



COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES
SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

10th Grade





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Introduction

September 11, 2020

"Let everything take second place to our care of our children, our bringing them up to the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If from the beginning we teach them to love true wisdom, they will have greater wealth and glory than riches can provide."

St John Chrysostom

The book of Proverbs tells us to "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov 22:6) Although our Orthodox faith never changes, the society and challenges our children face are always evolving. In light of this constant change, and in honor of the 100 year anniversary of establishment of Sunday school in 2018, the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States began working on a new curriculum named "Children of Light" to equip and educate our children in order to live a life pleasing to God in the midst of the world we live in. St Habib Girgis rightly reminds us that "education is the first need for the community after bread." Seeing the importance of educating our children, great effort was put over the past few years into ensuring a curriculum is developed that would feed our children with the proper foundations and tools appropriate to their age. Every grade will equip the child with strong biblical, liturgical, spiritual and morally appropriate lessons allowing them to grow in faith while providing them with tools to navigate the day to day issues they face in society so that they may be the true light of the world they are each called to be.

May this new curriculum be a tool that allows our children to grow in wisdom and in love of God, living up to their calling of being light of the world and true children of Light.

Bishop Youssef

Bishop Basil

Bishop Gregory

Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



Overview and Milestones



Theme of the Year

Repentance

Rationale: As they grow in understanding consequences of behaviors, they are re-introduced to the fall, the purpose of the incarnation and it's connection to our needed repentance.

Psych Analysis



Physical

Eats excessively, Needs extra sleep, Gaining height



Intellect

Thinking long term, Plans for "what if", Strong sense of right and wrong



Social

Thinks friends more important than family, Dating, Emotions are deep, Argues quickly, gets sad/depressed



Detailed Characteristics

Building Blocks

BB1: Call to Repentance - Exile & Restoration

Repentance and Confession

BB5: Church History

God the Logos, The Holy Spirit, Apostolic Era, Persecution of the Church, Monasticism, The Christian Creed

BB7: Life Matters

Timothy vs. Demas, The Great Commission, Boundaries with Friends, Addictions, Sex, Sexuality and Homosexuality, Difficult Sayings of Christ, Death and Judgment, Peer Pressure

BB1: Call to Repentance - Exile & Restoration

Daniel and the 1st deportation, Ezekiel and the 2nd deportation, Ezra and Nehemiah, Maccabees

BB9: Attacking the Mother sins

Pride & Vainglory, Anger, Lust, Sloth, Gluttony, Despair, Envy, Greed

BB8: The Liturgy

History of Worship in Orthodoxy, Liturgy is Scriptural Prayers, Liturgy is Forgiveness and Worship, The Liturgical "ANAPHORA", After the Liturgy, The Eucharist

BB3: Thanksgiving

Dealing with Conflict, Life of contentment and Thanksgiving, Why am I Orthodox?, Casting Blame, Guilt and Hopelessness

BB6: Towards Lent

The Temptation on the Mountain, Persistence in Prayer, Mercy & Justice of God, Fasting, The Bleeding Woman, Narrow Gate, Power of His Name, Holy Week

BB9: Wisdom and Discernment

Submission, Anxiety, You and Your Family, Generational Gap, The Vanity of the World, Judge Not

End of Year Milestones & Objectives



Scripture

- + Know/Comfortable with the period of the Babylonian Exile
- + Reads/knows of the content of the Deuterocanonical Books
- + Understand the fall from a dogmatic perspective



Spiritual

- + Understands the point of salvation
- + Understands the Creed
- + Knows the 5 sees of the early church
- + Confesses regularly out of their own will
- + Can relate the liturgy to their daily prayers and needs



Social

- + Vocal/Argues positively about spiritual matters
- + Comfortable with Predestination
- + Establishing Boundaries
- + Addressed issues of Substance abuse, Self-Esteem and Sexuality



Rituals

- + Can break down and understand the different parts of liturgy and its history
- + Knows the different fasting rituals (when they are, and when to fast with abstinence)
- + Regular in Vespers & Praises



Acknowledgements

The Diocese would like to thank all those who helped in this curriculum. There were collaborators and volunteers from across the globe throughout the US, Canada, and Qatar. We would also like to thank St. Mary and St. Mark of Edmonton for their significant collaboration in this service. May God bless and reward all to those who have labored and prayed for this curriculum.

Providing Feedback

Feedback, suggestions and material may be submitted at any time in the following [form](#).

Disclaimer

Only the content presented on this curriculum has been reviewed and verified. The provided links have also been reviewed. However, the remainder of the content of these websites were out of the scope of the review.



Building Block 1: Repentance

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 1.1: Jesus Friend of Sinner, Repentance and Confession

Building Block 1: Repentance



Objective

To reflect on Christ's approach to sinners to call them to repentance, that Christ awaits our repentance and rejoices when we return to Him

Application

Encourage them to choose to make regular confessions.

Find a quiet place where you can be alone and where you can concentrate on the love of God. Think of what God wants you to be and where you are in life, at this very moment. Ask yourself; How have I offended God? Examine yourselves. Pray and confess to God then go to your father of confession and confess your sins before him and God.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 15](#)



Liturgy: [Agius Agios Agios](#)



Patristics: *St. John of Dalyatha*; [St. Ephraim the Syrian](#) *St. John Climacus* *Origen*



Story: [Adulterous Woman, Parables of the lost sheep, coin](#)



Other: [The Life of Repentance & Purity Pope Shenouda](#); [Abba Give me a Word: Repeated Sins: Will I ever Stop?](#) by HG Bishop Gregory; [St. Ambrose](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Discuss the need for repentance.

- What is repentance?
- Repentance comes from the Greek word 'μετάνοια' (metanoia), and it literally means to have a change (meta) of mind/heart (noia)
- Although repentance can often have feelings of guilt or remorse, it is important to know that these feelings are not repentance itself.
- The Bible tells us that true repentance will result in a change of actions (Luke 3:8-14; Acts 3:19). In summarizing his ministry, Paul declares, "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance." (Acts 26:20). The full biblical definition of repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action.
- "Repentance raises the fallen, mourning knocks at the gate of Heaven, and holy humility opens it." St. John Climacus - "The Ladder of Divine Ascent" (Step 25)

+ True Repentance

- Repentance is a Divine act performed by God inside the person, according to His Divine promise, saying: "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, I will cleanse you from all your filthiness...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you...and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgements and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25-27).
- There is freedom in repentance. Therefore the Bible says: "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36). It is true freedom because, "whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:30).
- Repentance involves recognizing that you have thought wrongly in the past and determining to think rightly in the future.
- True repentance is prompted by "godly sorrow," and it "leads to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10)
- "There is no sin that cannot be forgiven except the one without repentance" (St. Mar Isaac).

+ Is repentance really necessary?

- Christ often spoke of repentance and valued it "repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt 4:17), "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). There is a constant need to be reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:20), to come back to one self (Luke 15:17)

- "Repentance is a great torment to the devil who tries to stop it" - St. John of Dalyatha
- "Cry out, O sinner, with all your might, and spare not your throat; for your Lord is merciful and loves those who repent. As soon as you return, your Father will come out to meet you and rejoice" - St. Ephraim the Syrian
- "Through repentance... the sinner bathes his bed in tears and his tears become his bread by day and night... not ashamed to show his sin to the priest of the Lord and ask for the remedy" - Origen
- "Many years of the devil's hard work is lost in one moment of repentance" - Saint John of Dalyatha
- And as we pray in the liturgy, "You have not abandoned us to the end but have always visited us." St. Basil Liturgy

+ Parables of Repentance

Consider giving an overview of each parable in Luke 15; Parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, lost son.

- Christ proclaims strongly the need for repentance so that He may be united with us and dine with us! This is precisely the purpose of Luke 15: "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them' So He spoke this parable to them, saying: 'What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? (Luke 15)
- St. Ambrose of Milan comments on the parable of the lost sheep and explains to us, "Who are these three persons: the shepherd, the woman, the father? Is not Christ the Shepherd, the Church the woman, and God the Father? Christ Who took upon Himself your sins bears you upon His own Body; the Church searches for you; the Father receives you back. As a shepherd He brings us back, as a mother He looks for us, as a father He clothes us. First, mercy, second, intercession, third, reconciliation; each to each; the Redeemer comes to our aid, the Church intercedes for us, the Creator restores us to Himself."
- He continues and says, Let us therefore rejoice because that sheep which had fallen by the way in Adam is uplifted in Christ...; the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10); that is, all men: for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive (I Cor. 15:22).
- The Parables of the lost sheep and lost coin end with an account of the joy in heaven over the sinner who repents. In both verses 7 and 10, the joy of the shepherds or the women's friends is a symbol of the joy of heaven.
- There is great joy in repentance.

+ A Joy and an Encouragement in a complete repentance (through confession)

- Luke 15 is a great encouragement to us. It shows us how much God loves us, and that even if (when!) we stray, God will go to every length possible to find us and bring us back into His care. He will search high and low. He will never stop watching, waiting, and looking.
- Complete your repentance through regular Confession. Regular confession are helpful as they provide accountability, they minimize spiritual negligence, builds spiritual growth and keeps us alert to our sins
- Introduce the youth to the prayer in the agpeya on the prayer before repentance, prayer before confession and prayer after confession.



Building Block 2: OT Timeline 4: Exile & Restoration

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 2:
OT Timeline 4: Call
to Repentance -
Exile & Restoration



Lesson 2.1: The Babylonian Exile: Daniel and the 1st deportation

Objective

To understand the historical background, why the exile, and how did Daniel deal with these new circumstances

Application

Christians youth can embrace education, even if it is conducted outside the bounds of Christian accountability. This is what Christian students face these days. What is one thing you say no to, this week, that harms your body? Determine your boundaries and the things you should no longer compromise.

References and Resources



Scripture: [The Book of Daniel](#)



Liturgical: [The Song of the Three Sainly Children](#)



Patristics: St. Clement; Origen; St. Basil



Story: [Abba Macarius and the pagan priest](#) [Midnight Praises: The Song of the three Sainly Children](#)



Other: [Grade 7 December Week 2 Legacy Curriculum](#); [Fr. Tadros on the Book of Daniel](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Overview of the book of Daniel

- The prophet Daniel is one of four Major Prophets, along with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The Book of Daniel is followed by the Prophet Hose.
- Why the exile? The Babylonian captivity or exile refers to the time in Israel's history when Jews were taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon. It is an important period of biblical history because both the captivity/exile and the return and restoration of the Jewish nation were fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies.
- God used Babylon as His agent of judgment against Israel for their sins of idolatry and rebellion against Him. There were several different times during this period (607-586 B.C.) when the Jews were taken captive by Babylon. With each successive rebellion against Babylonian rule, Nebuchadnezzar would lead his armies against Judah until they laid siege to Jerusalem for over a year, killing many people and destroying the Jewish temple, taking captive many thousands of Jews, and leaving Jerusalem in ruins.
- As prophesied in Scripture, the Jewish people would be allowed to return to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile. That prophecy was fulfilled in 537 B.C., and the Jews were allowed by King Cyrus of Persia to return to Israel and begin rebuilding the city and temple. The return under the direction of Ezra led to a revival among the Jewish people and the rebuilding of the temple.
- Is it possible to thrive at school or work while following God? The challenges Daniel and his colleagues faced are very similar to what we face nowadays.
- Daniel lived out his life in an environment very hostile to the Most High God. Yet circumstances brought him to a position of high opportunity in the service of the Babylonian king. Should he withdraw from the corrupt and profane Babylonian government and seek a life pleasing to God in a community among other Jews? Should he relegate his faith to a private, personal sphere, perhaps praying to God privately, while living the life of Babylonian power and influence indistinguishably from those around him? Daniel chooses neither. Instead he embarks on a promising career while remaining publicly devoted to God. The story of how he navigates these difficulties is both a guidebook and case study for today's Christians.
- Discuss how Daniel's way of collaborating with his overseer is a critical part of the story. (Daniel 1:17).
- You can also give the example of St. Macarius in respecting the Egyptian who believed in pagans.
- Present the trials Daniel faced
- Discuss what would one have done in Daniel's place.

+ Placing Daniel in context of historical timeline and graphical situation

- Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered the Land of Judea in 3319 (442 BCE) and destroyed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem
- As was the standard practice of invading rulers, Nebuchadnezzar deported the Jewish intellectuals and forced them to relocate to Babylon. Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (from the tribe of Jude), all extraordinarily gifted young men, selected to serve as officials in the royal court.
- This captivity of citizens of Judah in Babylon lasted for 70 years, as God had foretold through the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah.
- Clement writes of the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD in the prophetic language of Daniel's seventy weeks, "Vespasian rose to the supreme power (Emperor of Rome) and destroyed Jerusalem, and desolated the holy place" (STO, XXI, 142-143).
- Although he served the kings of Babylon, Daniel didn't simply go with the flow of the people around him, especially when the kings' orders conflicted with God's orders.
- We can learn much from Daniel on how to live holy lives in the secular ungodly world we live today.
- Daniel demonstrated remarkable trust in God and revealed God's plans for the future, not only for his own day but also for the Maccabean period and on through the time that God's kingdom being established by the Son of Man.

+ You may also use the Daniel Lesson in the Grade 7 Legacy Curriculum to help build the lesson.

- "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." (Chapter 10:2-3)
- "Since Daniel controlled his lust, he was able to control the Chaldean kingdom, so he destroyed their idols, tamed their lions, proclaimed the Incarnation and interpreted the hidden mysteries." - St. Basil the Great
- Origen writes, "The weeks of years up to the time of Christ the leader that Daniel the prophet predicted were fulfilled" (TPR, IV:1:5).

+ "What about Daniel?"

- How did he meditate on the wonders?
- This did not happen except after fasting for 20 days." - St. Basil the Great
- Liturgy Connection: Midnight Praises: The Song of the Three Saintly Children

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 2.2: The Babylonian Exile: Ezekiel and the 2nd deportation

Building Block 2: OT
Timeline 4: Call to
Repentance - Exile &
Restoration



Objective

To understand the balance between consequences of disobedience and sin and the lovingkindness of God.

Application

- In times of difficulties we may ask, “Who are we?” and “Where is God in all of this?” However, Ezekiel was a voice of hope during this time. He understood that God is in control. How can you follow his example and provide hope for someone you know this week?
- Do a Bible search for the characters that saw a vision or try to find verses from the New Testament that was actually prophesied in the book of Ezekiel

References and Resources



Scripture: [Jeremiah 25:1-14](#); [Jeremiah 30:3](#); [Ezekiel 37:27](#)



Liturgy: [Adam Sunday Psali](#)



Patristics: [St. Jerome](#)



Story: [Joseph was a voice of hope and wisdom](#)



Other: [Grade 7 December Week 1 Legacy Curriculum](#),
[Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel, Fr. Tadros Malaty](#); [SUS Q & A](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Overview of the book of Ezekiel

- The Prophet Ezekiel lived in the sixth century before the birth of Christ. He was born in the city of Sarir, and descended from the tribe of Levi; he was a priest and the son of the priest Buzi. Ezekiel was led off to Babylon when he was twenty-five years old together with King Jechoniah II and many other Jews during the second invasion of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnessar.
- His name signifies, The strength of God, or one girt or strengthened of God.
- He was a contemporary of the prophets Daniel and Jeremiah.
- The Book of Ezekiel records several visions he saw from God. Visions are difficult to understand and interpret as they involve an attempt to describe – with human language – things that “eye has not seen, nor ear heard” (1 Corinthians 2:9). One such vision was Ezekiel’s vision of God and the four creatures in Chapter I.
- Ezekiel ministered to his generation who were both exceedingly sinful and thoroughly hopeless. By means of his prophetic ministry he attempted to bring them to immediate repentance and to confidence in the distant future
- Ezekiel used various methods to convey God’s Word to his people. He used art in drawing a depiction of Jerusalem, symbolic actions and unusual conduct to secure attention. He cut his hair and beard to demonstrate what God would do to Jerusalem and its inhabitants.
- God didn’t exile the Israelites primarily to punish them. God never has been nor is He now interested in punishment for punishment’s sake. Rather, He intended the punishment or judgment in Ezekiel’s day as a means to an end—to bring His people to a state of repentance and humility before the one true God. They had lived for so long in sin and rebellion, confident in their own strength and that of the neighboring nations, that they needed God to remind them of His holy nature and their humble identity in a most dramatic way. After centuries of warnings, prophetic messages, and invasions, God decided that more significant action was required—He had to remove the people from their promised land.
- God is the Lord of heaven and earth, and the judgment the people were experiencing was a result of their own sin.
- The book of Ezekiel reminds us to seek out the Lord in those dark times when we feel lost, to examine our own lives, and to align ourselves with the one true God.

+ Placing Ezekiel in context of historical timeline and graphical situation

- Ezekiel had a vision about Jerusalem city’s ‘secret sins’ (Ezekiel 8:1-18). It reminds us in a definite way that God sees everything. And it



reminds us that He knows everything, verses 8-9. How can we understand that truth best? (Read Psalm 139: 23-24; Jeremiah 16:17; 23:24 and Hebrews 4:12-13.)

- + We want the truth to help us in every part of our daily lives. How can we do this?
 - You can also share with the students how Joseph was a voice of hope and wisdom to Egypt
 - This book gives a compelling account of how the Jewish people suffer a severely diminished life of deprivation and oppression – and even death – as captives in the conquering empire of Babylon. When they question why God has allowed them to suffer this way, Ezekiel speaks God’s answer: because of your unjust ways of living (Ezekiel 18:1-17)
- + On the four living creatures in Ezekiel’s vision: St. Jerome applies the four symbolic figures of Ezekiel to the Gospels: the Man is Matthew, the Lion, Mark, the Calf, Luke, "because he began with Zacharias the priest," and the Eagle, John.
 - Liturgy Connection: Adam Sunday Psalm "Ezekiel saw a door, to the East"
 - The Lord appeared to Ezekiel in a heavenly vision; he fell upon his face, and the Lord said to him, "Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak to you" (Ezekiel 2:1). This encouraged Ezekiel, and the Lord gave him a message to call the captured people to repent; He ordered him to deliver that message.
 - God used Ezekiel as a major factor to encourage the exiles to stay true to the "faith of their fathers."

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 2:
OT Timeline 4: Call
to Repentance -
Exile &
Restoration



Lesson 2.3: The Restoration of the Temple: Ezra and Nehemiah

Objective

To understand the importance and the spiritual meaning of rebuilding the temple and rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

Application

God has His chastening purposes for difficult times and He has His gracious purposes for spiritually renewing His people. How can we apply this understanding to one difficulty we face this week?
Can you identify personal spiritual walls that need to be rebuilt in your life?

References and Resources



Scripture: The Book of Ezra and Nehemiah



Liturgy: [Prayer after communion](#)



Patristics: [Homilies on Genesis 9.7, Origen](#)



Story: [St. Peter's repentance](#)



Other: [Grade 8 Filler 4](#), [Grade 6 October Week 4 and November Week 1](#) [SUS Pre-Servant](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Placing Ezra and Nehemiah in context of historical timeline and graphical situation
 - At this point in their history, the Jews are still in captivity with the Persians (who overtook the Babylonians that originally forced them into exile). The book of Ezra covers the rebuilding of the temple and the book of Nehemiah covers the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.
- + Overview of the book of Ezra:
 - Author: The Book of Ezra does not specifically name its author. The tradition is that the prophet Ezra wrote the Book of Ezra. It is interesting to note that once Ezra appears on the scene in chapter 7, the author of the Book of Ezra switches from writing in the third person to first person. This would also lend credibility to Ezra being the author.
 - Date of Writing: The Book of Ezra was likely written between 460 and 440 B.C.
 - Purpose of Writing: The Book of Ezra is devoted to events occurring in the land of Israel at the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity and subsequent years, covering a period of approximately one century, beginning in 538 B.C. The emphasis in Ezra is on the rebuilding of the Temple. The book contains extensive genealogical records, principally for the purpose of establishing the claims to the priesthood on the part of the descendants of Aaron.
 - Why is Ezra so important? The book of Ezra provides a much-needed link in the historical record of the Israelite people. When their king was dethroned and captured and the people exiled to Babylon, Judah as an independent nation ceased to exist. The book of Ezra provides an account of the Jews' regathering, of their struggle to survive and to rebuild what had been destroyed. Through his narrative, Ezra declared that they were still God's people and that God had not forgotten them.
 - In the book of Ezra we witness the rebuilding of the new temple, the unification of the returning tribes as they shared common struggles and were challenged to work together. Later, after the original remnant had stopped work on the city walls and spiritual apathy ruled, Ezra arrived with another two thousand people and sparked a spiritual revival. By the end of the book, Israel had renewed its covenant with God and had begun acting in obedience to Him.
- + Overview of the book of Nehemiah
 - After 70 years in exile, the Jews had returned home and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. They were able to worship God in their own land, but the city still lay in ruins. The once-great capital of the promised land was a depressing rubble heap exposed to her enemies.
 - When Nehemiah hears this, he sets out to restore the city walls. The book of Nehemiah is his story in his own words.
 - The book of Nehemiah is about reestablishing God's people both physically and spiritually.

- In the first part of the book, Nehemiah restores Jerusalem in a physical sense. When Nehemiah hears that “the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire,” (Nehemiah 1:3), he gets permission from Persian King Artaxerxes to rebuild the city.
- In the second section, Nehemiah and Ezra bring spiritual revival to Jerusalem. Ezra reads the law of Moses aloud to the people, and the nation rededicates to obeying God. Later on, Nehemiah works diligently to point people back to the law of Moses (Nehemiah 13).
- Nehemiah was a layman, not a priest like Ezra nor a prophet like Malachi. He served the Persian king in a secular position before leading a group of Jews to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the city walls
- Nehemiah’s humility before God provided an example for the people

+ God will Gather His people (as he did after the exile through Ezra and Nehemiah):

- The Book of Ezra is a chronicle of hope and restoration. For the Christian whose life is wounded by sin and rebellion against God, there is great hope that ours is a God of forgiveness, a God who will not turn His back on us when we seek Him in repentance and brokenness (1 John 1:9).
- The return of the Israelites to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple are repeated in the life of every Christian who returns from the captivity of sin and rebellion against God and finds in Him a loving welcome home.
- No matter how long we have been away, He is ready to forgive us and receive us back into His family. He is willing to show us how to rebuild our lives and resurrect our hearts, wherein is the temple of the Holy Spirit. As with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, God superintends the work of renovating and rededicating our lives to His service.
- "But I say, Has the Lord used iniquity to snatch the nations from the power of his enemies and recall them to faith in him and to his dominion? By no means. For “Israel” was once “the Lord’s portion,” but they made Israel turn from their God in sin, and because of their sins God said to them, “Behold, you have been separated by your sins and because of your sins you have been scattered under the whole heaven.” But again he says to them, “If your dispersion should be from one end of heaven to the other, from there I will gather you, says the Lord.” Because, therefore, “the princes of this world”¹³ had first invaded “the Lord’s portion,” “the good shepherd” had, necessarily, the ninety and nine having been left on the heights,¹⁵ to descend to the lands and seek the one sheep that was lost, and when it was found and carried back on his shoulders, to recall it to the sheepfold of perfection on high." - Origen
- Liturgy Connection: The prayer we pray after receiving communion
- The example of Peter’s repentance; “And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So he went out and wept bitterly.” Matthew 26:7

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 2: OT
Timeline 4: Call to
Repentance - Exile &
Restoration



Lesson 2.4: Exile & Restoration Review & Post-Prophets: Maccabees

Objective

To understand the purpose of 1 & 2 Maccabees and learn that the entire story narrates the successful struggle of the Jews to survive against the cultural and military forces brought against them.

Application

- + Notice and ask yourself, How do you let the outside culture impact you and change you?
- + Begin reading another Deuterocanonical Book

References and Resources



Scripture: The Book of Maccabees



Liturgy: [Melody for the Feast of Hosanna Sunday](#)



Patristics: [St. Augustine of Hippo, "The Care to be Had for the Dead" c. 421 A.D.](#); [St. Augustine](#)



Story: [St. Verena](#); [St. Samuel the Confessor](#)



Other: [Bible Study Sermons on Maccabees, Fr. Matthias Shehad](#); [LA Copts](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Overview of the book of Maccabees

- The Book of 1 Maccabees recounts Jewish history and a time when Jerusalem and the land of Judea was occupied by the Greeks under the rule of King Antiochus, following the conquest and death of Alexander the Great.
- King Antiochus instituted a violent anti-Jewish policy. Circumcision, Sabbath worship, teaching the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament), and observance of the commandments were all banned.
- In 168 B.C. the Jewish priest Mattathias started a revolt against Greek oppression. Upon Mattathias death in 166 B.C., his son, Judas the Maccabee succeeded him as leader of the revolt.
- The Book of 1 Maccabees recounts how Judas succeeded in recapturing Jerusalem and purifying the Temple. The Temple was rededicated for worship of the LORD in 165 B.C.
- The first book portrays the effort by the Jews to regain their cultural and religious independence from Antiochus IV Epiphanes after his desecration of the Jewish temple
- The Second Book of Maccabees was written most likely around 100 BC. This work coheres with 1 Maccabees, but it is written as a theological interpretation of the Maccabean Revolt. In addition to outlining the historical events, 2 Maccabees discuss several doctrinal issues, including prayers for the dead, intercession of the saints, and resurrection on Judgment Day. (Please note that The Catholic Church has based the doctrines of purgatory on 2 Maccabees which is not doctrine for the Coptic Orthodox Church)

+ Place the Maccabees in context of historical timeline and graphical situation.

- "We read in the books of the Maccabees (2 Maccabees 12:43) that sacrifice was offered for the dead. But even if it were found nowhere in the Old Testament writings, the authority of the Church which is clear on this point is of no small weight, where in the prayers of the priest poured forth to the Lord God at his altar the commendation of the dead has its place." St. Augustine of Hippo, "The Care to be Had for the Dead" c. 421 A.D.
- "The whole canon of the scriptures, however, in which we say that consideration is to be applied, is contained in these books: the five of Moses . . . and one book of Joshua [Son of] Nave, one of Judges; one little book which is called Ruth . . . then the four of Kingdoms, and the two of Paralipomenon . . . [T]here are also others too, of a different order . . . such as Job and Tobit and Esther and Judith and the two books of Maccabees, and the two of Esdras . . . Then there are the prophets, in which there is one book of the Psalms of David, and three of



Solomon.” St. Augustine of Hippo, (Christian Instruction 2:8:13 [A.D. 397]).

- The first and second Books of Maccabees, though regarded by Jews and Protestants as apocryphal, i.e., not inspired Scripture, because not contained in the Jewish list of books drawn up at the end of the first century A.D., have always been accepted by the Coptic Church as inspired and are called “deuterocanonical” to indicate that they are canonical even though disputed by some.
- Liturgy Connection: Melody for the Feast of Hosanna Sunday
- The Example of St. Verena adapting and living in a culture that is different from her without compromising her faith or values.
- Or, the example of St. Samuel the confessor when he was taking a slave

You may use the following Bible Study resource to base your lesson: [Maccabees Bible Study](#)



Building Block 3: Thanksgiving

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 3.1: Dealing with Conflict

Building Block 3:
Thanksgiving



Objective

To understand how to resolve conflicts in a Christian manner

Application

Think of someone that you haven't spoken to in a while because a conflict, reach out to them and try to reconcile the relationship - Approach them with love and humility

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Corinthians 5:18-20](#), [James 1:5](#), [1:19](#), [4:1](#), [Proverbs 12:8](#), [15:1](#), [16:7](#), [17:9](#), [14](#), [18:13](#), [19](#), [18:13](#), [19:11](#), [Matthew 18:15-20](#), [Colossians 3:8](#), [Matthew 7:3-5](#), [Galatians 6:1-4](#), [1 John 4:18](#), [Luke 23:34](#), [Philippians 2:4-5](#), [Ephesians 4:15,29](#), [Genesis 13:2-9](#), [1 John 4:8](#)



Liturgy: [Greet one another](#)



Patristics: [St. Isaac the Syrian](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: [Matthew 18:15-17](#); [Abraham and Lot](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Why do forensic crime scene investigators always look for fingerprints in a crime scene?

- If they find a fingerprint on the crime scene, they know the main suspects. WHY? No two people on this planet have the same fingerprint; even identical twins have different fingerprints; the same goes for ears (that's why your passport photo must show both ears); they are unique identifiers to you.
- The reason fingerprints are unique is the exact reason why each person is one of a kind. People are a mixture of the influence of their DNA, the way they were raised, their environment, culture and so on. That's why many may not agree on the same opinion or like the same things.
- That difference often creates friction, which sometimes leads to conflict. Wars, divisions, racism, terrorism, broken families, broken relationships all result from unresolved disputes.
- Someone might even have a conflict with God, which is sin. God loves sinners, but He has a Holy nature that can't accept sin, so to reconcile with people, He had to make a move to the cross and put all the sins on His only begotten Son (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
- By doing this, Jesus says, I love the sinner - all people with no exception.
- Jesus as a role model is teaching everyone how to reconcile with others, take the first step, don't wait for others to do it. It requires love and humility, but that gives those who do that the high status of "Ambassador for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

+ Easier said than done; it is challenging.

- The root, *"When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him."* Proverbs 16:7. When someone is at peace with God, they will be at peace with others. One may ask, if he/she is full of God or full of his/her egos?
- When someone is both full of their ego, their wants or desires, it goes against their wants resulting in a conflict (James 4:1).
- One ought to ask God for wisdom when dealing with such situations. (James 1:5)
- *"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore, stop contention before a quarrel starts."* Proverbs 17:14
- Handling the issue at the beginning stages is easier, "A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle." Proverbs 18:19.
- Someone should always try to discuss an issue or try to reconcile with their brother, *"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath"* James 1:19
- On dealing with a sinning brother, or someone who tries to hurt others badly or on a regular basis: (Matthew 18:15-20).
- One should avoid blaming others or using inappropriate or harsh language; it's a waste of time and energy and might lead to more conflict,



but rather the focus should be on finding a solution (Colossians 3:8).

- *"The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression."* Proverbs 19:11
 - Active listening, listening to people's hurt and point of view. Listening to the emotions behind the words and avoiding being self-centred: *"He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him."* Proverbs 18:13
 - Pick your battle, *"It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can start a quarrel."* Proverbs 20:3; *"He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends."* Proverbs 17:9.
 - Self-examination is important to ensure individuals are not the ones to be blamed, possibly insensitive, oversensitive, ungrateful, over demanding? (Matthew 7: 3-5)
 - Bear and share burdens. (Galatians 6:1-4)
 - Abraham was exemplary in his conflict with Lot, surrounding to his will though he was the elder and responsible one: "Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold" (Gen 13:2), but Lot, who went with Abraham, also had flocks and herds and tents, so that the land could not support both dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites "dwelt in the land" (Gen 13:7) Knowing the conflict could lead to trouble, Abraham came up with an idea. He said, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." (Gen 13:8-9), "Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other" (Gen 13:11). Abraham solved this conflict by giving Lot the choice of where he wanted to be, and even though Abraham, as the Patriarch of the family, had the authority to take the best land, Abraham let Lot choose to avoid conflict. Abraham's unselfishness solved this conflict.
- + Can't someone just wait, and time will heal everything?
- If someone is shot, would they wait, and time can heal everything? If someone holds onto resentment and grudges, their heart hardens. *"Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts"* - Psalm 95: 7-8
 - God in His love doesn't want that to happen to anyone. *"Someone who bears a grudge while he prays is like a person who sows in the sea and expects to reap a harvest."* St. Isaac The Syrian
 - In the liturgy, we are asked to reconcile and greet one another with a holy kiss. (Matthew 5:22-24)
 - The only way to resolve a conflict is to face it. Fear makes someone distant, defensive and unable to connect. *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment."* 1 John 4:18.
 - It is always more rewarding to resolve a conflict than to dissolve a friendship.
 - There might not be a solution for every conflict; there are some things that will never be agreed upon. Instead agree to disagree without grudges or any bitter feelings.
 - It's not about being friends with everyone because that is not realistic. Always ask God to give you love for everyone and to become more like Him (1 John 4:8).
 - Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us the greatest way of how to resolve a conflict as we read in Matthew 18:15-17
- + Hurting people, hurts other people:
- Someone who has been hurt by a friend or colleague or family member, might have the urge to hurt others as a defense.
 - Let's look our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, forgetting His severe pain and caring about others: Luke 23:34
 - *"Let each of you look out not only for his own interests but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"* Philippians 2:4-5
 - "Every time that we sin, we are born of the devil. But every time that we do good, we are born of God." (St. John Chrysostom)
- + What if the truth hurts?
- That doesn't mean that someone agrees with everything and everyone. It's not about becoming people pleasers. Often, disagreement is healthy if the request comes from God's commandments.
 - Disagree without being upset or distressed and without using harsh words *"A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger."* - Proverbs 15:1
 - Speak the truth tactfully: The truth will set you free but say it with love (Ephesians 4:15).
 - It is not what is said but how it is said that matters. It's not about being persuasive or abrasive. (Proverbs 12:18) and (Ephesians 4:29)

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 3:
Thanksgiving



Lesson 3.2: Life of Contentment and Thanksgiving

Objective

To understand the importance of living a life of thanksgiving and contentment

Application

Throughout the week, be thankful for at least 3 things each day, whether great or minor and attempt to think of those items when praying the thanksgiving prayer. Make an effort to be thankful on purpose.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Timothy 6:6-8](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#); [1 Chronicles 16:34](#)



Liturgy: [Thanksgiving Prayer](#)



Patristics: [St. Isaac the Syrian Abba give me a Word with HG Bishop Basil](#)



Story: [St. Demiana](#), Ruth, The Samaritan Leper



Other: [Life of Thanksgiving by Pope Shenouda](#); [Giving Thanks](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ In Everything?

Consider discussing: Have you ever given an expensive present to someone who never thanked you for it? How did you feel?

- Most of us are guilty of the same unresponsiveness toward our gifts from God.
- St. John Chrysostom teaches us, "Let us give thanks to God continually. For, it is outrageous that when we enjoy His benefaction to us in deed every single day, we do not acknowledge the favor with so much as a word; and this, when the acknowledgment confers great benefit on us. He does not need anything of ours, but we stand in need of all things from Him." *St. John Chrysostom, Homily 25, Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew.*
- St. Paul teaches us to always offer thanksgiving, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks" (1 Thess 5:16-18).
- All the Coptic church rituals and liturgies begin with the prayer of Thanksgiving, whether a wedding, a funeral or a liturgy. Likewise, the seven prayers (in the Agpeya) either in the morning or at night.

+ "For everything, concerning everything and in everything"

- Levels of thanksgiving:
 - For the great things
 - For the little things
 - For the invisible things (Protection)
 - For all things
 - For tribulations

+ From Request to Thanksgiving

- We give thanks for if we didn't our relationship would simply be transactional, for what can we truly offer God in return for His love?
- St. Basil the Great clearly instructs us, "Do not start your prayer by a request, lest it is thought that if it was not for the request, you would not have prayed."
- Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:6-7



- As this St. Paul suggests, supplications to the Lord are not wrong. It is a valid and good prayer, rather it is done in a spirit of thanksgiving. Rather than demand, one prays knowing that the Lord will provide if it is His will, and we stand thankful regardless of the outcome of the supplication.

+ From Thanksgiving to contentment

- St. Isaac the Syrian, the great ascetic of the 7th century, begins his 2nd ascetical homily saying, “The thanksgiving of the recipient incites the giver to give gifts greater than the first... Nor does any gift remain without addition, except that which is received without thanksgiving. The fool’s portion is small in his eyes.” [St. Isaac the Syrian Abba give me a Word with HG Bishop Basil](#)
- St. Ambrose of Optina wrote “We must begin with thanksgiving for everything. The beginning of joy is to be content with your situation.”

+ What is contentment?

- Contentment is being in a state of satisfaction and happiness. St. Paul writes in I Timothy 6:6-8 “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.”
- St. John Chrysostom wrote “Happiness can only be achieved by looking inward and learning to enjoy whatever life has and this requires transforming greed into gratitude.”
- During the Liturgy the priest prays that the Lord shields us from anything that will take our contentment away. He prays “Therefore we ask and entreat Your goodness, O Lover of mankind, grant us to complete this holy day, and all the days of our life, in all peace with Your fear. All envy, all temptation, all the work of Satan, the counsel of wicked men and the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest Take them away from us, And from all Your people, ...”
- St. Demiana gave up her fortune and lived in seclusion. She was content with her love for our Lord Jesus Christ

+ How to live a life of contentment

- The apostle Paul is an example of someone who mastered the art of contentment. “Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:11-13)
- Strive for eternal life. St. Pachomius the Great wrote “As for you, my son, shun the satisfactions of this age, so as to be happy in the age to come. Do not be negligent, letting the days pass by till unexpectedly they come looking for you and you arrive at the straits of your anguish and the ‘horror-faces’ surround you and drag you off violently to their dark place of terror and anguish.”
- The story of Ruth. She gave up the idols and was content praying to the true God of Naomi. Ruth 1:16
- The Samaritan leper is a great example. Consider the depth of our greatest blessing, as the leper did. The leper didn't wait to return to Jesus until it was convenient or until after he visited the priests. He went immediately to Jesus. Thanksgiving should be offered from the outpouring of the heart. There was intensity in the leper's worship because he was aware of his weakness. One ought to be consistent in offering thanksgiving. The more intentional we are about offering thanks to God, the easier it becomes to see His blessings in our lives.

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 3:
Thanksgiving



Lesson 3.3: Why am I Orthodox? Orthodox Doctrine

Objective

To understand what Orthodoxy is and how the faith was preserved

Application

Provide either 2 reasons next week (or to your guide) of why you are orthodox.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Hebrews 10:26](#), [Hebrews 6:4-6](#), [John 17:17, 1](#)
[Corinthians 16:13](#)



Liturgy: ["Keep us in the faith"](#)



Patristics: [St. Athanasius](#)



Story: [Fr. Lazarus El Antony](#)



Theology Academy: [Church History](#)



Other: [Be the Bee ep 142 - Why I'm an Orthodox Christian, 5 reasons](#), [Fr. Peter Farrington](#), [Fr. Lazarus Saint Anthony I, II](#), [Orthodox Christianity Reasonable faith by Fr. Peter Farrington](#), [The Beauty of Orthodoxy by HG Bishop Anqaelos](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Defining Orthodoxy: What is Orthodoxy?

- Orthodoxy is often misunderstood. Some view the Orthodox faith as constraining, dry, sometimes bitter.
- Orthodoxy is the life of the Orthodox Church.
- The church started by Our Lord Jesus Christ that we may continue to live in His light and His promise. It was carried on by the Apostles who preached the Word of God.
- In the Church we live within the safeguards and the teaching that Jesus Christ Himself gave to His Disciples. This is the church we have today.
- We think of the Church as the building or the institution. The Orthodox Church is the body of Christ. It incorporates us all into Him, our Lord being the head, breathing, functioning body of Christ.
- Prayers are fundamental and essential to the church. Types of prayers: Communally (the beginning of sessions such as lectures), ritually (liturgy), individually (privately), collectively (as groups).
- Now the Church is fragmented and divided into many denominations but we hope to become one Holy Universal Church of God.
- We don't compromise on our teachings as they were passed down from the Apostles themselves (i.e St. Mark) and passed down through the forefathers of the Church.
- The Coptic Church is traditional. One of the pillars of her faith is the teachings of the early Church Fathers.
- It is Sacramental. She has seven primary Mysteries: Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, the Eucharist (Communion), Marriage, Priesthood, and the Anointing of the Sick.

+ The preservation of faith in the Orthodox Church

- Everything we do is based on the scriptures as the inspired word of God that we live by. It started with the Apostles.
- Baptizing, breaking of bread (communion) and prayer.
- Book of Acts 2: 40-43. The Apostles taught the Church doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread (sharing of meals, Eucharist) and prayers.
- The Apostles taught that the doctrine is important as it is the foundation of the church.



- The Church was unified. When the 3 councils met, there were bishops representing the same church from different regions. The Church became divided at that time due to personal opinions and thoughts. However, the Coptic Orthodox Church still stands strong in its teachings and dogma. It has not changed since the beginning of the first Church.

+ Statement of Faith: The Creed

Note that an entire building block is dedicated to the Creed and the Ecumenical Councils.

- The Creed was written to combat heresies. St. Athanasius was the main defender of the faith. When Arius said about Christ that He was "similar" in essence with the Father, [St. Athanasius](#) said: "One in essence with the Father."
- St. Athanasius was at the Nicene council and was instrumental in writing the Creed.
- The Creed has 12 sections: 1. God the Father and Creator. 2. His only Begotten Son, 3. The Incarnation, 4. Crucifixion and death of Christ. 5. The Resurrection. 6. The Ascension. 7. The second coming. 8. The Holy Spirit. 9. The Church. 10. The one Baptism. 11. The general resurrection. 12. The Eternity. ([Pope Shenouda III Theological College Sydney NSW – Doctrinal Theology Chapter 20](#))
- The Creed is our belief. It is essential to our faith. The Creed unites the faithful, and provides them with safeguards against false doctrine and practices.
- "The holy and inspired Scriptures are sufficient of themselves for the preaching of the truth." St. Athanasius

+ Why Orthodoxy?

Consider asking the youth why they are here. Have they chosen to be in this specific church? Have they chosen to be Christian? Or is it all motions?

- "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7
- "I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me." - Proverbs 8:17
- "But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul." - Deuteronomy 4:29
- "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13
- Seeking Him, means seeking a path that keeps oneself in His path: I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. Psalm 119:10
- Orthodoxy, throughout history, has continued to be bold in witnessing to the faith and dogma Christ set out. It has resisted countless heresies, seeks to preserve the moral teachings of Christ without wavering to environmental standards and practices.

+ Visit the references to see why some have converted and consecrated themselves to the Orthodox Church.

Consider sharing the conversion story of [Fr. Lazarus El Antony](#).

- His life was empty and bitter. He was lost until he found Christ. Listen to his words regarding how he converted.
- The Coptic Church has carefully preserved the Orthodox Christian Faith in its earliest and purest form, handing it down from generation to generation, unaltered and true to the Apostolic doctrines and patterns of worship and strive to keep that faith as we pray in the liturgy, "Keep us in Your faith, and grant us Your peace unto the end."

Encourage the students to read and learn more about the early church. To continually attend Liturgy and partake of the Holy Eucharist. Praying, engaging in fellowship. The importance of understanding the faith. Discuss with their spiritual father.

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 3:
Thanksgiving



Lesson 3.4: Casting Blame and Complaining, Signs of Unthankfulness

Objective

To learn how to show thankfulness to God through good or bad

Application

Do I find myself complaining about my circumstances or blaming others? Make a decision to start being thankful more than you are now. Make an effort to be thankful on purpose. Do not just wait for something to come along that makes you feel thankful, but instead, actively look at all of the things in your life that you are thankful for.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Kings 15](#); [Philippians 2:14](#); [Matthew 6:25-34](#); [Philippians 4:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#); [Ephesians 5:20](#); [Colossians 3:15-17](#); [Hebrews 13:15](#); [Ezra 3:11](#); [Psalm 7:17](#); [Psalm 9:1](#); [Psalm 35:18](#); [Exodus 16:1-16](#); [Romans 8:28](#)



Liturgy: "You, O my Master have turned for me the punishment into salvation" - St. Gregory Liturgy



Patristics: [St. Basil the Great, from Homily V. In martyrdom Julittam](#); [St. Anthony the Great said to Abba Poeman](#)



Story: [King Saul vs King David](#)



Other: [Blame Shifting by HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" - Matthew 7:3

Consider opening with a question to define blaming and complaining. Do we complain that someone else is the reason for our fall/mistakes?

- Genesis 3:12-13 "Then the man said, "The woman who you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent.
- Blame shifting is as old as humanity: Discuss how Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. They did not take ownership of their fall. "The woman whom YOU gave me, she gave me and I ate", "The serpent deceived me and I ate".
- Pilate justified his decision of crucifying Christ and thus washed his hands proclaiming innocence.
- Aaron, dealing with the Israelites did not take responsibility for his action and blamed the people, saying, "Do not let the anger of my lord become hot. You know the people, that they are set on evil. For they said to me, 'Make us gods that shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'"
- Matthew 25:14-30 Parable of the talents. The servant with the one talent casts blame on his master for his laziness.
- Refer to [Chronic Complaining: Negative Attitudes Directly Affect Spiritual Growth](#)
- The priest prays during liturgy "But those things which are good and profitable do provide for us, for it is you who have given us the authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy."

+ Responding to rebuke

HG Bishop Youssef, in his [sermon](#), clearly distinguishes the two types of responses to rebuke.

- Comparing King Saul's response to Samuel's rebuke and King David's response to Nathan's rebuke. King Saul and King David both in their times broke the law and were rebuked by Samuel and Nathan the prophets respectively.
- 1 Samuel 15:20-21 "But I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me, and brought back Agag king of the Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took off the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal." Saul was arrogant and insecure. He justified his disobedience. He did not take ownership of his behavior. So Samuel the prophet tells King Saul: "I will not return with you, for you have



rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

- On the other hand, king David, who committed adultery and murder is rebuked by Nathan the prophet. 2 Samuel 12:13 “So David said to Nathan, *“I have sinned against the Lord.”* King David was humble and admitted his sin.
- [The Sins of Men and the Sins of Women in the Eyes of a Just and Merciful God: David and Bathsheba—An Unusual Model of Repentance and Restoration](#)
- Blame shifting is often rooted in pride and ego. A lack of acceptance of blame, responsibility or accountability.
- In contrast, “You, O my Master have turned for me the punishment into salvation” St. Gregory Liturgy

+ Thankful and Grateful

Discuss how blaming and complaining are signs of unthankfulness and lack of repentance.

- Complaining is a sign of un-thankfulness and lack of repentance.
- Philippians 4:6 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, which thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”
- “Behold another consolation, a medicine which heals grief, and distress, and all that is painful. And what is this? Prayer, thanksgiving in all things. And so He wills that our prayers should not simply be requests, but thanksgivings too for what we have.” St. John Chrysostom.
- The story of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19): Only one thankful. He came back to glorify God. How do you think Jesus felt when He saw that only one had returned? Jesus had healed them of a horrible disease, He made a way for them to return to their homes and live a normal life, and yet only one of the ten took the time to say, “thank you.” By asking where the other nine were, Jesus shows that He is shocked and disappointed by their reaction. The one that returned is a great example of living with an “attitude of gratitude.” “And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.” He was thankful because God had changed his life.
- People have a choice to make. They can complain about the situation, focus on everything they lack, feel victimized, and blame others for their hardships OR be grateful for what is going right, appreciate the good that is theirs, and look for the lessons they can learn. Blaming is easy and quick. But how does one really feel when he/she focuses on what they lack? They feel: inferior, overwhelmed, depressed, moody, victimized: life seems unfair. How would one feel when they concentrate on what's going right or what's good in their lives? They feel: satisfied, confident, happy, Positive or Easy-going, in Control. Indeed, they can think clearly and make good decisions.
- There is a power in gratitude. It changes one's perspective, their outlook, and their feelings.
- The Apostle Paul exclaims: “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 15:57).

+ Discuss practical ways I can be accountable and avoid blaming others or complaining.

- Emptying the mind of worries: “What is it then to be a fool for Christ? It is to control one's thoughts when they stray out of line. It is to make the mind empty and free...to put it in a state of readiness to assimilate Christ's teaching, swept clean for the words of God that it needs to welcome.” St. John Chrysostom
- Emptying the mind of foreign thoughts in self-reflection: “In the same way you cannot see your face in troubled water, the soul, if it is not emptied of foreign thought cannot reflect God in contemplation.” – Early Church Father
- Mary and Martha: Luke 10:40-42 Mary chose to listen to God's word but Martha was busy serving and she blamed God by saying “Lord do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus replied and said to her “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”
- Though things may be difficult, interactions may seem unfair, blame shifting is a disease that must be cured in self-reflection, thanksgiving and sitting in the presence of Christ.
- “When you sit down to eat, pray. When you eat bread, do so thanking Him for being so generous to you ...When you dress, thank Him for His kindness in providing you with clothes. When you look at the sky and the beauty of the stars, throw yourself at God's feet and adore Him who in His wisdom has arranged things in this way. Similarly, when the sun goes down and when it rises, when you are asleep or awake, give thanks to God, who created and arranged all things for your benefit, to have you know, love and praise their Creator.” – St. Basil the Great, from Homily V. In martyrdom Julittam.
- “This is the great work of man: always to take the blame for his own sins before God and to expect temptation to his last breath.” St. Anthony the Great, said to Abba Poeman

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 3: Thanksgiving



Lesson 3.5: Hope vs. Despair: A Joyful New Beginning in the Lord

Objective

To understand the significance of trusting in God and hope in Him and the outcome of despair

Application

Memorize some of God's wonderful promises that kindle joy, peace, and hope in your soul so that you can meditate on them throughout the day and whenever you feel hopeless.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 15:16](#), [Matthew 27:3](#), [Jeremiah 5:24-25](#), [Luke 15:18-19](#), [Psalm 42:5](#), [1 John 1:9](#), [Luke 15:20](#), [Isaiah 1:18](#), [2 Corinthians 7:10](#), [Micah 7:8](#), [Matthew 26:75](#), [John 21:2-3](#), [John 21:4-5](#), [John 21:6](#), [John 21:7](#), [John 21:15-17](#), [Romans 5:20](#), [1 John 1:7](#), [Lamentations 3:22-23](#), [Psalm 118:1](#), [Matthew 6:12](#)



Liturgy: [Vespers and Matins Prayers](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: [Judas vs Peter](#)



Other: [Do not Despair, Abba Give me a Word with HG Bishop Gregory](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What would be the state of the prodigal son if he never returned to his father?

Discuss how it feels for someone away from his family in a distant land, unable to feed himself, with no money, friends or anybody to care for. No future, no happy occasions to celebrate, feeling alienated, lost all self-respect.

- Luke 15:16: we see the prodigal son guided by a set off emotions, the feeling of guilt, sorrow, hopelessness and despair.
- Despair is a very harsh feeling, can be defined as "the complete loss or absence of hope".
- Despair pushed Judas to commit suicide. (Matthew 27:3), while repentant, with eyes full of tears, YET a strong faith and trust in God's love and tender mercies, saved St. Peter, who denied Jesus.
- The parable of the prodigal son resonates with our life experience; it is us who turn all good away from us when we sin. (Jeremiah 5:24-25)

+ How can we end such an awful feeling of despair in our lives?

- There is a defining moment between hope and despair, light and darkness. Let's Leave the pigs, the hunger, the loneliness, the awful smell and the desperation and head back to our loving father. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." - Luke 15:18-19
- "Cry out, O sinner, with all your might, and spare not your throat; for your Lord is merciful and loves those who repent. As soon as you return, your Father will come out to meet you and rejoice" - St. Ephraim the Syrian
- Pray and put your faith and hope in God to get you out of this harsh feeling. ([Psalm 42:5](#))
- Repent ASAP and go to your father of confession, talk with him openly about your feelings, this should relieve you from the pressure and burden (1 John 1:9). *When you have a tooth cavity, you go to the dentist ASAP to fill it, if you delay he might need to perform a root canal surgery, likewise confessing sins ASAP helps us to get the right direction from our spiritual father to heal better and faster.*

+ How is it repentance if I know I might fall again?

- Better wait till I get better? No. The Father can't wait for our return; look what he did when the son was a great way off. (Luke 15:20)
- The Father wants to celebrate our return and give us every good gift. (Luke 15:22-24)
- "Do not be ashamed to enter again into the Church. Be ashamed when you sin. Do not be ashamed when you repent. Pay attention carefully.

After the sin comes the shame; courage follows repentance. Did you pay attention to what I said? Satan upsets the order; he gives the courage to sin and the shame to repentance.” St. John Chrysostom, Homily 8, [On Repentance and Almsgiving \(Fathers of the Church Patristic Series\)](#).

- God’s will is to set us free: “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the Lord, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. - Isaiah 1:18
- The purpose of the guilt feeling is to lead us to repentance, not despair.” For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” - 2 Corinthians 7:10. " Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise" - Micah 7:8.

*Discuss the idea of guilt as a spiritual defence mechanism - to help us repent. Compare it to how our bodies throw up when we eat something bad, as a body defence mechanism to prevent the bad food from getting to our body cells and causing sickness. **Unhealthy guilt leads to despair, healthy guilt leads one to seek treatment.***

+ A joyful new beginning:

- A series of sins: Peter denied Jesus 3 times, lied about being his disciple, cursed and swore, even though Jesus warned him. (Matthew 26:34)
- Sadness, regret and bitterness sure to follow sin: (Matthew 26:75)
- Losing hope - going back to fishing: (John 21:2-3). “that night they caught nothing”.
- A joyful new day: But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, “Children, have you any food?” They answered Him, “No.” (John 21:4-5)
- God’s love and care: “And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. (John 21:6)
- Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. (John 21:7)
- Jesus restores Peter to his apostolic rank. Jesus knew that St. Peter was feeling down, and he made sure, he communicated to him, that Peter is still the same rock that he would use to build the church (John 21:15-17)

+ From here on out

- Remember that the son’s rebellion is always met with the power of a father’s relentless love and forgiveness. ([Romans 5:20](#))
- Always have Communion ([1 John 1:7](#))
- Vespers and Matins is a raising of incense ideal for offering repentance. Attend these services, offer your repentance and complete the repentance in confession. Living this in a habit preserves and expresses our hope in God’s mercy.
- The devil will do everything and anything at its capacity to get you to give up on God’s love and mercy: "Repentance is a great torment to the devil who tries to stop it" - St. John of Dalyatha - “Many years of the devil’s hard work is lost in one moment of repentance” - Saint John of Dalyatha
- When you get any thought of despair or hopelessness, remember and recite ([Lamentations 3:22-23](#))
- Peter was discouraged after he denied knowing Jesus, but in Jesus’ eyes, he was never disqualified from doing God’s work.
- Always offer thanksgiving to God for his everlasting love and mercy and that he is always giving us second chances ([Psalm 118:1](#))
- God’s forgiveness is a gift; accept it and offer it to others (forgive them) when they trespass against you (Matthew 6:12)
- “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” - St. Augustine of Hippo, “Confessions”



Building Block 4: Church History

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 4.1: The Christian Creed / Apologetic Exposition and Historical Factors

Building Block 4:
Church History



Objective

To understand the historical background of the creed and what this creed means to us, the Orthodox Christians.

Application

Since the Creed summarizes our faith; Let's recite it every day this week and make sure we understand the meaning of every sentence; if any of us is unclear about any of the sentences or their meaning, we can discuss it in class next week.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Mark 1:1](#), [1 John 4:15](#), [Acts 13:33](#), [Hebrews 5:5](#), [John 1:14](#), [John 3:18](#), [Isaiah 44:6](#), [Isaiah 45:5](#), [Genesis 1:1](#), [John 1:1-3](#), [Acts 14:15](#), [Luke 2:11](#), [John 20:28](#), [John 3:16](#), [John 20:28](#), [Luke 1:35](#), [Luke 1:27](#), [Luke 23:23-25](#), [John 19:20](#), [Acts 4:10](#), [1 Corinthians 15:3](#), [1 Corinthians 15:4](#), [1 Peter 3:18](#), [Luke 23:43](#), [1 Corinthians 15:4](#), [Matthew 28:1](#), [Matthew 5:10](#), [Mark 16:19](#), [Luke 24:51](#), [Acts 1:11](#), [Mark 16:19](#), [Hebrews 1:3](#), [2 Timothy 4:1](#), [John 5:22](#), [John 15:26](#), [John 16:7-8](#), [John 13-14](#), [Acts 13:2](#), [Luke 7:48](#), [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#), [John 6:39](#), [John 10:28](#), [John 17:2-3](#), [Genesis 1:26-28](#)



Liturgy: [The Creed](#)



Patristics: [St. Clement of Alexandria A.D. 153-193-217. The Instructor. Book I Chapter I. The Office of the Instructor Chapter II.—Our Instructor's Treatment of Our Sins, Discourse Against the Arians](#)



Story: [St. Dioscorus](#)



Other: [The Nicene Creed](#), [The Orthodox Creed](#), [The Coptic Church](#), [What do we believe?](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Have you ever played “Broken telephone”?

- It's a fun game where you start with a word, whisper it to the next player, and so on till you end up with a totally different word than the original one.
- Do you think it can be a reliable communication tool? A reliable tool would require that the outcome is EXACTLY the same as the original. To achieve accuracy, each person in the game should speak very loud and clear when communicating the word to the next, making sure they could grasp the word VERBATIM before the next takes it to the next and so on.
- Our church fathers made sure we get the EXACT teachings of Jesus from one generation to the next till it reaches our hands. “The Church, though dispersed through our the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: (She believes) in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His (future) manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father “to gather all things in one,” - Irenaeus
- Throughout the generations, some people from within the church came up with ideas that don't match EXACTLY the church teachings (these are called heretical or schismatic groups). The church was very sensitive to this issue, and through ecumenical councils, could keep her unity



and settle the orthodox faith.

+ What does “ECUMENICAL COUNCILS” mean?

- Ecumenical councils are church councils that gather worldwide church leaders in one place to debate church matters.
- The Coptic Orthodox Church recognizes three of them, namely the councils of Nicaea (325 AD), Constantinople (381 AD) and Ephesus (431 AD). It participated in a fourth one, Chalcedon (451 AD) but does not recognize it, and it continues to deal with its effects through contemporary inter-church dialogues in gentleness and love, working toward the Christian Unity.
- An Ecumenical Synod is convened primarily to deal with false teachings and refute them by proclaiming the faith handed down to us by the Apostles and the church Fathers.

+ “of one essence with the Father” Where did you hear this sentence? And what does it mean?

Consider using this intro to open a discussion about the Orthodox creed and how it summarizes our Orthodox faith.

- The great heresies in early church history prompted the writing of the Creed. The Creed was developed in three stages.
- The “Nicene Creed” is the one formulated by St. Athanasius (the 20th Pope of Alexandria and the Hero of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea) in the 4th century (324 A.D.). He is one of the most prominent figures in the preservation of the Apostolic faith and known as the Pillar of the Faith
- This Council of 318 Bishops approved this Creed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to refute the false teaching of Arius and his followers, who denied the divinity of Christ. *“For God is one and only and first. But this is not said to the denial of the Son; perish the thought. For he is in that One and First and Only, as being of that One and Only and First the only Word and Wisdom and Radiance. And he too is the First, as the fullness of the godhead of the First and Only, being whole and full God.”* - Discourse Against the Arians 3.23
- The main concern of the council was to defend the true divinity of the Son against Arius. The creed asserts this by professing the “Lord Jesus Christ” to be the “Son of God,” “begotten of the Father,” “only-begotten.” These are biblical assertions (Mark 1:1 and I John 4:15 call Jesus the Son of God; Acts 13:33 and Heb. 5:5 speak of him as begotten of the Father; John 1:14 and 3:18 both use the Greek word monogenous, which means “only-begotten”).
- It’s like light. How can you separate light from light? You can’t. (This was a traditional example in early Christian writings, usually concerning the ray of the sun and the sun itself.) Neither can the Father and the Son be separated.
- This Creed was completed in the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) convened by 150 Bishops against Macedonius’ heresy against the divinity of the Holy Spirit. *“O mystic marvel! The universal Father is one, and one the universal Word; and the Holy Spirit is one and the same everywhere, . . .”* - Clement of Alexandria
- The Council confirmed that the Holy Spirit is not a creature, but is rather the Life-Creating Lord, Who proceeds from the Father, and is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son.
- The third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus (431 A.D.), convened by 200 Bishops against Nestor’s heresy, added the introduction to the Creed.
- An Ecumenical Council was a gathering of many of the bishops, from as many different places as possible, to discuss and resolve some of the most pressing theological issues of the time.
- The Nicene Creed was originally written in Greek.
- The creed is repeated as an expression of our faith daily in our private prayers, the Divine Liturgy, Baptisms and in different church services.
- It is a clear statement of what had been believed from the Apostolic times, and it still represents the basis of Orthodox teaching today.
- We believe that God has shown himself to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We find this idea that God is a plurality, and not just one divine person eternally alone, in the Bible itself. The account of the creation of man in the book of Genesis says: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” - Genesis 1:26-28
- The Coptic Orthodox Church worships the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Oneness of Nature. We believe in One God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three equal Co-Essential and Co-Indwelling Hypostasis (Persons).
- “Now, O you, my children, our Instructor is like His Father God, whose son He is, sinless, blameless, and with a soul devoid of passion; God in the form of man, stainless, the minister of His Father’s will, the Word who is God, who is in the Father, who is at the Father’s right hand, and with the form of God is God. He is to us a spotless image; to Him we are to try with all our might to assimilate our souls.” - Clement of Alexandria



+ Does the Creed perfectly match the Holy Bible?

This can be turned into a game, consider splitting the class into two or more teams and having them compete against each other to pick a bible verse that corresponds to each of the Creed's sentences, the team who gets the answer right first gets a point, the winning team is the one who gets the most points:

- We believe in God the Father Creator of all things, (Isaiah 44:6; 45:5; Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3; Acts 14:15)
- We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God, (Luke 2:11; John 20:28; John 3:16; John 20:28)
- His incarnation, (Luke 1:35; Luke 1:27)
- His suffering and crucifixion, (Luke 23:23-25; John 19:20; Acts 4:10)
- His death, (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Corinthians 15:4; 1 Peter 3:18; Luke 23:43)
- His resurrection, (1 Corinthians 15:4, Matthew 28:1, 5-10)
- His ascension into the heavens, (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51, Acts 1:11), and is seated at the right hand of the Father, (Mark 16:19; Hebrews 1:3)
- He is coming again to judge the living and the dead, (2 Timothy 4:1; John 5:22).
- We believe in the Holy Spirit, (John 15:26; 16:7-8, 13-14; Acts 13:2), The forgiveness of sins, (Luke 7:48)
- The resurrection of the dead, (1 Thessalonians 4:16; John 6:39), and the life of the age to come, (John 10:28; 17:2-3)
- As a matter of fact, the Creed encapsulates the entire good news of the gospel into a short and rich summary. It describes the triune God, and goes on to express our future hope, and the purpose of living the Christian life.

+ St. Dioscorus' life as an example of those who defended their faith

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 4:
Church History



Lesson 4.2: God the Logos by Athanasius of Alexandria: 1st Ecumenical Council

Objective

To understand the significance of the Council of Nicea

Application

St. Athanasius was one of the greatest champions of the Coptic Church. He is known for firmly standing for the faith in a time when the Arian heresy threatened to forever impact the church. Learn one thing from him and apply this week?

References and Resources



Scripture: [Hebrews 13:9](#); [Galatians 1:6-8](#); [2 Timothy 4:3-4](#); [1 John 2:22-23](#)



Liturgy: [The Prayer of Reconciliation](#), [The Creed](#)



Patristics: [St. Gregory the Theologian](#), [St. Gregory of Nyssa Against Eunomius Hom. II](#), [St. Basil the Great](#),



Story: [The Heresy of Judaizers \(Acts 15\)](#); [Prosperity Gospel Heresy](#), [\(1 Corinthians 4:8-13\)](#)



Theology Academy:

- ▶ Was Jesus fully God? - 4th Century (Church History)
- ▶ What happened after the Council of Nicea? - 4th Cen...



Other: [God the Logos by St. Athanasius](#), [St Athanasius of Alexandria](#), [Servant Prep: Ecumenical councils On the Incarnation](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + What was St. Athanasius' role in the 1st Ecumenical Council?
 - The first Ecumenical Council was held in Nicea, Asia Minor in 325. Under Emperor Constantine the Great. 318 Bishops were present.
 - This ecumenical council was the first effort to attain consensus in the church through an assembly representing Christianity
 - At the first Ecumenical Council St. Athanasius was a deacon and personal secretary to Pope Alexandros.
 - Pope Alexandros took St. Athanasius to the Council in Nicea to defend the faith against the Arian heresy.
 - He was a fearless defender of faith and Orthodoxy; spent sixteen of his forty-five years as Bishop of Alexandria in exile; one of the most profound theologians; Father of the Church.
 - "Even on the cross He did not hide Himself from sight; rather, He made all creation witness to the presence of its Maker." St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation.
 - [Ecumenical Councils](#), Review the link to understand how St. Athanasius at the age of 25 years old was able to defend the faith.
- + What was the Arian heresy?
 - This Ecumenical Council mainly battled a heresy called Arianism.
 - Arius' false teaching was that Christ was "similar" in essence with the Father. St. Athanasius said "One essence with the Father."
 - St. Athanasius provided biblical evidence.
 - Provide the example of the Judaizers (Acts 15), Galatians 1:6-8
 - St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote "When God revealed himself, he united himself with our mortal nature in order to deify humanity through this



close relation with deity. Since this is so, through his flesh, constituted by bread and wine, he implants himself in all believers.”

+ What was the outcome of the 1st Ecumenical Council?

- Its main accomplishments were settlement of the Christology issue of the divine nature of God the Son and his relationship to God the Father and the construction of the first part of the Nicene Creed.
- The council wrote the Creed to say that Christ was the Son of God and at the same time God Himself.
- The Creed is the guiding principle of all Christians.
- The words of the Creed are carefully thought out and worded by great Christian minds of that time. It is preserved throughout the centuries.
- St. Athanasius was the lead in writing the words of the Creed along with 318 church fathers.

+ What is the Coptic Church Role?

- The Creed is prayed at every hour of the Agpyea and liturgical prayers.
- St. Basil the Great wrote “Keep striving until the fire of heresy is put out, before it consumes the Church.”

+ What kind of life did St. Athanasius lead?

- Read Bashans 7 “The Departure of St. Athanasius the Apostolic the 20th. Pope of Alexandria”
- St. Athanasius the Great wrote on the Incarnation “Even on the Cross He did not hide Himself from sight; rather, He made all creation witness to the presence of its Maker.”
- In his book, (On the Incarnation of the Word) he explained the biblical doctrine of the deity of the Son.
- “When I praise Athanasius, virtue itself is my theme: for I name every virtue as often as I mention him who was possessed of all virtues. He was the true pillar of the Church. His life and conduct were the rule of bishops, and his doctrine the rule of the Orthodox faith” - St. Gregory the Theologian.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 4.3: The Person of the Holy Spirit & Heresies

Building Block 4:
Church History



Objective

To understand the significance of the 2nd ecumenical Council; the Council of Constantinople

Application

Always keep a humble heart so you can repent quickly; a proud heart can lead to heresy. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. - 2 Thessalonians 2: 15

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Thessalonians 2: 15](#), [1 John 5:7](#)



Liturgy: [Commemoration of the Saints](#)



Patristics: Irenaeus. Against Heresies Book I Chapter X
Clement of Alexandria The Instructor. Book I Chapter VI. Basil the great "[On the Holy Spirit](#)"; [Origen](#)



Story: Mormonism - Latter-day Saints as non Trinitarian



Theology Academy:

[Was the Holy Spirit fully God? - 4th Century \(Church H...](#)



Other: [Servant Prep, A Brief History of the Christian Church, Ecumenical Councils, Ecumenical Councils - Orthodox Christians; Mormonism 101](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Historical Introduction.

- When the chair of Alexandria became vacant at the death of Abba Petros II, Timotheos, another disciple of Athanasius and an illustrious priest and teacher was elected to fill it. For his various faithful services he was consecrated the twenty-second successor of St. Mark the Apostle. At that time another heresy was being proclaimed by Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, who had announced his denial of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The bishops of the Orthodox faith, who considered themselves trustees of the apostolic legacy, exchanged views on the subject, and came to the conclusion that another ecumenical council was imperative.
- In May 381 A.D. a second Ecumenical Council was summoned by the emperor Theodosius I (378-395) to meet in Constantinople (Constantinople was the capital city of the Roman/Byzantine Empire - Modern day Istanbul in Turkey) in the church of Hagia Irene to define the nature of the Holy Spirit.
- The emperor recognized Christianity as the official religion of his empire a year before the council.
- One hundred and fifty bishops responded to his invitation, and their meeting together constituted the second Ecumenical Council. Emperor Theodosius attended the inaugural session and gave an address in which he welcomed the members and expressed his joy at their assembly.

+ What was the heresy of Macedonius?

- Macedonius claimed that the Holy Spirit is not the eternal Spirit of God but a created one. Macedonius began to employ the word "homoousios" "of similar essence" (in contrast to the Orthodox teaching of "homoiousios", "of the same essence") regarding the essence of the Son and that of the Father.
- This formula still presented a danger because Macedonius presented himself as a struggler against the Arians, who used the term "like the Father." Besides this, the Macedonians, being semi-Arians, depending on conditions and advantages of the moment, sometimes inclined towards Orthodoxy, sometimes towards Arianism. They blasphemed the Holy Spirit by suggesting that He was not "of the same essence" with the Father and the Son.



- This is totally against the bible and the fathers teachings :
“For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” - I John 5:7
“O mystic marvel! The universal Father is one, and one the universal Word; and the Holy Spirit is one and the same everywhere, . . .” - Clement of Alexandria
- Abba Timotheos asked Macedonius to REPENT and return the faith handed down to the church by the Apostles and the Holy Fathers., but Macedonius refused. Unfortunately the hidden source of heresy is always the pride of the human mind, which does not want to submit to the teaching of the Church, but places one’s own mind, one’s own understanding, above that of the Church. Repentance is the act of correcting direction and it requires humility. “When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom.” - Proverbs 11:2
- The Church Father who led the battle against this heresy was Saint Basil the Great (c. 330–379). In his work called “On the Holy Spirit”, he refuted Macedonianism by pointing out from the Holy Scriptures and the sacramental life of the Church all the things that the Holy Spirit does as the “the Spirit of God” and “the Spirit of Christ.”

+ Council outcome:

- The council of Constantinople discussed a number of matters of interest to all churches, top priority being given to the examination of the Macedonian heresy. After a thorough consideration the Holy Fathers rejected the false teaching of Macedonius, and unanimously affirmed the Apostolic teaching that the Holy Spirit is not a creature, but is rather the Life-Creating Lord, Who proceeds from the Father, and is worshiped and glorified with the Father and the Son. In order to combat other heresies, of the Eunomians, Arians and Semi-Arians, the Fathers reaffirmed the Nicene Symbol of Faith, the council expanded the Nicene Creed by adding to it the clause (its eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth sections) concerning the Holy Spirit, and thus putting it in the form still upheld to the present day by all Orthodox Churches. “Yes, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-Giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.” - Orthodox Creed
- In the Commemoration of the Saints of all liturgies, we remember those Bishops who gathered to discuss this heresy.
- The Second Ecumenical Council also established the norms for ecclesiastical courts (Canon VI), and it decided to receive those repentant heretics who were properly baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity through Chrismation, but those baptized with a single immersion were to be received as pagans. “From all which we learn that the person of the Holy Spirit was of such authority and dignity, that saving baptism was not complete except by the authority of the most excellent Trinity of them all, i.e., by the naming of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and by joining to the unbegotten God the Father, and to His only-begotten Son, the name also of the Holy Spirit.” - Origen

+ Modern day Heresies:

- The danger of heretical teachings lies in the fact that the error is so cleverly veiled, argued, and mixed with true words that the inexperienced person will find it difficult to determine what is right and what is wrong.
- The Mormons and their belief as an example of those who do not believe in the Trinity and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 4.4: Apostolic Era: Disciples of Christ and the Early Church Fathers

Building Block 4:
Church History



Objective

To understand and learn more about the apostles, their efforts in spreading the gospel, and their writings.

Application

The Apostles went through many hardships to transfer the knowledge of God to us, get out of your comfort zone, find a service that you can do to help someone, given that the service is not very appealing to you or you are not 100% comfortable to do it.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 14:26](#), [Matthew 28: 19-20](#), [Acts 1:9](#), [Acts 1: 13-14](#), [Matthew 28: 19-20](#), [Acts 1:9](#), [Acts 1: 13-14](#), [Acts 2: 1-4](#), [Acts 1:8](#), [Acts 2: 41](#), [Acts 4: 18-20](#), [Psalm 19:3-4](#), [Acts 8:4](#), [Acts 20:28](#), [Titus 1:5](#), [1 Timothy 3: 1-13](#), [2 Corinthians 11:24-29](#), [2 Corinthians 11:30](#), [Romans 9:3](#)



Liturgy: [Liturgy Reading](#)



Patristics: [Tertullian](#), ([Prescription Against Heretics 21](#))



Theology Academy: [Church History](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + What does a doctor, a fisherman, a tax collector, and a teenager have in Common?
 - The four of them wrote the Gospel - inspired by the Holy Spirit. (Luke, John, Matthew and Mark)
 - "Our Lord Jesus Christ himself declared what He was, what He had been, how He was carrying out his Father's will, what obligations He demanded of men. This He did during His earthly life, either publicly to the crowds or privately to His disciples. Twelve of these He picked out to be His special companions, appointed to teach the nations." Tertullian
- + What does the word "Apostle" mean?
 - Apostle, from Greek Apostolos, meaning "person sent."
 - During Jesus' ministry, He chose 12 disciples to follow and learn from Him. He promised them to receive the Holy Spirit (the comforter) to teach them and remind them of everything He taught them. (John 14:26)
 - Our Lord prepared the 12 disciples plus another 70 prophets to teach Christianity to the whole world. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* - Matthew 28: 19-20.
 - Jesus Ascends to Heaven. (Acts 1:9)
 - The Upper Room was the first Church where the Apostles with the women and St. Mary had their prayer meetings. (Acts 1: 13-14).
 - At Pentecost, they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2: 1-4).
 - The Apostles received what Jesus promised them, and it is now their turn to witness to our Lord everywhere, starting from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)
 - Peter said his first sermon, and that day, about three thousand souls were added to the Church. (Acts 2: 41).
 - The Jewish religious leaders tried to stop the Apostles from preaching; however, our courageous fathers empowered by the Holy Spirit refused to obey them more than God. (Acts 4: 18-20)
- + How did the word of God reach areas outside Jerusalem?
 - King David prophesied about the church, *"There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world."* - Psalm 19:3-4

- Intensified persecution served as a catalyst to the Church's growth, as many of the believers took the word of God wherever they fled *"Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word"* - Acts 8:4. An excellent demonstration of the work of God's power in the weakness of his people. Nobody can serve God with their power and enthusiasm only; everybody needs the counsellor and the guide (Holy Spirit).
- The message travelled across the Roman empire; our apostolic fathers preached, taught, healed and demonstrated love everywhere the spirit led them. They set an excellent example for everybody, surrendering their own will to the Holy Spirit, who will sanctify one's desires and talents and bless them to serve his holy name.
- The apostles worked in teams to serve different areas of the world (these are the main areas of the ancient world served by the grace of God and the love of our fathers to their beloved saviour):
 - 1- Judea and surrounding areas: Peter, James and Matthias.
 - 2- Asia Minor and surrounding areas: John, Philip and Bartholomew.
 - 3- Iran and India: Judas, Thomas and Simon the Zealot (Kananaios).
 - 4- Various parts of Europe: Andrew, James the great (St. John's brother), Paul and Luke.
 - 5- Egypt and Ethiopia: Mark and Matthew.
- St. Paul and his companions took the Gospel on missionary trips to many countries north of the Mediterranean sea. He travelled by land and ship equal more than 13,000 airline miles.

+ How did the Church continue growing after many of the Apostles were martyred?

- Whenever the Apostles visited a country, they ordained Bishops and ministers to shepherd the believers. As St. Paul spoke to the Ephesian disciples: (Acts 20:28)
- And requested from Titus: *"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you"* Titus 1:5
- And specified particular qualifications for selecting bishops and deacons (1 Timothy 3: 1-13)
- This ordination system kept going from generation to generation till it reached us now at the Coptic church. Every bishop or priest is ordained and appointed through the power of the Holy Spirit. "Since the Lord Jesus Christ sent the apostles to preach, [our rule is] that no others ought to be received as preachers than those whom Christ appointed; for 'no one knows the Father except the Son, and him to whom the Son wishes to reveal him' [Matt. 11:27]. Nor does the Son seem to have revealed Him to any other than the apostles, whom he sent forth to preach." Tertullian.

+ Why should we be very grateful to our Apostolic fathers?

- They went through many hardships and too many obstacles: beatings, plots, riots, prison, torture and Martyrdom. Growth during such times shows that Christianity is not the work of humans but of God.
- St. Paul, as an example, went through a lot (2 Corinthians 11:24-29), but listen to his servant's attitude: *"If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity."* - 2 Corinthians 11:30
- Our fathers favoured us over themselves; they chose discomfort in their lives to give us the comfort of God's word. (Romans 9:3)
- With only a few intervals of peace, the Church was persecuted throughout the Roman Empire (who ruled the world back then) for nearly three hundred years. The faith and love expressed by the Christians were viewed as a threat to the religion and political policies of the Empire. Thousands upon thousands of Christians were martyred.
- The beginning of the fourth century marked a new stage in the development of the Church. After centuries of vicious persecution at the direction of the Roman Emperors, the Emperor of Rome became a Christian. This was Constantine the Great, who in the year 313 granted Christians freedom of worship.
- Inspired by the Holy Spirit they wrote the four Gospels, the book of Acts and the rest of the books in the New Testament are letters, or epistles. Paul wrote most of these, but also included are letters written by James, Peter, John, and Jude. The book of Revelation, written by John, concludes the collection of the New Testament.
- The Liturgy readings in THE LITURGY OF THE CATECHUMENS; are a collection of the books written by the Apostles: The Pauline Epistle, the Catholic Epistle, The Act of the Apostles, and The Gospel. The Psalms and Synaxarium are the exceptions.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 4.5: Persecution of the Church and Martyrdom

Building Block 4:
Church History



Objective

Students will learn how the church received the name “Church of the Martyrs”.
Learn about the kinds of Martyrdom.

Application

Those who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. Standing for Christ in the World is a New type of Martyrdom. The Church of Christ is always in a state of persecution throughout its history. We should remember that and be ready at any moment to witness to our faith by denying comfort, stability, and even our whole lives. We may not have to face martyrdom, but we may endure rejection, ridicule, misunderstanding, and more.

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Timothy 3:10-13](#)



Liturgy: [The commemoration of the Saints](#)



Patristics: Tertullian martyrs on a scale, 21 Martyrs of Libya, School shootings, Anba Suriel: “Christianity isn’t for weaklings.”



Story: [St. Kyriakos](#)



Theology Academy:

[Early Persecution and Martyrdom - 3rd Century \(Ch...](#)



Other: [Be the Bee ep 130 - 4 tips for Being an Orthodox](#)

[Christian in the World](#), [Church of Martyrs](#), [SSC Legacy - Grade 12](#), [St. Mark](#), [St. Mark and St. George Church from the Diocese of Australia](#), [Copts Throughout the Ages](#) [From the Diocese of Los Angeles](#), [Martyrdom](#) [Diocese of the Southern United States](#), [Church of Martyrs](#) [Diocese of the Southern United States](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ When does the Coptic Church celebrate New Year and why?

- Copts take pride in the persecution they have sustained as early as May 8, 68 A.D., when St. Mark was slain on Easter Monday after being dragged from his feet through the streets and alleys by Roman soldiers through Alexandria.
- To Show their pride, the Christians began their calendar (Nayrouz) from 284 AD, which is the year that Emperor Diocletian became emperor and began his reign of persecution against Christians.

+ Interesting facts:

- The Coptic calendar is known as the “Year of the Martyrs”.
- The Copts have been persecuted by almost every ruler of Egypt.
- Clergymen have been tortured and exiled even by their Christian brothers after the schism of Chalcedon in 451 AD.

+ 3 Centuries of Persecutions!

- For more than three centuries’ Christians were being persecuted by Romans. There were many Roman Emperors who led this tyranny, amongst them were Nero and Diocletian, and we will find out how Constantine became great.
- Nero began the first persecution for Christians where St. Peter and St. Paul got the crowns of martyrdom and apostleship. This persecution began in 64 AD and in the 10th year of his reign. Nero became a symbol of evil in his sixth year or his reign. He killed his brother “Britannicus”, his mother “Agrippina”, his wives “Octavia” and “Poppaea”, his counselor “Seneca” and many Romans leaders and

Generals. Nero, with his friends, rioted by night through the city, attacking men, assaulting women. Rome eventually declared Nero an enemy and he would be sentenced to death. Known as an outlaw and forsaken, he committed suicide in June, A.D. 68.

- Diocletian's name is associated with the last and most terrible of all the persecutions of the early Church. The reign of Diocletian (284-305) but he wasn't alone, he brought on Maximian, a bold but rude soldier, Galerius and Constantius and distributed the responsibilities. Galerius encouraged Diocletian to turn to persecution. These two rulers at a council held at Nicomedia in 302, agreed to suppress Christianity throughout the empire. The cathedral of Nicomedia was demolished, and a decree was issued "to tear down the churches to the foundations and to destroy the Sacred Scriptures by fire and commanding also that those who were in honorable stations should be degraded if they persevered in their adherence to Christianity". Three further decrees marked continuous severe persecution: the first ordering that the bishops, presbyters, and deacons should be imprisoned; the second that they should be tortured and compelled by every means to sacrifice; the third including the laity as well as the clergy. After reigning for nearly twenty-one years, he abdicated the throne and lived in seclusion until his death.
- Constantine turned the history of the world into a new course and made Christianity, which until then had suffered bloody persecution, the religion of the State. He worked hard to help women, slaves, and Christians. His mother Helena played a big role in his life. when Constantine was about to go to war against an enemy, he became ill and died shortly afterward, only after being baptized, he died in May, 337.
- The word martyr is derived from the word witness. First it was used for the apostles who witnessed the new Christian faith. Afterward, it described the confessors who suffered for their belief in our Lord Jesus Christ. Lastly, it was used for those who were killed for the sake of their faith.
- On this Tertullian has this astonishing quotes on the martyrdom of the Coptic Church: *"If the martyrs throughout the world were to be put on one side of the scale and the Coptic martyrs alone on the other side of the scale, the later would outweigh the former"* - Tertullian (220 AD)

+ Type of Martyrdoms

- There are three kinds of martyrs:
 - Those who die for the sake of faith
 - Those who die for the sake of purity
 - Those who die for the sake of dogma
- Most of the Martyrs fall into the "those who died for the sake of the faith". The Coptic church is full of stories up to this present day.
- Martyrs who died for the sake of purity preferred death then to be defiled, specifically amongst women. Many Rulers would judge these Martyrs harshly, and attempt to build fear into them. But these Pure Martyrs saw that defiling their bodies was worse than death.

+ Can you name examples of Pure Martyrs?

- St. Theodora was a seventeen-year-old virgin martyr. She was martyred with Didymus the soldier who saved her from the plot to shame her by the emperor's decree to send her to a whorehouse.
- St. Kyriakos
- St. Veronica the virgin martyr. In the year 749 the soldiers of Marwan the caliph entered a monastery for virgins close to Akhmim, a city in Egypt. They wanted to assault and rape her because she was very beautiful. But she deceived them, telling them that she had oil that would protect the body from any sword. To convince them she placed this oil on her neck and told them to test her words. One soldier took out his sword and swung at her neck and she was beheaded. This terrified the soldiers, and they left the monastery.
- There were also many martyrs who died for the preservation of the true faith, these are known as Martyrs that died for the sake of dogma. Heresies began to appear after the era of persecution during the reign of King Constantine, though this has been happening since the Apostolic era.

+ Which Martyrs died for the sake of dogma?

- St. Makarous the bishop (one of the three Macari) refused to sign the Arian decree and so was repeatedly kicked by the Arian bishop until he died.
- Riots in Alexandria were the consequence of the Chalcedon council where Pope Dioscorus was exiled, and 30 thousand martyrs were killed. They shed their blood in defense of the true Christian faith.

+ Can you name different kinds of persecutions Martyrs may have experienced?



- Paying special taxes that allowed them to practice their faith, if they were not able to pay, they either had to convert or they lost their civil rights (meaning they could be killed)
 - Restrictions on repairing churches and building new ones
 - Testifying in court
 - Public behavior
 - Inheritance
 - Public religious activities
 - Dress codes
- + Martyrs held virtues that were witnessed in their actions, not just by their words. These martyrs were the greatest examples of Christian virtues and those around them witnessed it and recorded their words and actions. In so doing, our martyrs offered the best witness to Christianity as a religion.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 4.6: Monasticism, a life of repentance

Building Block 4:
Church History



Objective

To understand the significance of the three vows of the monastic life

Application

Read the story of St. Anthony of Egypt. Learn how to recognize the devil's work and how to fight it. Set a spiritual canon for praying daily without deviation.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 19:21](#), [Matthew 19:11-12](#), [Col 3:2-3](#), [1Tim 4:16](#), [Psalm 68:1](#)



Liturgy: [The ordination of monks prayer](#)



Patristics: [St. Anthony](#), [St. Clement of Alexandria](#)



Story: [St. Anthony](#)



Theology Academy:
[The world's first monks - 4th Century \(Church History\)](#)



Other: [Legacy Curriculum Great Fast Week I](#), [Life of a monk by Fr. Lazarus Saint Antony, Coptic Monasticism](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Discuss monastic life:

- What is a monk? How does a monk live?
- Ask the students what a typical day in their lives is like – what do they do, eat, wear, type of home, etc. Now take a monk in a monastery and contrast each aspect
- Ask the Students: Would you want to be a monk (or nun)? Are you willing to give up everything for Jesus as Anthony did?
- Share: There were hundreds of monasteries and thousands of caves in the mountains of Egypt. Saint John Cassian said that the traveler from Alexandria in the North to Luxor in the South, would have, in his ears along the whole journey, the sounds of prayers and hymns of the monks scattered in the desert, from the monasteries and from the caves, from monks, hermits and anchorites. For the monks, monasticism was the life of prayer, contemplation, solitude, worship, and purity of heart. They had nothing in their minds, hearts, and feelings except God alone. They lived a calm and quiet life, abiding in the Lord, detaching themselves from everything and everyone, to be attached to Him alone.

+ Why do some choose monasticism?

- Since the early years of the Christian era, Christians have been called by Christ Himself to live in the world without being of the world (John 17:13-16).
- The ones who choose the monastic life are seeking a life of seclusion with God. They want a solitary life with continuous prayer. They sacrifice everything in their world. They leave all their possessions and family to live in poverty, chastity and obedience.
- St. Anthony of Egypt is considered the founder and father of organized Christian monasticism. He was a hermit. Despite many fights with the devil his faith was not shaken.
- Monasticism is full of struggles and confrontations with the devil. St. Anthony was always singing this psalm, *"Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let those also who hate Him flee before Him."* (Psalm 68:1)
- Tell the life story of St. Anthony, which is celebrated on Toba 22.

+ Why monasticism?

- Before Monasticism, there were excessive persecutions of Christians. But with the end of martyrdom by Roman emperors many wanted to continue to give their lives to God. Setting their minds on things above.
- Monasticism is a chance for offering themselves as a living sacrifice to God. This is a way of martyrdom without the shedding of blood.
- They disregarded their earthly and body needs. They spent their time in worship and fasting.
- *"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."* - Col 3:2-3

+ What are the 3 vows of monastic life?

- Poverty - *"If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven; and come follow Me"* (Matthew 19:21)
- Chastity - *"But he said to them, 'All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given; for there are eunuchs who were born thus...and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it'"* (Matthew 19:11-12)
- Obedience - *"Take heed to you and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you"* (1 Timothy 4:16).
- This is the covenant that a candidate for monasticism recites at the time of the consecration.
- [What is Monasticism?](#) By H.H. Pope Shenouda

+ What are the 3 types of monastic life?

- 1. Hermit - monks living alone in a secluded cave away from the world and others. They follow a special personal system of prayer and fasting. Abba Paul the wanderer and Abba Anthony are among these.
- 2. Monastic groups - founded by St. Anthony are like hermits but dispersed in caves forming a monastery without walls. The monks gather around one of the great fathers renowned for their spiritual nature.
- 3. Communal - founded by Saint Pachomius in Upper Egypt, the monks lived in a community inside the walls of the monastery, in association with each other, governed by an abbot and by rules. They observe a strict and severe order concerning the regulation of hours of wakefulness, sleep, prayers, food, and work. Each has duties and rights.
- *"Always have the fear of God before your eyes. Remember Him who gives death and lives. Hate the world and all that is in it. Hate the peace that comes from the flesh. Renounce this life, so that you may be alive to God."* St. Anthony of Egypt
- *"That many of us are called poor, this is not our disgrace, but our glory. For, as our mind is relaxed by luxury, so is it strengthened by frugality? Yet, who can be poor if he does not want-if he does not crave for-the possessions of others? Who can be poor if he is rich towards God? He, rather, is poor, who, although he has much, desires more. Wealth, when not properly governed, is a stronghold of evil. Many, because of casting their eyes upon it, will never reach the Kingdom of Heaven. For they are sick for the things of the world, and are living proudly through luxury...Love of money is found to be the stronghold of evil, which the apostle says, 'is the root of all evils.' But the best riches are the poverty of desires. And the true magnanimity is not to be proud of wealth, but to despise it."* - St. Clement of Alexandria

+ Effects of Coptic Monasticism on the World

- Coptic Monasticism is considered the most profound spiritual revival in the history of the Church
- The news of the spiritual life of the monks spread everywhere
- They were not preachers but they were living sermons, examples of the true life and the image of God on earth.
- Here is a short list of how these saints influenced the world:
- 1. Pope Athanasius was greatly responsible for the introduction of the monastic movement to Roman religious life, during his exile in Treve and his flight to Rome in 339 AD. He also wrote "The Life of Anthony", and read the world over.
- 2. The Pachomian rules were translated into Greek by Palladius, and into Latin by Saint Jerome.
- 3. The rules of Benedict of Nursia (480 - 550) were based on the Pachomian ones.
- 4. Saint John Cassian (360 -435 AD) dwelt in Egypt for seven years, and wrote his two famous books, "Institutes" and "Conferences".
- 5. Saint Jerome and Saint Rufinus visited Egypt.
- 6. Saint Hilarious of Palestine became a disciple of Saint Anthony and returned to his own land to practice asceticism.
- 7. Saint John Chrysostom stayed in one of the Pachomian monasteries for 8 years.
- 11. Orphenus came to Egypt and wrote 'The Desert Fathers'.



Building Block 5: Passions

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 5.1: Pride & Vainglory

Building Block 5:
Passions



Objective

To understand the danger of pride & vainglory and how it can affect our salvation. How to recognize it, fight it and overcome it.

Application

Think about how pride can consume a life. What are some ways a person can be humbled when faced with a situation that can lead to prideful actions?

References and Resources



Scripture: [Proverbs 11:2](#), [Daniel 4:37](#), [Luke 3:16](#), [John 3:30](#), [Matthew 15:19](#), [Philippians 2:3](#)



Liturgy: [3rd Canticle- Midnight Praises, Liturgical Responses.](#)



Patristics: [St. Pachomius on Humility](#), [Amma Theodora on Humility](#); [Desert Fathers](#), [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#)



Story: [King Nebuchadnezzar's dream \(Daniel 4\)](#), [Adam and Eve](#), [The fall of Satan](#)



Other: [Pride vs. Humility](#), [Article by HG Bishop Youssef](#), [Q&A Bishop Youssef](#), [The power of humility by HG Bishop Angaelos](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is the mother of all sins? Pride

- Can pride be considered ever a 'good thing'?

Help the students to understand the role of the subconscious in driving our actions and the need to understand why we do what we do.

- "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (Matthew 15:19)
- What is our subconscious? It is the activity of our brain which we are not aware of. It is fueled by everything we take in every single day- our surroundings, media, people, what we hear and what we see and the associations we have with them.
- Our actions are directed by our subconscious. Our actions are kind of like the actors of a play and the director behind the play is the subconscious.
- What kind of things do you think are driven by the subconscious? Pride - Lust - How we talk to people - Fear - Peace and Joy - Addictions - Jealousy and Competition - Anger and resentment.
- These things are called passions. The passions are movements of the soul that are intended for good, but in the fallen man have gone awry. For example, anger is meant to be directed towards sinfulness, yet we direct it towards people.
- All Christians must face and must overcome their passions. For every passion there is a fruit of the spirit.
- The desert fathers in particular were doctors who spent their time diagnosing, struggling with, and overcoming the passions.
- What do you think would hinder people from figuring out why they are doing what they are doing? Fear from the truth?
- If the subconscious is the director behind the actors, who is our actions; what or who is the guide to get "behind the scenes?" The word of God - The Holy Spirit - The spiritual guide
- St. Macarius said, "If you are stirred to anger when you want to reprove someone, you are gratifying your own passions. Do not lose yourself in order to save another."
- Webster's Dictionary defines pride as "Inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, rank or elevation in office, which manifests itself in lofty airs, distance, reserve, and often in contempt of others."
- Pride is self-centered

+ The fall of Pride



- *"Let not the foot of pride come against me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away."* (Psalm 36:10-12)
- Lucifer falling due to Pride (Ezekiel 28:12-19, Isaiah 14:12-15) and inciting humanity to do the same (Genesis 3:1-5)
- *"The pride of heart was enough to cast from heaven such a great and capable power. The fall of the great devil, warns us to be cautious."* - St. John Cassian
- King Nebuchadnezzar was a proud king, he was proud of his kingdom and all the glory that came with it. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a great tree that grew tall and high into the heavens. The tree was then chopped down, destroyed and all that was left was a stump. It stayed like that for 7 years. Daniel had interpreted the dream as the tree representing King Nebuchadnezzar and how great and strong he was and his kingdom. The destruction of the tree represents the destruction of King Nebuchadnezzar and he dwelt in the desert for 7 years eating grass like oxen. He prayed to God and praised him *"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down."* (Daniel 4:37)
- This is a great example of how pride can cause destruction to your life, how you can lose everything you've done. Pride doesn't have to be boastful and loud, it can affect those who are quiet and reserved.
- King Solomon discussed the outcome of pride in the book of Proverbs: *"When pride comes in, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom."* (Proverbs 11:2).
- Pride is the greatest of sins because it is the summit of self-love and is directly opposed to submission to God. I. *"From pride all perdition took its beginning."* (Tob. 4:14).

+ How can pride lead to self destruction, lose respect from people, lose friends and loved ones?

- There is a species of pride in every sin, whatever may be the individual nature of the sin itself. Pride is the most dangerous of sins, because it blinds our understanding, and unless something finally makes us realize the truth, we are liable to go on, day after day, in a spiritual self delusion, imagining our acts to be good and virtuous when certain habits actually may be vicious.
- Pride Promotes Strife: *"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously'? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.'" (James 4:1-6)*

+ Sources/Indications of Pride

Ask and discuss how social media can contribute and influence pride in yourself and lead to vanity. Vanity leads to dependency. A response or reaction is expected with every post on social media. It becomes a dependency.

- Jeremiah prayed for protection *"Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved, For you are my praise."* (Jeremiah 17:14)
- We all have gifts and talents that God has given us and we can excel in them.
- Does that mean we are proud of our talents? Yes. It is a gift from God. A person should not boast about it but use it to serve God. *"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."* (1 Peter 4:10)
- How should we behave when we get complimented on our talents, looks or actions? We always praise God. Everything is through the grace of God.
- Selfishness can lead to vanity. *"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."* (Philippians 2:3)
- *"If the poison of pride is swelling up in you, turn to the Eucharist; and that Bread, Which is your God humbling and disguising Himself, will teach you humility. If the fever of selfish greed rages in you, feed on this Bread; and you will learn generosity."* St. Cyril of Alexandria

+ How can pride and vainglory be overcome? Through humility

- Pride can lead to spiritual death. It causes distress of heart and issues between us and our neighbor and the love between us and God.
- Pride and vainglory should be fought with the grace of God, which comes through humility.
- This is what our church teaches us, especially during all of Her liturgical prayers. The response of the congregation to the priest or deacon is usually "Lord have mercy" which is a way we remind ourselves that we depend on the mercy of God and this is a way we can fight pride.
- St. John the Baptist is a great example of Humility. When he was baptizing in the Jordan river, the Bible tells us that he was preaching that



someone greater was coming after him. St. John the Baptist said *"I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose."* Luke 3:16, and *"He must increase, but I must decrease."* - John 3:30

- St. John the Baptist had followers and he could've been proud and not talked about Jesus and kept all the glory to himself. Yet he didn't and he prepared the way for Christ. Not only did he prepare the way for Christ, but he told the multitude of people that the one coming after him is greater than him. He shifted all the pride and glory he could've taken and humbled himself. *"He must increase, but I must decrease."* John 3:30
- Liturgy Connection: 3rd Canticle- Midnight Praises
- St. Pachomius, the noted founder of coenobitic monasticism, said, "Be humble so that God guards and strengthens you, because God looks to the humble. Be humble so that God fills you with wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, because it is written that He guides the humble and teaches His ways to the meek."
- St. Theodora who was one of the holy Mothers of the Desert also taught that humility is the only way we can receive salvation from the Lord. She used to say "neither asceticism nor hardship, nor any kind of toil, saves, except for genuine humility."
- Prayer and repentance are key to becoming humble and attaining humility. Thanking God for what you have and what you've been given (material and immaterial) is how we should be praying. This will help us humble ourselves and protect us from pride and vainglory. By having a humble attitude we will learn to depend on God.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 5.2: Anger & Wrath

Building Block 5:
Passions



Objective

To understand the danger of anger & wrath and how it can affect our salvation. How to recognize it, fight it and overcome it.

Application

Challenge them to have self control and contain their wrath and anger when faced with situations that provoke wrath and anger. (Ex. if someone offends them) Discuss how prayer, repentance and meditation can help resolve our anger and calm us down. The Holy Spirit can help us be slow to act, humble, patient and have love towards each other. Challenge the students this week to be slow to act when angry. To think about the situation and ask for God's help to remove and resolve the feeling of anger and wrath from within them. Take a step back and be slow to act.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Ephesians 4:26](#), [Psalm 37:8](#), [Genesis 4:1-8](#), [James 1:19-20](#)



Liturgy: [Greet one another](#)



Patristics: [St John Chrysostom on Anger](#), [St. Basil on Using Anger](#); [Anger is a spiritual warfare](#), [St. John Cassian](#)



Story: [When Christ was angry when the temple was turned into a marketplace. \(Matthew 21:12-13\)](#)



Other: [Anger Conquered with Righteousness](#), [Suspects Article](#), [Problem of Anger](#), [Article by HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

Consider this activity before teaching the lesson: Think about anger as an emotion and try to bring to mind one incident in the last two weeks that has made you really angry. It could be something in your personal life or something in the news. Share this with a partner and answer the following questions: What made you angry? How did you feel? How did you deal with your anger? After giving each pair time to discuss, you may ask for a volunteer to share with the group.

+ Define and Recognize

- Webster's dictionary defines wrath as "Strong vengeful anger or indignation."
- Distinguish holy anger and sinful anger.
- Purpose of Anger in humanity before the fall: "The soul's faculty of temper is useful to us in many of the acts of virtue. It can be an ally to reason against sin. For the temper is a sinew of the soul, producing in it for the accomplishment of good actions. If your temper is not roused against the evil one, you will not be able to hate him as much as he deserves. For this above all temper is useful as the cooperation of the faculty of temper with the prudent part of the soul is most excellent and appropriate." - St. Basil the Great
- The concept of Anger changed in humanity after the fall where it is no longer against sin and fighting for virtue but against our fellow man.
- Satan uses this passion to extinguish our communion with God and to create strife with our brothers.
- Story of Cain and Abel- Genesis 4:1-8

+ Why are anger and wrath dangerous? Give examples

- Wrath can harbor inside of you and lead you to destruction and consume your thoughts and actions.
- Anger can consume our thoughts and feelings which leads us away from salvation and God. It can lead to more dangerous actions like murder.
- Anger is tied in with Pride. When we have self pride, anything offensive to us can lead us to deep anger and hatred towards that person. It leads us to losing control and deepening our anger.
- Pleasure or Desire: Anger ensues often when something we have not wanted has happened
- Anger ruins our prayer
- Uncontrolled passion of anger should be seen as spiritual warfare. There was a monk once who was in prayer. By him were some pots with water in them. Satan trying to destroy his prayer tipped over one of the pots. The monk corrected the pot and continued his prayer. Satan again tipped the pot. The monk again corrected it. Satan continued to do the same. Eventually the monk lost his temper, picked up the pot and smashed it against the wall. Then when he returned to prayer he realized his loss of peace due to his temper was actually a temptation from Satan.
- Oftentimes anger causes us to lose perspective and act irrationally. St. John Chrysostom said "If it were possible for the angry man to see himself



at the time of his anger, he would not need any other admonition, for there is nothing less pleasing than an angry countenance"

- When we feel anger, we should ask whether this anger is due to our pride or if it is anger towards sin.
- Being angry at something or someone isn't bad, it's when you harbor that anger and it leads you to cause pain on yourself or others is what is bad. "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret-it only causes harm." Psalm 37:8
- Anger is God-given and is meant to be there to steer us away from evil and unrighteousness. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can take a stance against evil and sin.

+ Is God wrathful?

- God's wrath is not like our wrath or anger. It is provoked by evil and evil doings by humankind. It is the response of His love for us that provokes His wrath and anger.
- God is also slow to anger and wrath. He gives us many chances to change, repent and come back to Him. (Ex. Noah's Ark, The people during Noah's time had so much evil in their hearts. God had given them time and time to repent and come back to Him but there was so much evil in their hearts, that He could no longer let them live. God wants us to come back to paradise and have eternal salvation and He set His wrath on the people because if He didn't, we wouldn't be able to have salvation.)
- We see in the New Testament that Jesus was angry when the temple was made into a marketplace and place for gambling. Jesus' anger was towards the sin. Read together the verses from Matthew 21:12-13.

+ How to deal with anger?

- Understanding we are angry is the first step
- Knowing real root cause of anger/bitterness (whether or not your anger is justified)
- Anger can be fought against through prayer, humility, and realization of the real source of anger.
- Desert fathers say the first step to controlling anger is to (1) control words of anger, (2) then thoughts of anger, (3) then anger in the heart.
- *"So, Then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."* James 1:19-20
- "No matter what provokes it, anger blinds the soul's eyes, preventing it from seeing the Sun of Righteousness." St. John Cassian

+ Based on the examples and discussion, when is anger acceptable?

- When ones salvation is at risk, such as being pushed to go against the faith.
- Do not be silent when the church is mocked.
- St. Basil teaches: "Anger is the sinew of the soul when it is allied with the reason against sin Unless your anger has been aroused against the Evil One, It is impossible for you to hate him as fiercely as he deserves. For our hatred of sin should be as intense as our love for virtue. Anger is very helpful in bringing this about so long as it closely follows the guidance of the reason, being quiet, docile, and readily obedient to the call of reason Such, then, is the advantage of anger if one knows how to control it" (St. Basil the Great, Homily 10).
- "For whenever, once reason has been pushed aside, the anger takes control of the soul for itself, it makes the human being entirely like a wild beast; it does not allow him to be a human being since he no longer has the help of reason." - St. Basil the Great
- Liturgy Connection: After the prayer of the reconciliation, the deacon calls us to, "Greet one another with the holy kiss." in order for us to receive communion.

+ Brainstorm what things make us most angry. How can we negate the negative effects of this anger?

- Parents, siblings, friends
- When unexpected things happen
- Anger is a temptation by the devil to make us fall in sin. When we pray the Lord's prayer we say "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."
- Starting the day and ending it with prayer provides spiritual and physical strength.
- In the thanksgiving prayer, we ask God "to guard us in all peace this holy day and all the days of our life... grant us to complete this holy day and all the days of our life in all peace with your fear."
- We pray for every event, good or challenging, "We thank You for everything, concerning everything, and in everything."
- Before reacting, stop, take a moment to analyze the situation, think of the words before speaking them. What will happen if we walk away and don't react?
- Ask God for patience.



Theme: Repentance

Lesson 5.3: Lust

Building Block 5:
Passions



Objective

To understand the danger of lust and how it can affect our salvation. How to recognize it, fight it and overcome it.

Application

The next time you encounter a lustful image, comment, video, person or situation, just look away and turn it into a chance for prayer. Ask yourself, if you participate in a lustful situation whether by action or sight, is it something that you would be proud of and want to share? What can help you fight lustful urges? (Ex. Prayer, Meditation, Self Control)

Prayer and repentance are key to successfully attaining the virtue of purity, a pure heart and pure life. Seek council from your spiritual guide on how you can take steps to combat lust and strive to live a life of purity.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Judges 16](#), [1 John 2:16](#), [Exodus 20:17](#), [Ephesians 5:3,4](#), [Ephesians 5:11](#), [Proverbs 28:13](#), [1 Peter 5: 8-11](#), [Luke 15: 7,10](#), [Proverbs 7:26](#), [1 Thessalonians 4:3-5](#), [2 Timothy 2:22](#), [Revelation 22:15](#), [Matthew 5:27-28](#)



Liturgy: [Response after the Catholic Epistle](#)



Patristics: [Abba Dorotheos of Gaza on Laying Bare our Secret Thoughts](#), [St. Macarius of Egypt](#), [St. Mark the Ascetic](#)



Story: [Samson & Delilah](#), [David & Bathsheba](#)



Other: [Life of Purity by HG Bishop Youssef](#); [Fr. Anthony Mourad](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

Consider asking them: how do you know if you are lusting? Give them a chance to answer.

A great test of whether it is lust is to ask this question: Am I looking at the picture or this person as a child of God? Would the thoughts I'm having honor them as a person God loves?

+ What is lust?

- Webster's Dictionary defines lust as "Longing desire; eagerness to possess or enjoy; as the lust of gain."
- The Bible says a lot about lust! Proverbs is full of helpful hints & tips and is a must read for every young Christian! Other passages to read are Matthew 5:27-30, Romans 1:18-32
- Lust is self-centered.
- "What held me captive and tortured me was the habit of satisfying with vehement intensity an insatiable sexual desire." - St. Augustine

+ Various forms of lust? Visually, action, feeling

- Matthew 5:28: Jesus came to affirm that sin includes the actions done in the mind and heart, not just the visible actions.
- When lust lingers in us, all the senses of our human body become deviated. An example of that is the sense of sight. In fact, our eyes can be very implicated in the sin of lust. Instead of using our eyes to see the beauty and image of God, in another person, we rather use them to take in violence against ourselves. It makes us realize why Christ in the gospel of St. Matthew makes the bold declaration that whoever looks at a woman with lust in his heart has committed adultery. St. John Chrysostom explains why Jesus said that: "“What then, one may say, if I should look [at a woman], and desire her indeed, but do no evil? Even so you are set among the adulterers! For the Lawgiver has pronounced it, and you must not ask any more questions. For by looking once, twice, or three times, you will perhaps have power to refrain [yourself]; but if you are continually doing this, and kindling the furnace, you will assuredly be taken; for your station is not beyond that nature which is common to men. As we then, if we see a child holding a knife, though we do not see him hurt, [discipline] him, and forbid his ever holding it; so God likewise takes away the unchaste look even before the act, lest at any time you should fall in act also. For he who has once kindled the flame, even when the woman whom he has beheld is absent, is forming by himself continually images of shameful things, and from them often goes on even to the deed. For this cause Christ takes away even that embrace which is in the heart only.” (St John Chrysostom -

Homilies on Matthew – Homily 17 – 2.). He explains that the eyes are like a window that lets in sin/lust. The image the eyes let in can make a person live in a morbid state where things may become phantasmal.

+ How does lust present itself in the world? (Ex. sexually, social media, porn, commercials, music)

- *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”* (1 John 2:15-17)
- In the Bible to be worldly or to express worldliness is a negative or bad thing.
- Living for this world is being led by the flesh or sowing to the flesh as Paul talks about in Romans eight and in Galatians five and six (Rom.8:5-13, Gal.5:15-21, 6:7-8)

+ How does lust affect our lives?

Touch on how lust can lead to a life of destruction and how it can consume your thoughts and feelings.

- The flesh opposes the things of the Spirit and St. James uses three words that depict a fight, “Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?” (James 4:1)
- The 10th commandment says “You shall not covet thy neighbor’s wife.” (Exodus 20:17)
- The lust of the eye is just as much a sin as the lust of the flesh and the action of lust. Looking at something lustful is just as much a sin. As St. John says: “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world.” 1 John 2:16
- The lust that is found in the world pulls us away and distracts us from God and our goal which is to obtain salvation in Heaven.
- God desires for there to not even be a hint of lust or impurity in our lives (Ephesians 5:3,4), so how can we control our natural desires when we see lustful images, hear lustful words, etc?

+ Is lust found in the Bible?

Touch on the story of Samson & Delilah and king David, Bathsheba, and Uriah

- Samson was strong but easily distracted by lust. He was in a place called Sorek where he loved a woman named Delilah. Delilah was approached by the Philistines and was told to entice Samson and find out the secret to his strength. Because Samson was distracted by Delilah and the lust of that relationship, he gave up his secret to his strength which led to his imprisonment. His lustful desires distracted him from God.
- The story of king David, Bathsheba, and Uriah is documented in 2 Samuel 11. Rather than going out and fighting the Ammonites alongside his men, David stays back in Jerusalem. We aren’t told why he stays, but we do see that David’s self-isolation and refusal to battle opens the door to lust. One night, he gets up from his bed, walks around on his rooftop, and sees a woman, Bathsheba, bathing. David doesn’t avert his eyes. He doesn’t return to bed alone. He sends for Bathsheba and sleeps with her. Here, we see king David give lust a victory. He was out alone on the palace roof at night. Why would he choose to go there of all places?
- So many times, lust is situational and depends on the environments and situations we place ourselves in. This story compels us to reflect and consider the question, “How are we pursuing lust and putting ourselves into dangerous situations?”

+ How is lust and physical intimacy in a marriage different? The following are some steps to fight against lust and work towards purity:

- 1. Bring our sins to the light by confessing to a Priest and receive guidance.
 - *“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”* (Ephesians 5:11)
 - *“He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”* (Proverbs 28:13)
 - Abba Dorotheos of Gaza teaches that the desert fathers maintained this same mentality. “If a man would safeguard his soul, he will do so by laying bare all his secret thoughts and hearing from an experienced director.”
- 2. Work smarter, not harder
 - Run: *“Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”* (2 Timothy 2:22)
 - *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”* (1 Peter 5: 8-11)



- Prevent exposure to things that may cause you to lust such as social media.
- Realize that God's grace is the only thing that will allow us to defeat lust, but we must be zealous and actively be taking steps to prevent us from falling into sin.
- That is why the Church teaches us to pray for purity through God's grace during all Her services. (Litany for mercy, Prayer of Reconciliation, absolution etc.)
- We should be taking active steps to be filled with Christ so that lust has no place in our hearts. This can be done by filling our time with spiritual activities, placing icons in our room, changing our phone wallpaper to something edifying etc.
- We pray in response after the Catholic Epistle "By Thy pleasure, O God, fill our hearts with Thy peace; purify us from all lust, all deceit, all hypocrisy, all evil and from all remembrance of evil entailing death." - The Priest says this before the Greeting of the Holy kiss; "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For the world passes away and the lust thereof. But, he that does the will of God abides forever, Amen."
- Fast: indulgence in food is directly connected with indulgence in lust. Thus, by regularly fasting from food for a certain period of time, we do battle against the sin of lust. If you practice asceticism and self-denial with your stomach, that will make it easier to practice asceticism with the other parts of your body.
- 3. Learn from the lives of the saints
 - Read the lives of the saints who struggled with lust such as St. Mary of Egypt or St. Moses the Strong and develop a relationship with them.
 - See how they fought against temptation and ask for their prayers to help you in your struggle.
- 4. Persevere
 - St. Macarius of Egypt said, "God awaits with great patience the repentance of every sinner, and He celebrates the return of the sinner with celestial rejoicing; as he Himself says, *"There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents"* (Luke 15: 7,10)"
 - Never give up and realize that you are doing something honorable by fighting against lust.
 - St. Mark the Ascetic said, "Living a chaste Christian life is sometimes more difficult than suffering a martyr's death."

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 5.4: Sloth

Building Block 5:
Passions



Objective

To understand the danger of Sloth and how it can affect our salvation. How to recognize it, fight it and overcome it.

Application

It is common to leave prayer to the last minute of the day when laziness takes over. Try to not leave prayer to the last thing in your day, pray when you come home from school. Try to find a task whether it be spiritual, physical or school related and make it a priority. Finish your tasks earlier and don't leave it to the last minute. Find someone (a family member, friend, father of confession, etc) to hold you accountable with your tasks. After a while, it will become a habit and easy for you to just do the task at hand. Do not make excuses, we have time!

References and Resources



Scripture: [Song of Solomon 2:15](#), [2 Samuel II:1-5](#), [Genesis 2:15](#), [Proverbs 26:16](#), [Proverbs 22:13](#), [Proverbs 13:4](#), [Proverbs 6:9](#), [Proverbs 10:4](#), [Proverbs 10:26](#), [Proverbs 19:15](#), [Proverbs 6:6](#), [Hebrews 6:12](#), [Luke 21:36](#), [Revelation 3:7-13](#)



Liturgy: [Gregorian Anaphora](#)



Patristics: [St. Augustine](#),



Story: [Learning from ants](#)



Other: [Characteristics of a Lazy Person, Laziness a spiritual pitfall. Article by HG Bishop Yousef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ “Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines.” - Song of Solomon 2:15

- *Why do you think Sloth is a sin, let alone a mother sin? It leads to physical, mental and most importantly spiritual harm.*
- Define Sloth (Webster's dictionary defines sloth as "The quality or state of being lazy.")
- Small sins cause big problems like with king David
- Read 2 Samuel II:1-5 (King David's slothfulness in staying home and not going to war as he was supposed to led to negligence and slipping into the horrible sins of adultery and murder)
- “The slothfulness of body members will be followed by distraction of thoughts. When the body takes interest in worldly things, and leads a slothful life, the lust in him will turn aflame.” - St. Ephraim the Syrian
- “Slothfulness and negligence do not only harm a leader, but also those under his command. A man, entrusted with a treasure, should never fall asleep. If we faithfully follow the law of watchfulness, and knowledgeably practice discernment, from which we would reap the fruit of life, the attacks of lusts will never approach our minds.” - St. Ephraim the Syrian

+ What is the opposite of Sloth? (Hard work and perseverance)

- God created man to work Genesis 2:15
- When God created Adam in Paradise he had a responsibility to work / toil which is supported by the patristic quote.
- This shows that God never intended for man to be lazy but to be productive.
- “The first man, even in Paradise, undertook a kind of toil so as to furnish a law for future ages by which to bind us to the performance and to the preservation of our bounden duty and to the function of supporting hereditary succession.” - St. Ambrose of Milan
- Apostolic Command - 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10
 - Verses from St. Paul commanding Christians to work

+ "For, like elderly men who have no hope of renewing their strength, and expect nothing but their last sleep, so you, weakened by worldly occupations, have given yourselves up to sloth, and have not cast your cares upon the Lord." Shepherd of Hermas (AD 150);



- + "Slothfulness (being too lenient) with sinners is not a virtue, but weakness; it is not love nor meekness, but negligence; it is actually a crime against those souls, leading to their perdition, without an effort to draw their attention to their serious destiny." - St. Augustine
- + Sloth can come in many forms (Physical, Mental & Spiritual)
 - Physical sloth is the avoidance of neglect of physical work and duties (Ask the students for examples); Physical laziness can lead to medical conditions like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, etc.
 - Mental sloth is taking the easy way out or shortcuts (Ex. not doing your homework 100%, money schemes); Mental laziness can lead to depression when we're not exercising our minds intellectually.
 - Spiritual sloth is not praying to God, not reading the Bible or Agpeya, not using our talents given to us by God; Thus it is a mother of sins, as it removes the most important tools available to us for strength. Spiritual laziness leads to death. This is why the church has put in place prayers every hour (Agpeya) to help us with our spiritual life. In turn, this helps us with laziness because it fills our time and gives us the opportunity to pray throughout the day.
- + Are there any consequences of sloth and what does a slothful person look like?
 - Thinks they are smarter than others (Proverbs 26:16)
 - Makes Excuses (Proverbs 22:13)
 - Lacks drive (Proverbs 13:4)
 - One who loves to sleep (Proverbs 6:9)
 - Proverbs 10:4, Proverbs 10:26, Proverbs 19:15
 - "I put Your law behind me by my own counsel and became slothful toward Your commandments." - Gregorian Anaphora
 - These verses show the consequences of laziness and the negative impact they cause (hunger, poverty, embarrassment)
 - "For, like elderly men who have no hope of renewing their strength, and expect nothing but their last sleep, so you, weakened by worldly occupations, have given yourselves up to sloth, and have not cast your cares upon the Lord." Shepherd of Hermas (AD 150)
- + Seek diligence through Repentance
 - (Proverbs 6:6), role models (Hebrews 6:12) and appreciation of time.
 - Repent from laziness and use role models to imitate the way of work and learn from nature.
 - The solution to laziness is to be watchful and always alert of your surroundings (Luke 21:36)
 - Ex. Crossing the street must look both ways to avoid an accident
 - Whatever you do, do it as if you are doing it for God. (Colossians 3:17)
- + Some examples are Parable of the Wise and foolish virgins, Parable of the Talents, Story of Anba Bishoy and tying his hair up so he doesn't fall asleep and neglect his prayers.
 - St. Bishoy was not lazy, the parable of the talents shows the lazy servant and the consequence so does the 5 foolish who were not prepared for the bridegroom
 - "The Bridegroom is coming at midnight, blessed is the servant whom He finds watching." - 1st Watch Litany
 - "If we knew when we would die, we would only strive that hour. In order to strive continually, He does not tell us the hour. This is why the end of each person's life is so uncertain. If you do not continue to watch, you will not be ready." - St. John Chrysostom
 - Revelation 3:1-3 (The weakness of this Church is that they were slothful in their work)

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 5.5: Gluttony

Building Block 5:
Passions



Objective

To understand the danger of Gluttony and how it can affect our salvation. How to recognize it, fight it and overcome it.

Application

How can we avoid or overcome gluttony? Challenge yourself this week and try to avoid a certain food or treat you like. Try to practice self control when it comes to your favorite foods. Prayer and repentance are key and asking for God's help and having self control will aid you in your life and future struggles with food. We have all experienced some variation or degree of gluttony. (Ex. your favorite food or dessert, Thanksgiving time, feasting on food after we've just fasted.) Try to be self content and not overeat until you're full and can't eat anymore.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 3:6, 23](#), [Proverbs 23:21](#)



Liturgy: [The Prayer of Reconciliation - Gregorian](#)



Patristics: [St. John Climacus](#); [St. Basil](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#); [St. Abba Dorotheus](#), [St. John Cassian](#)



Story: Pope Kyrillos rejects excessive food on feasts



Other: [Church Fathers sayings](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Gluttony and all its "glory"

- Desire for food gave birth to disobedience and a sweet taste expelled from paradise (Gen. 3: 6, 23). - Evagarius
- "The belly is the cause of all human shipwreck." - St. John Climacus
- Story of Adam and Eve sinning through eating of the forbidden tree
- "There is nothing worse, nothing more shameful than gluttony,...It makes the mind gross and the soul carnal; it blinds and permits not to see clearly." John Chrysostom
- "For, just as water that irrigates many furrows makes those furrows fertile, so also the vice of gluttony, proceeding from your heart, irrigates all of your senses, raising a whole jungle of evils within you, making your soul a lair of wild beasts" (St. Basil the Great, On Renunciation of the World).
- "For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags." Proverbs 23:21

+ Define Gluttony (Webster's Dictionary defines gluttony as "Habitual greed or excess in eating.")

- "There are two kinds of gluttony. One is when a man seeks food that pleases him and does not always want to eat very much, but wishes to eat only what pleases his palate.
- Another is when a man is overcome by a tendency to eat much He only wants to eat and eat, nor minding what the food may be, only caring to fill his belly" (St. Abba Dorotheus, Directions on Spiritual Training).

+ Who does Gluttony affect? (it can affect anyone but it can lead to obesity which is unhealthy)

- We might suppose that the gluttony part of the tradition is really about extreme cases of overeating -- people who actually eat and drink themselves into ill health, or even to death.
- That would make gluttony more recognizable to us, something like our own concerns about obesity. But as much as that might make sense to us, it doesn't actually reflect the way the sin was conceived of by the early church.
- St. John Chrysostom actually considered gluttony to be the first sin, committed when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and brought about our alienation from God. Clearly whatever gluttony meant to them, it had nothing to do with extremes of overeating or the problems of diet-related illness.
- The quotes introduced seem to give such a gravity to this sin yet, it seems prevalent. Desire for food is a natural notion in society. Have the youth contemplated different acts of gluttony that may have been normalized? How can culture impact gluttony?



- It is said that Pope Kyrillos, when he was a layman, would return home after a feast and dine with his family. In a given year, it is said that having felt there was an excess of food on the table, he took and shared it with those in need.
 - You may also relate gluttony to non-physical food but a desire to consume other products. A desire for the internet or social media.
 - A temperate person does not grab a piece of candy here and there between meals all day, nor does she pick up her phone and check her email, Instagram, Facebook, text messages, etc. every time there is a lull in the day.
 - Gluttony or immoderate use of food leads to a dullness of one's senses and mind. Then the dullness of my mind creeps into my prayer life.
 - I stop listening to the readings in Liturgy, and I don't pray as attentively. St. John Cassian says, "A reasonable supply of food partaken daily with moderation, is better than a severe and long fast at intervals." ([Institutes, Book V, Ch. 9](#))
- + Why is it a sin to be gluttonous ? (It can not only lead to physical issues like obesity and the health risks associated with it, but it can consume your time which leads to time away from prayer and God.)
- Our bodies are a temple of God and when we indulge in gluttony, we are destroying our bodies and in turn God's temple. Gluttony is a sin of the flesh
 - Discuss how the Bible compares Gluttony to drunkenness.
 - Discuss how gluttony doesn't just mean over eating but "loving" a certain food is also a gluttonous behavior. "The great attraction of gluttony is not necessarily concerned with large quantities of food, but in the temptation to have just a 'little taste.' But if the wish for a taste succeeds in making you a slave to gluttony, the evil one can then give you up utterly to destruction. - Evagrius
 - He who controls the stomach diminishes the passions; he who is overcome by food gives increase to pleasures - Evagrius
 - Liturgy Connection: "Of one plant you told me, do not eat, but according to my will, I did eat" - Gregorian Liturgy
- + Against Gluttony
- "In addition, we should always prefer that food which can be easily found. not concerning ourselves with costly fare, extravagant foods, or expensive sauces." (St. Basil the Great, The Long Rules).
 - To fast is to do violence to nature. It is to do away with whatever pleases the palate.
 - Fasting ends lust, roots out bad thoughts, frees one from evil dreams...Angered by such abuse, raging and foaming, Gluttony answers us: "Why are you complaining, you who are my servants? How is it that you are trying to get away from me? Nature has bound me to you. The door for me is what food actually is, its character and quality. The reason for my being insatiable is habit. Unbroken habit, dullness of soul, and the failure to remember death are the roots of my passion. -St. John Climacus
 - Solutions would be: treat gluttony as sin; confess that you are guilty of gluttony and that you know it is wrong, and repent by committing to a new life without gluttony. In addition, fasting, self control and focusing on the true food which is the Eucharist.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 5.6: Despair & Despondency

Building Block 5:
Passions



Objective

To understand the danger of Despair & Despondency and how it can affect our salvation. How to recognize it, fight it and overcome it.

Application

When we feel despair, the best solution is Hopeful Prayer. Prayer strengthens our spirit and prevents the devil from coming in and tempting us to cause sin. Encourage presence in midnight Praises which is filled with hope and victory.

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Corinthians 7:10-11](#), [1 Peter 5:7](#), [Romans 8:24](#), [1 Kings 19:1-18](#), [Daniel 6:21-22](#), [Exodus 3:11](#)



Liturgy: [Commemoration of the saints](#); [Midnight Praises](#) (song of victory, Source of hope)



Patristics: [St. John Cassian](#); [St. John Chrysostom on Repentance and Defeating Despair](#), [Evagarius](#), [St. John Chrysostom on courage and repentance](#), [St. John Chrysostom on falling into despair](#)



Story: [St. Paul imprisoned](#), [St. Marina the monk](#)



Other: [Time and Despondency](#), [Be anxious for nothing - HG Bishop Anqaelos](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Consider this discussion: Think about one of the best days of your life: What happened? What made it so great? Now, think about one of the most disappointing days of your life... What happened? Then offer assurance: Life can be really hard. God knows that life is hard.

+ What is despondency? Similarly, Define Despair (Webster's dictionary defines despair as "utter loss of hope.")

After defining despondency and despair, attempt to have the class discuss the relation between them and depression. Note that, even if some, not all, depressions may be rooted in some spiritual weakness, it is not to be misunderstood of the value and critical importance of mental health counseling in such matters.

- "Guard yourself from despondency above all, for it is worse and more harmful than sin. When the evil urge awakens desire in man, he is not concerned with plunging him into sin, but with plunging him into despondency by way of sinning." - Unattributed
- "A light breeze bends a feeble plant; a fantasy about a trip away drags off the person overcome with acedia." - Evagarius
- "For as the moth injures the garment, and the worm the wood, so despondency the heart of man." - St. John Cassian
- St. John Chrysostom defining despondency: For despondency [athymia] is for souls a grievous torture chamber, unspeakably painful, more fierce and bitter than every ferocity and torment. It imitates the poisonous worm that attacks not only the body but also the soul, and not only the bones but also the mind. It is a continual executioner that not only tears in pieces one's torso but also mutilates the strength of one's soul.
- Psychologists define this condition as depression. If a person has symptoms of depression, what should they do? Many go to psychologists. What do they get? Firstly, self-scrutinizing conversations, and secondly, antidepressant drugs.
- Psychologists say that depression is successfully treatable in most cases. However, they admit that it is the most common mental illness. There is a contradiction: after all, if an illness may be successfully treated, then why does it not disappear and why does the number of patients increase over time?
- For example, smallpox was successfully eradicated and there have been no one taken ill of it for a long time. Yet, the situation with depression is reversed. Why? [Note that this statement is not here to deny the existence of mental illness, and/or depression. But it may be



that despondency and despair may lead to depression. and thus, at times, at its core, the real issue is a spiritual matter.] You may open this as a discussion, once the definitions are laid out.

+ Does time have anything to do with despondency and despair?

- Note that it may not come looking like depression but rather, through a loss of hope, or lack of will, one misuses his time. The misuse of time can often be sourced to either despondency or despair.
- Every moment, every second is precious and a gift from God. When the moment is fulfilled to its purpose, then the moment has properly been responded to. While when the moment is ignored and unfulfilled, one can say they were despondent to fulfill the fullness of their purpose at that time.
- “Pray without ceasing” - when each moment is fulfilled to God’s purpose, this in and of itself, and a prayerful action.
- “For it is your heart’s desire that is your prayer. If your desire continues uninterrupted, your prayer continues also. For it was not without meaning, when the apostle said, “Pray without ceasing.” Are we to be “without ceasing” in bending the knee and prostrating the body and lifting up our hands, such that he says, “without ceasing”? If that is what “without ceasing” means, then I do not believe it is possible. There is another kind of inward prayer without ceasing, which is the desire of the heart.” - St. Augustine, COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS 37.14

+ Is loss of hope/despair a sin?

Note that despair can be seen as full grown despondency.

- When we enter into despair, we become weak and it's a great opportunity for the devil to come in and tempt us with sin. We are more vulnerable and the devil takes advantage of the state of mind we're in.
- When we fall into despair, we can sometimes feel like there's no return to God. We have gone so far away from Him that He will not accept our repentance.
- St. Peter says "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7
- Touch on how despair can lead to severe depression, anxiety and in worse case scenarios-suicide. Ask the students to reflect on what worries them and instead of becoming anxious and depressed about it, try to turn it around and find the positive or find a solution.

+ How does Hope overcome Despair?

- St. Paul says "For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?" Romans 8:24)
- Link between despondency and Despair: Hope
- It is easy to fall into despair and just give up. It is more difficult to find hope when you feel hopeless but we need to look at examples from the Bible and take strength from those stories.
- St. Paul was thrown into jail for his ministry and instead of falling into despair, he wrote the 4 Epistles and wrote about hope. Having faith, hope and strength in his belief is what prevented St. Paul from falling into despair.
- Other examples from the Bible about despair and hope are Moses, David, Daniel, Jesus Christ Himself, St. Marina the monk, 3 holy youth in the fiery furnace)
 - Moses didn't feel confident and was scared to return back to Egypt and face Pharaoh. Yet he had hope and didn't give up and did what God commanded of him. But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Exodus 3:11
 - Daniel never gave into the commands of King Darius despite the consequences and punishment set by the new law. Daniel refused to serve any idol or any other person other than God. Daniel was thrown into the lion's den and God saved him from the lions because he had hope and never doubted God. "Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." Daniel 6:21-22
 - Story of Elijah being in despair and God encouraging him: 1 Kings 19:1-18

+ The devil wants us to fall into despair because it leads us to other sins.

- When we are hopeless, it can lead us to other sins like Gluttony. Instead of turning to sin, we need to turn to God and have hope that He is with us and He will help us overcome our despair.
- Conclude with the story of St. Peter and Judas. Both committed sins against our Lord and left Him during His most difficult moments but St.



Peter repented through hope and Judas committed suicide.

- “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner.” - 2 Corinthians 7:10-11
- One of the devil's main attacks on us is that he accuses us in front of God and continually attempts to put us down
- “Pay attention carefully. After the sin comes the shame; courage follows repentance. Did you pay attention to what I said? Satan upsets the order; he gives the courage to sin and the shame to repentance.” - St. John Chrysostom
- “Even if a Christian has fallen into the worst of sins for an extended time such a person should not fall into despair.” - St. John Chrysostom
- “To have fallen is not a grievous thing but rather to remain prostrate after falling and not to get up again continuing in despair.” - St. John Chrysostom
- “The wicked one dragged Judas out of this world lest he should make a fair beginning and so return by means of repentance to the point from which he fell.” - St. John Chrysostom
- “Despair is unjustified. The Ninevites who may have had reason to believe there was no hope nonetheless recognized God's mercy.” - St. John Chrysostom
- “To despair of ourselves not only has this evil that it shuts the gates of that city against us and that it drives us into greater indolence and contempt but also that it plunges us into satanic recklessness.” - St. John Chrysostom
- “Laziness is the root of despair and they both feed each other to keep you down. Break away from both in order to alleviate the depressing thoughts they give you.” - St. John Chrysostom
- “The evil one puts you in despair by cutting off your hope.” - St. John Chrysostom

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 5.7: Envy

Building Block 5: Passions



Objective

To understand the danger of Envy and how it can affect our salvation. How to recognize it, fight it and overcome it.

Application

Challenge the students to make a list of what they have been given through a journal (food, clean water, clothing, shelter, physical and mental health, family, friends) and reflect on the countless blessings they have. Being thankful doesn't leave room in our hearts to be jealous or envious for what we don't have.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 20:17](#), [Songs of Songs 8:6](#), [1 Samuel 18:1-16](#), [Genesis 4:1-15](#), [Proverbs 6:34](#), [Galatians 5:19-21](#)



Liturgy: [St. Basil Liturgy Reconciliation Prayer](#)



Patristics: St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom



Story: [Story of Saul & David](#), [Cain & Abel](#), [Joseph and his Brothers](#)



Other: [Envy & Jealousy](#), [HG Bishop Gregory](#); [Envy & Jealousy](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#);



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What does it mean to be Envious and why does it matter?

Is all jealousy sin? (Q&A on Jealousy by HG Bishop Youssef)

Are Envious thoughts or feelings "in our human nature?" (No, we are not meant to be envious but the world and society around us taunts us and shows us what we should have which leads to envious thoughts and actions.)

- Webster's Dictionary defines envy as "painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage"
- Saint Basil says, envy "is sorrow over one's neighbor's success. [Our brother's happiness] is food for the disease and added suffering for the envious man."
- Envy stems and is rooted in pride. It is often related with praise as one becomes envious of a certain glory.
- The 10th commandment says "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." Genesis 20:17
- "...jealousy is cruel as the grave: it's flames are flames of fire, a most vehement flame." Songs of Songs 8:6
- It is clearly written in one of the 10 commandments to not be envious or jealous of what others have.
- Liturgy Connection: "death entered into the world through the envy of the devil" - St. Basil Liturgy Reconciliation Prayer
- Introduce envy as the cause of humanities fall through Satan's wickedness
- "No passion is more destructive than envy when it is implanted in the souls of human beings. It is the ruin of life, the corruption of nature, hatred of the gifts given by God to us, and opposition to God. It teaches us to fight against God. It is the mother of homicide, giving birth to violation of nature, ignorance of kinship, and disasters of the most irrational sort." - St. Basil the Great

+ How Does Envy Manifests Itself?

- Ask the students what does envy look like? (Materialistic-cars, houses, jewelry, clothing, Job, career or money, Envious of people like celebrities, family, friends)
- In Envy, we may struggle seeing good in the person. The following stories depict this in its extremes.
- Discuss Saul's Jealousy of David, 1 Samuel 18:1-16 and Joseph with his Brothers, Cain and Abel
- Alternatively, you may discuss the story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-15) and how Cain's jealousy led to murdering Abel (Disobeying one of the 10 commandments)



- In both stories we can see.... "For jealousy causes the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance." Proverbs 6:34

+ The Consequences of Envy

- Envy is a sign of carnal life with the mind obsessed on material elements.
- The works of the flesh are the opposite of the fruits of the All-Holy Spirit. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelings and such like..." (Galatians 5:19-21). Thus keeping our minds and being envious of any such fleshly desires are violent to one's spiritual life.
- One of the dangers of envy is that it has no limits. Unlike other sins which may be gratified, such as lust, or gluttony, envy could see no limit. And as such the misery that grows within a person continues to amplify discreetly.
- "Tell me, you who envy others: Why do you envy your brother? Is it because of the earthly blessings he has got? Are they not from the Lord? It is thus obvious that, by your envy, you make God the object of your animosity; as He is actually the Grantor of that gift. Can you see now the extent of the evil you are committing, and how you are gathering for yourself a crown of sins?! And can you see the pit of revenge you dig for yourself?!" - St. John Chrysostom
- "He who envies, tortures himself, even if he is not harmed by the other party; That is why the sin of envy is the worst and most horrible of sins." - St. John Chrysostom
- You may touch on how jealousy can consume our lives, it can lead us down a path of depression and in worst case scenarios, suicidal thoughts.

+ How can we overcome envy and jealousy?

- Admit and acknowledge the jealousy, Repent, Correct Prayer
- Through a life of gratefulness and thanksgiving (the opposite of envy and jealousy)
- We need to be thankful and grateful for what we have been blessed with and pray that God continues to bless our lives and everything He has given us.
- "The key is to judge no human circumstance as great or marvelous in itself: neither prosperity in human endeavors, nor renown which fades away, nor bodily health. For we do not define the highest goods in terms of transitory things but we have been called to share in everlasting and true goods. Therefore, when you elevate your mind above human realities through your powers of reasoning and fix your attention on what is truly good and praiseworthy, you will be far beyond thinking that any corruptible and earthly good is a source of happiness or enviable. In anyone who has acquired this habit of mind, who is not obsessed with worldly goods as if they were of great value it is impossible for envy ever to be present." - St. Basil the Great

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 5.8: Avarice and Greed

Building Block 5:
Passions



Objective

To understand the danger of Greed and how it can affect our salvation. How to recognize it, fight it and overcome it.

Application

Encourage a homeless giving service as a class or a simple act of giving something you desire to a homeless person when you pass by them.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 6:24](#), [Luke 12:15](#), [James 4:1](#), [Mark 9:33-42](#); [Matthew 21:33-46](#), [1 Chronicles 29:14](#)



Liturgy: ([Litany of the Offerings](#))



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#); [St. John Chrysostom on feeding the hungry](#); [St. Augustine](#), [St. Athanasius](#), [St. Basil the Great](#), [St. Gregory of Nazianzus](#), [St. Gregory of Nyssa](#); [St. Cyprian of Carthage](#)



Story: Judas' betrayal of Jesus [Matthew 26:14-16](#), [Anba Abraam of Fayoum](#); [Rich Man and Lazarus](#)



Other: [Gambling: An impulse control disorder](#); [On Wealth and Poverty by St. John Chrysostom](#); [On Social Justice by St. Basil the Great](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Differentiate between desire and greed

Consider discussing how to differentiate between ambition and greed?

- Webster's dictionary defines greed as "a selfish and excessive desire for more of something (such as wealth, power or food) than is needed."
- Avarice is a formal yet more extreme form of this greed, particularly related to wealth.
- Desire for good things is acceptable. All things created by God are good.
- The faculty of desire was placed in his nature so that he could desire God, yearn for Him and be raised and united to Him.
- "He found his delights only in the one Lord." - St. Gregory of Nyssa
- When desire was turned away from God, it lost its unity, and by being turned towards the sensible world considered independently of God.
- "Neglecting the higher realities and slow to grasp them, men sought rather those which were closer to them. Now that which is closer is the body and the senses. Likewise, they turned their mind away from intelligible things and began to consider themselves; and considering themselves, becoming attached to their body and other sensible things, and erring, so to speak, in their own reason, they came to desire themselves, preferring their own possession to the contemplation of divine realities." - St. Athanasius
- The danger is the acceptance of such desire to become a love separated from God. All things are a gift from God. Desiring them outside of God is a path towards greed. This desire subsequently has dominion over us, rather than we have dominion over all the earth as intended. At its core, one must have a willingness to forego all desires. Easier said than done, but the basis of our spiritual life and struggle.
- It is on this basis that Christ says in Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"

+ Ask the students to give examples of Greed (Ex. greed of money and wealth, greed of materialistic things, greed of food, greed of fame or popularity)

- Discuss how the greed of money led to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas.



- Greed puts too much value in things that are temporary. After revealing the greed of the man, Jesus shares a parable. He talks about a wealthy man who is so successful in business that he just gains more and more wealth. He wonders what to do with all his good fortune. He decides just to invest in himself and give himself more. But there is a problem with this man's thinking. The Gospel of St. Luke tells us that Jesus warns us about greed and shared the parable of the rich, saying "And He said unto them, take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." Luke 12:15-21

+ Greed: The Source of all your Arguments

- Touch on how greed can lead to always wanting more and never being satisfied with what you have. You're always longing and wanting more, never satisfied.
- Touch on how wanting things and being greedy, leads to arguments and fights. James 4:1
- "Riches are not only to be despised but they are also full of danger. They are the root of seducing evils and deceive the blind human mind by hidden deception." - St. Cyprian of Carthage
- Desiring materialistic things and always wanting more leads to emptiness. You will never be satisfied once you get what you want. You will always be wanting more.
- Greed is a bottomless pit, you will never be satisfied or full.
- "There is no illness crueller than [the] incessant hunger that doctors call bulimia; no matter how much one eats, nothing can alleviate it. Transfer such an illness from the body to the soul—what is more frightful? The bulimia of the soul is avarice; the more it gorges on food, the more it desires. It always stretches out its wishes beyond what it possesses. (St John Chrysostom: Homilies on 2 Timothy VII.2.)

+ Discuss the concept of zeal/yearning for God as an antitype of Greed.

- Have them analyze the passage where the Disciples argue about who is greatest (Mark 9:33-42; Matthew 21:33-46). Is it Greed, Avarice, Zeal? A combination of two?
- Danger of Gambling and why is it wrong

+ How to change the focus from Greed to Stewardship and Giving

You can discuss how God will judge us on Judgment Day with some of the criteria being (hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me to drink, naked and you clothed me etc.) Many of the fathers talk about such charity with high regards.

- What we have is not ours but God's
- 1 Chronicles 29:14
- "Do not extend your hand in haste to take and yet retract when giving. Give to the poor as long as you can afford, in order to gain forgiveness of your many sins." - St. Shenouda the Archimandrite
- "We offer You Your gifts from what is Yours." - Gregorian Liturgy
- "Charity is the root of all good works. Just as greed, after all, is the root of all evil, so charity is the root of all good things." Augustine of Hippo (AD 430)
- "Feeding the hungry is a greater work than raising the dead." - St. John Chrysostom
- "Let us remember the poor, and not forget kindness to strangers; above all, let us love God with all our soul, and might, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves." - St. Athanasius
- "The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor." - St. Basil the Great
- "The Lord tells us that those who sell all their possessions and distribute them for the poor become perfect and complete and in so doing they lay up treasures for themselves in heaven." - St. Cyprian of Carthage
- "Give something however small, to the one in need. For it is not small to the one who has nothing. Neither is it small to God, if we have given what we could." - St. Gregory of Nazianzus
- "The Giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic His giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves." - St. Nicholas of Myra

+ Discuss methods to overcome greed such as fasting or giving to the poor and the rewards for giving

- St. Epiphanius of Cyprus 17th of Bashans Synaxar
- "If money were common and available to all there would be no opportunity for generosity on the part of the rich and gratitude on the part of the poor." - St. John Chrysostom



- + Greed is emptiness and it's a bottomless pit that will never be filled or satisfied.
 - It never ends. You will feel like you always want more and more.
 - Liturgy Connection: Donations and tithes (Litany of the Offerings); “Blessed are those who have mercy, who give to the poor...” - Great Fast Melody
 - Teach them about tithes, donation and first-fruits
 - Anba Abraam of Fayoum was distinguished by his patience and self-control and his interest in almsgiving.
 - We can learn from Anba Abraam how to be more giving to our Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, fasting but also giving to our fellow neighbor.



Building Block 6: Towards Lent

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 6.1: The Temptation on the Mountain / Know the Adversary

Building Block 6: over
Lent



Objective

Understand the tools the adversary uses against the children of God and how we can overcome them through the grace of God.

Application

Ask the students to reflect on temptations they get and notice their patterns. As temptations arise, attempt to do the sign of the cross, pray a psalm (maybe even memorize a psalm together as a class)

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 12:31](#), [John 14:30](#), [John 16:11](#), [1 Peter 5:8](#), [Micah 7:8](#), [Job 5:13](#), [Matthew 4:4](#), [Revelation 20:10](#), [Ephesians 6:11](#), [James 4:7](#), [John 8:44](#), [Romans 7:18](#), [Galatians 5:19 - 21](#), [James 1:14 - 15](#), [2 Peter 1:4](#), [Galatians 1:4](#), [1 John 2:15](#), [2 Timothy 2:22](#), [Luke 4:13](#)



Liturgy: [Litany of the Assemblies](#)



Patristics: St. Anthony, [St. Justin the Martyr](#), [St. Basil the Great](#), [St. Syncretica of Alexandria](#), [St. John Saba](#), [St. Athanasius](#), [Origen: HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE](#), [Ambrose of Milan](#)



Story: [St. Moses the Strong](#)



Other: [The Weapons of Satan](#), [HG Bishop Youssef: Temptation in the Wilderness](#), [HG Bishop Youssef: Temptation Of Christ](#), [HG Bishop Youssef: Overcoming Satan's Temptations](#), [HG Bishop Serapion](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Have a show of hands: Who is the prince of the world? (you can have multiple choices such as the devil, Christ, God, or the president)
 - Christ often speaks of the devil as “prince of this world” “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.” - John 12:31, “I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.” - John 14:30.
 - Devil’s Dominion and authority: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” - 1 Peter 5:8. Don’t throw yourself in the lion’s den; Temptation is not a sin, but if we start negotiating with the thought and acting upon it, it becomes a sin. God is sovereign over Satan. The devil does not have a free hand in this world. He is on a leash, so that he can do no more than God permits. In effect, he must get permission.
- + The Devil's desire to destroy
 - “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” - 1 Peter 5:8
 - St. Anthony: “Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath.”
 - The previous quotes illustrate the importance of always being vigilant and ready to fight temptation while also predicting methods of attacks. When armies plan for war, they always try to anticipate the different methods of offense their enemy might use all based on previous experiences. Likewise, in our spiritual lives, if we've fallen or been stricken, this may serve as a method of knowing how we are spiritually injured.
 - “We forewarn you to be on your guard, lest evil spirits deceive you. For they strive to hold you as their slaves and servants. They subdue all those who fail to make strong opposing efforts for their own salvation.” - St. Justin the Martyr
- + Sources of Temptation (*you may enable a discussion to see what they think are sources*). There are three sources of temptation:



- The devil (Ephesians 6:11, James 4:7). Temptation is primarily based on deception. This is why a fallen Lucifer, the universe's first sinner and chief promoter of disobedience, is called the "he is a liar and the father of it" - John 8:44
 - The desires and lusts of our human nature (Romans 7:18, Galatians 5:19 - 21, James 1:14 - 15)
 - The world (2Peter 1:4, Galatians 1:4, 1John 2:15).
- + The devil attempts to defeat through different methods. In the sermon of the mount we see 3 methods, each time attacking from a different angle (*ask students to name the 3 methods*).
- 1. Through instant needs - The First Temptation: Stones into Bread
 - **GLUTTONY CAPTURED THE FIRST ADAM.** He was eager to cast this man down, just as he had cast Adam down. So he approaches Jesus and introduces the first temptation, that of gluttony, through which he had also captured the first Adam. Since there was no food anywhere, because the whole region was a desert, he knew that bread would satisfy Christ's hunger. He himself does not produce bread, because Christ was not going to take it from the enemy. But he commands him to make bread from the stones that he points to. Look at Satan's wiles and great wickedness—he tried to keep Christ from knowing his plot. He did not simply say, "Turn the stones into loaves of bread," but he prefixed it with, "If you are a son of God." He did this to show that he wanted this act done to prove that Christ is a son of God. For he was thinking that Christ would be provoked by his words and offended by the suggestion that he was not a "son of God." He thought that Christ would not recognize the deception and, as a man who has power from God, turn the stones into bread. Then, when he saw the bread, he would yield to his stomach, since he was very hungry. But the devil did not escape the notice of him who "catches the wise in their craftiness." - Job 5:13
 - Jesus defeats Satan by the Word of God: Christ answered him and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" - Matthew 4:4.
 - 2. By enticing future desires: The Second Temptation
 - **SATAN SHOWED HOW HE RULED THE WORLD. ORIGIN:** We should not think that when the devil showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world, he showed him, for example, the kingdom of the Persians and of the Indians. "He showed him all the kingdoms of the world," that is, his own kingdom, how he reigned in the world. **HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 30.1.21**
 - "Hell can't be made attractive so the devil makes attractive the road that leads there." - St. Basil the Great
 - 3. By Providing Everything at the expense that it is sourced by him: The Third Temptation
 - **EVE ENTICED BY THE DESIRE TO WORSHIP ANOTHER. AMBROSE:** "You see, ancient errors are undone in Christ's footprints, and the snares, first of the stomach, second of sexual sin, and third of ambition, are loosed. For Adam was enticed by food. Because he willingly transgressed in the matter of the forbidden tree, he also was charged with heedless ambition, for he desired to be like the Godhead.³² Therefore the Lord first remitted the debt of the ancient wrong, in order that, having shaken off the yoke of captivity, we may learn to overcome our faults with the help of the Scriptures. . . . The devil shakes the whole world with cunning deceit, in order to corrupt people, and fights with all the enticements of this age. You must beware of his flattery all the more. Food had not persuaded Eve, nor had the forgetfulness of the commands deprived her. If she had been willing to worship the Lord alone, she would not have sought what was not due to her. So a remedy is given, which blunts the dart of ambition, so that we serve the Lord alone. Pious devotion lacks ambition." - Ambrose of Milan
 - "Many are the wiles of the evil one. If he is not able to disturb the soul by means of poverty, he would suggest riches as an attraction. If he has not won victory by insults and grace, he would suggest praise and glory." - St. Syncletica of Alexandria
- + How can we overcome temptation? What are our weapons against the devil?
- The devil is smart, clever, and a master of illusions and trickeries. We need to realize that his tricks are no match for Christ's love, grace and power.
 - Know the Scriptures
 - Know when and how to run from temptation "Flee also youthful lusts, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart." - 2 Timothy 2:22
 - We cannot worship 2 masters. If we give in to the evil one, we betray our Lord. When we resist the temptations of the devil, God recognizes this and rewards us for staying faithful and knowing the Truth.
 - "Repentance saves and releases those whom the devil captured. Many years of the devil's hard work is lost in one moment of repentance." - St. John Saba



- “There is no need for us to fear the things they throw at us, because through prayer, fasting and faith in the Lord, the demons immediately fall.” - St. Athanasius
 - Liturgy Connection: “Satan and all his evil powers, trample and humiliate them under our feet speedily.” - Litany of the Assemblies
 - Temptation is something that continually happens to us and consequently we must continue to trust in God and continue to pray., “Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.” (Luke 4:13)
 - The example of St. Moses the Strong: He had many years of strife and fierce struggle with the devil and his sinful past. While fasting, and during times of prayer, the devil tempted St. Moses by bringing back to his mind his wicked habits of his past. St. Moses used to go to St. Isidore to ask for his advice on what to do, our father of confession is a fundamental part of our victorious journey. Finally he won the long successive and violent battles, his advice: “Four virtues aid the young monk: continuous meditation on the word of God, watchfulness, fervent prayer and considering himself as nothing.”, one of his other sayings may summarize his spirituality: “Humility of heart precedes all virtues, and the desire of the belly is the source of all passions. Pride is the basis of all vices and love is the origin of all goodness.” Saint Moses the Strong.
- + Reiterate how temptations are illusions from the devil that make pain, suffering, and worry look charming, beautiful and attractive. You will feel like you always want more and more of earthly things, but through struggling with prayer and fasting it may be overcome. The devil will always want our souls, but we must not give in to his trickeries. If we fall, we must rise. “Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, The Lord will be a light to me. “ - Micah 7:8
- + Finally: Satan Will Not Win the battle: “ The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where[a] the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” - Revelation 20:10

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 6.2: Persistence in Prayers - Parable of the unjust judge

Building Block 6:
Towards Lent



Objective

To understand what prayer is, the importance of persistent prayer, and the benefits/outcomes of praying continuously.

Application

Explain to the students that the Jesus prayer is such a strong arrow prayer. Give them a task to recite the Jesus Prayer always as it is a form of prayer that will give them peace and joy because all their thoughts, and actions are being done in the presence of God

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 18:1-8](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#), [Phil 4:13](#)



Liturgy: [Lord Have Mercy prayer](#)



Patristics: [Tertullian the Scholar](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#),



Story: [St. Paul the Simple](#); [Abba Agathon](#)



Other: [Persistent Widow](#), [Fr. Elijah Iskander](#); [Prayer](#), [HG Bishop Gregory](#), [Fr. Matthew the Poor](#); [Unjust definition](#); [Gospel of Luke 18](#); [Prayer](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is an Unjust Judge?

Read the parable of the unjust Judge Luke 18: 1-8.

- Unjust is defined - characterized by injustice, unfair, faithless, dishonest
- The judge in this parable is portrayed as a man with a bad character. He neither feared God nor regarded man; he had no regard either for his conscience or his reputation; he had no care of the wrath of God against him or of men concerning him. He took no care to do his duty either to God or man; he was a perfect stranger both to godliness and honor, and had no notion of either.
- It is not strange, for people who have cast off the fear of God to be altogether independent of their fellow-creatures; where no fear of God is no good is to be expected.
- Being unjust is a bad character to have, but to be a judge with this character, who has power in his hand, in the use of which he ought to be guided by the principles of religion and justice, and, instead of doing good with his power he will be in danger of doing hurt, is very bad.
- Question - Have you ever been unfair to someone? Have you been treated unfairly? How did it feel?

+ What's the difference between prayer and persistence in prayer?

- Prayer is entering the palace of the king and going straight to him to talk to without going through his guards. Likewise we pray when we talk to the King of Kings Himself
- Persistent prayers help us build our relationship and faith in God
- (Luke 18:1-8) For a woman to persist to an unjust judge, to give her justice, how much more will God seek mercy and justice for us, who are his chosen ones.
- The Lord wanted to teach us that men should always pray and not be faint of heart.
- It is our duty to pray; we sin if we neglect it. It is our constant work; we should always pray.
- Reciting the Arrow Prayer "My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner" everyday, anywhere, at all times, keeps our mind on the Lord.
- When we are praying for strength against our spiritual enemies, our lusts and corruptions, which are our worst enemies, we must pray and not be weak, for we shall not seek God's face in vain.
- We must pray, and never grow weary of praying
- Persistence in prayer means not giving up when we do not see results right away, while also trusting that God knows best.
- If a child persistently asks his parents for something they do not really give an answer to, the child will continue asking because he knows



and has faith that if he keeps asking he will eventually get a clear answer. We should be the same with Christ.

- The number of Lord Have Mercys during liturgy. How many times during liturgy do we say "Lord have mercy"? This shows persistence of seeking mercy, justice and our needs
- "We meet together as an assembly and congregation offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This violence God delights in." - Tertullian the Scholar
- Persistent in prayer means to pray when you feel like it, and also when you don't feel like it.

+ Praying for a specific outcome?

- Sometimes when we pray for something to happen we do not see the future and we cannot 100% know if it will help or harm us. By being persistent in our prayers, we are able to see God's hands direct us to make good choices and decisions that glorify His name.
- The biggest reassurance we have when we don't see movement, is that God's grace and mercy will prevail even if we have to wait.
- Just like the widow in this parable was persistent in her begging and crying to the unfair judge, how much more will God's chosen people prevail.
- If we look at any desert father's story before they left the world, they were never one-time prayers, but rather prayers about the same topic for years. That is how we should live our lives; by praying constantly for the will of God.
- For example, St. Paul the Simple was known to be very persistent. When he first wanted to be a monk under St. Antony and St. Antony did not allow him in because he was old, St. Paul stayed outside his cell for 3 whole days until St. Antony let him in. Also there is a story of him holding a rock in the midst of the days being persistent until the devil who was troubling him went away.
- The Parable concludes with a question, whether the Lord will find faith at the end. The widow had faith, the saints had faith, we God's children should have faith that whatever outcome we get is the Lord's plan for us.
- "He who has redeemed you, has shown you what He would have you do. He would have you be instant in prayer, He would have you ponder in your heart the blessings you are praying for, He would have you ask and receive what His goodness is longing to impart. He never refuses His blessings to them that pray, but rather stirs men up by His mercy not to faint in praying. Gladly accept the Lord's encouragement: be willing to do what He commands, not to do what He forbids. Lastly, consider what a blessed privilege is granted you, to talk with God in your prayers, and make known to Him all your wants, while He though not in words, yet by His mercy, answers you, for He despises not petitions, He tires not but when you are silent." -St. John Chrysostom

+ Means to overcoming a 'dread' of prayer

- The brethren asked Abba Agathon "Amongst all our different activities, father, which is the virtue that requires the greatest effort?" He answered: 'Forgive me, but I think there is no labor greater than praying to God. For every time a man wants to pray, his enemies the demons try to prevent him; for they know that nothing obstructs them so much as prayer to God. In everything else that a man undertakes, if he perseveres he will attain rest. But in order to pray a man must struggle to his last breath" (From The Sayings of the Desert Fathers)
- You need to set a specific time for prayer daily. It is best if it is first thing in the morning. Make an effort to wake up half an hour early and start your day with prayer.
- You have to keep in mind that you can defeat the devil who will try to discourage you from waking up early, and that you will pray later during the day. These are all excuses the devil brings to your mind in order to tempt you and defeat you. Do not succumb to his trials. Be firm and repeat to yourself "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13)
- Once you start praying, the devil will make you go astray with your thoughts or make you feel bored of prayer.
- Again do not let him win this battle. If you wander away, repeat again and again the same prayer or psalm trying each time to concentrate on it and pray to God at this moment to let you focus on your prayers.
- You may want to start from tomorrow with a goal of only 10 minutes of prayer and as you achieve this goal by the end of the week you can increase the time. Do not give up but take it slowly and surely. 'With prayers' you will be able to live the life of prayer and overcome your sins.

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 6:
Towards Lent



Lesson 6.3: Balance between the Mercy & Justice of God

Objective

Orthodoxy is the balance between God's mercy and His justice. To overemphasize or minimize one is to harm the other. This lesson provides answers to questions such as: Could Heaven even be Heaven if unrepentant sinners dwelled there? For now, there is a time of mercy and access to the throne of mercy, but there comes a day when justice requires a final answer and verdict.

Application

Approaching confession regularly confirms our acceptance of both the mercy and the justice of God.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 16:19](#), [John 8:1-11](#), [Luke 23:43](#), [Leviticus 10:1-2](#), [Matthew 12:36-37](#), [Numbers 14](#), [Matthew 18:23-34](#), [Matthew 7:12](#), [Matthew 7:1](#), [2Samuel 12:13](#)



Liturgy: [The absolution prayer of confession](#)



Patristics: [St. Isaac the Syrian](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Polycarp](#), [St. Pachomius](#), [St. Severus of Antioch pg 57](#)



Story: [The parable of the two debtors or the unforgiving servant](#)



Other: [Transformation of the Holy Cross](#), [Isaiah 10- God's Justice and Judgment](#), [Fr. Benjamin Abouelkheir](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is the difference between God's mercy and justice in the Old Testament and New Testament?

Consider asking the youth, "do you believe the Old Testament God is more fearful than the New Testament God? How about the NT God does he ever invoke similar events of fear whatsoever?"

- God is a merciful and just God. In the Old Testament as in the New Testament God is the same merciful and just.
- God's Mercy: There are many examples in the Bible. The story of Jonah is a story of God's mercy, and God's ability to use anyone for his glory - a one seeking to save an entire wicked nation! Similarly, God saved His people from famine through Joseph the patriarch. God saved His people from bondage in Egypt and from being destroyed by Pharaoh. God saved them from starvation in the wilderness by sending manna and quail.
- Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice on our behalf. He sacrificed Himself for our sins so we would receive eternal life. This is the only sacrifice we will ever need. It is eternal.
- Similarly in the New Testament Christ gave the Apostles the priesthood and gave them authority to receive confessions and pray for the forgiveness of sins. Matthew 16: 19. Jesus was merciful to the adulteress in John 8:1-11. Jesus had mercy on the thief on the right side. "Assuredly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." Luke 23:43. Peter denied Jesus three times. As we read in the Gospel of Mark, Peter denies that he even knows Jesus saying, "I know not this Man of whom you speak" (Mark 14:71). Shortly thereafter the cock crows and we read how "the Lord turning looked on Peter" (Luke 22:61). Seeing Jesus' face Peter weeps bitterly and recognizes his sin. After Jesus' death and resurrection, Peter's repentance is tested and Jesus extends His mercy to him by asking Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Peter responded affirmatively and Jesus asked him to "feed my lambs" (John 21:15).
- With regards to God's Justice, likewise there are many examples in the Bible
- God judged his people based on His Laws through Moses and the judges. When Nadab and Abihu tested God by burning incense against God's Law, God punished them by sending fire down on them and it devoured them. Leviticus 10:1-2
- But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! Luke 12:5
- God gave us the mysteries of confession and repentance. "But I say to you that every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it on the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12: 36-37
- The thief on the right side of Jesus was justly rewarded for his faith and declaration publicly that Jesus is the savior. The Transformed Holy Cross by HG Bishop Youssef.



+ Why were Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh promised the entry to the promised land?

- Numbers 14. Joshua and Caleb were 2 of the 12 spies sent by Moses to spy on the land of Canaan, which God gave to the children of Israel.
- Joshua and Caleb were the only ones who had faith that God will deliver Canaan to the children of Israel.
- The people murmured in fear after listening to the other 10 spies complaining about how it is going to be impossible to overtake Canaan.
- God wanted to strike them with death but Moses interceded and God had mercy on the children of Israel.
- Nevertheless God said the Children of Israel will be in the desert 40 years before they reach the promised land.
- God promised that Joshua and Caleb and their families would see the promised land because they had faith.
- The ones who murmured from the age of 20 years old and older will die in the desert and never see the promised land.
- God showed mercy and judgment toward the children of Israel.

+ Orthodoxy is in the balance between God's mercy and His justice.

- In some eras, the notion of a harsh, strict God was so emphasized that His mercy was all but lost.
- Today, the tendency is to stress His mercy and kindness while nearly wrongfully dismissing His role as the sovereign Judge who will set things right by upholding the just and punishing the wicked.
- If God is all only mercy, there will be no need for repentance. And if God is all justice, there will also be no need for repentance.
- St. Isaac the Syrian wrote "Our frail nature would not be strong enough if God's justice were to rise up to take vengeance. Therefore, He employs mercy, since at all times we are held by debt. But do not sin, O man, expecting that you will repent; and do not succumb [to sin] being confident of forgiveness! Remember that death will not delay."
- "Remember the day of judgment; and since we have need of mercy, let us prepare in advance mercy for ourselves. So let us forgive liberally, so that we may deserve forgiveness which is more liberal." - St. Severus of Antioch pg 57
- Jesus told the story in Matthew 18:23-34, the King had mercy on his servant who owed him 10,000 talents, but the same servant did not forgive his servant for 100 denari. 10,000 talents is equivalent to 200,000 years of labor which is obviously not humanly possible. Yet, the king forgave him, when he could have exiled and executed him. On the other hand, 100 denari is only 16 weeks worth of labor, which is very acceptable and he would not forgive him. The king judged his servant harshly because the servant was merciless.

+ What does God's mercy and justice teach us?

- Be merciful to others. It is written "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12
- God is the ultimate judge. The Bible says "Judge not, that you be not judged." Matthew 7:1
- Holding onto a grudge is like holding onto an electrical wire. If we hold on to the grudge at any level, we may die.
- Although Christ is our friend and Father, we cannot neglect that He is also our King and Judge.
- We should live life always in the fear of God, but we should not be living life from the fear of God.
- The mystery of confession and repentance is a means to place the issue at hand and judgment to God.
- Confession as a means to show our acceptance of both the mercy and justice of God. Let it be Your will.
- "How long will you be negligent? As it was last year, so it is this year. As it was yesterday, so it is today. As long as you are negligent there will be no progress for you. Be watchful, lift up your heart, because you will have to stand before the Judgment seat of God and give an account for what you have done both in private and in public." - St. Pachomius
- The absolution prayed by the priest at confession or during Liturgy shows the mercy of God. St. Basil pg 31
- The Priest prays "He has appointed a day for recompense on which He will appear to judge the world in righteousness, and give each one according to his deeds." St. Basil pg 87
- "Whoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts, and says that there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first born of Satan." - St. Polycarp
- The need for the mystery of confession shows justice with regards to sin. Sin which is essentially transferred to Christ through the sacrament. Nathan said to King David after his confession "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 2 Sam 12:13

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 6.4: Fasting Between Tradition, Practices and the Missing Value

Building Block 6:
Towards Lent



Objective

To understand why the church implements fasting, the importance of fasting, how to practice fasting, and how to use fasting as a tool for our drawing near towards the Lord.

Application

With the guidance of your Father of Confession, pick a virtue to focus on during the next fast. Take time to discover the virtue, pray and seek the Lord's will.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 12:22-24](#), [Luke 12:34](#), [Genesis 2:16,17](#), [Matthew 17:20](#), [Galatians 5:22-23](#), [Mark 9:28](#)



Liturgy: [Great Lent Fraction](#)



Patristics: [Quotes on Fasting, Church Fathers](#)



Story: [The Moving of the Mountain, Abba Abraam the Syrian and Simon the Tanner](#)



Other: [The Spirituality of Fasting, HH Pope Shenouda III](#); [Bishop Youssef on the Holy Great Fast](#); [Fr. Anthony Mourad](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ A Dog Can Run, But an Eagle Can Fly (Why We Fast)

- In a scenario in which a dog is attached to an eagle through a rope, what will happen if the dog becomes stronger? (the dog will be able to run and the eagle will remain flying closer to the ground). What will happen if the eagle is fed more and becomes stronger than the dog? The eagle will have the strength to fly higher and higher and will lift the dog up with it. Now consider the dog to resemble our bodies and the eagle resembles our souls. During the time of fasting, we learn to feed the soul (eagle) instead of our body (dog). Through the feeding of the soul, our souls and bodies will grow closer to the Lord together.
- "Fasting is the earliest commandment known to mankind, for God commanded our ancestor Adam to refrain from eating a certain fruit from a certain tree (Genesis 2:16,17) but allowed him to eat from the rest." - HH Pope Shenouda III (linked above)
- Fasting has been an integral element of our faith since the very beginning with Adam not being allowed to eat from a certain tree. Thus, this, and many more examples, as emphasized in the Great Lent Fraction which is a beautiful reminder of the power of fasting and prayer:
 - "Fasting and prayer are those which raised Elijah to heaven and saved Daniel from the lions' den." - fasting saves us from our tribulations (as Daniel) and brings us nearer to God (as Elijah).
 - "Fasting and prayer are those which the people of Nineveh pursued until God had mercy on them." - fasting softens the heart of God and leads us into a life of repentance as the people of Nineveh.
 - "Fasting and prayer are those which the apostles pursued, until they preached to all nations and made them Christians, baptizing them." - fasting moves the hearts of those around us, just as the apostles fasted and preached to the nations. For it was not they themselves who moved the hearts of people, but rather the Lord through their pleasing to Him in prayer in fasting.
 - "And we too, let us fast from all evil, in purity and righteousness, and let us proceed forth to this Holy Sacrifice and partake of it with thanksgiving" - we too are called to fast as the prophets, apostles, and people in our Bible fasted and prayed.
- Together, fasting and prayer can move a mountain: "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to the mountain move from here to there, and it will move." - Matthew 17:20. This verse of the bible is proved to us in the story of the moving of the mountain by Simon the Tanner (linked above). The pope "sent for bishops and priests and exhorted them to fast and pray for the duration of those three days... They knelt down three times as the Pope made the sign of the cross with a sweeping gesture extending from one end of the mountain to the other. The mountain shook violently as if a strong earthquake had hit the land. Then it began moving upwards. Every time the worshippers



rose from their prayers, the mountain lifted itself upwards.”

+ Food Can Perish, But The Lord’s Love Cannot

- It is important to reorient the focus of the fast. At times, it is easy to become so consumed by what we will eat or what we won’t eat. However, remember that this is the opposite of what the fast intends for us to do. The fast is intended to clear our minds of all distractions and center our thoughts on God. Just as Christ reminds us, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?” - Luke 12:22-24
- The Lord does not want us to be preoccupied with the things of the world, rather to lay up our treasures in heaven with Him, for He will provide all that we need.
- This is a time to remove worldly distraction, to remove temptation, to weaken our body so that He may strengthen our soul. It is in the Lord that we will find strength. However, we are weak and likely many distractions can flood our mind, once the distractions come... call upon the Lord and upon the saints and upon His angels to guard you.
- In addition, food is temporary satisfaction, but our Lord is the one Who provides us with eternal joy. If we place our entire focus on food and what we will eat once the fast is over, we will lose the treasure of the fast. For the Lord reminds us that, “ where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” - Luke 12:34

+ Vices Can Come, But Virtues Can Prevail

- Use the blessed time of the fast to build our virtues and resist the vices. Although vices (evil) may come our way from the devil, we can fight these vices by seeking virtue.
- “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” - Galatians 5:22-23
- There are a plethora of virtues and fruits which we should aim to build in ourselves in order to become perfected in the image which the Lord initially created us in. Thus, the time of fasting is a beautiful and holy time during which we can begin our journey towards one virtue at a time.
- With the guidance of your father of confession, pick one virtue to work on this lent. Pray for the Lord to guide your choice and to reveal which virtue He would like you to begin working towards. Then, throughout the time of fasting focus on that virtue. Focus on reading scripture about virtue, reading what the fathers say about that virtue, practicing the virtue with all those around you, then finally spreading the joy of that virtue through being a light to others.
- Finally, as St.Basil the Great reminds us, through fasting we mimic the angels, “The fast is a weapon for protection against demons because ‘this kind does not go away, except through prayer and fasting’ (Mark 9:28). Our guardian angels more really stay with those who have cleansed our souls through fasting. The fast is imitating angels, cohabiting with the righteous, the training of a chaste life”.
- Let us train ourselves to live a life of chastity, self control, and imitation of the angels.

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 6:
Towards Lent



Lesson 6.5: Jesus Healing the Bleeding Woman

Objective

To learn from the bleeding woman to have an unshakable faith and an extraordinary courage.

Application

When we focus on God and nothing else (people around us, or distractions), when we are in need of healing God will be there for us, because we remain faithful. How will you demonstrate your faith in action in Jesus?

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matt 9:20-22](#), [Mark 5:25-34](#), [Luke 8:43-48](#),
[Psalm 16:4](#), [Matt 1:21](#), [Psalm 103:2-3](#)



Liturgy: [Keep us in Your faith](#)



Patristics: [St. Ephrem the Syrian](#),



Story: [The woman with the issue of blood](#)



Other: [Sermon Mark 5: Jesus Heals](#), [Orthodox Christianity](#).



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Consider reading the story from the Bible (Matt 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48)

- One of the most unique healing stories in the Bible is the healing of the woman with the issue of blood. It's such a powerful story that it can be found in all three gospels; Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:24-34, and Luke 8:43-48.
- Suffered many things: In the Gospel of St Mark, it was mentioned that This woman "Had suffered many things" Mark 5:26 She tried all the earthly ways to be healed. She went to many physicians, but the need is for Christ, the True Physician. The earthly ways don't work. "Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god" Psalm 16:4
- Spent all that she had: She even spent all her money on physicians to get healed. Only God can heal the body & the soul. "And you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" Matt 1:21
- She grew worse; After spending all her money on physicians, she didn't get better or stayed the same, she grew worse. Keep in mind that she's considered defiled & socially rejected with no hope for healing from any physician. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits; who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases" Psalm 103:2-3

+ Touch of Faith:

- We all approach God differently. This woman approached God with faith. She was rejected from society because of her illness. At that time she was considered defiled & whomever touched her is defiled too. But she approached Jesus with faith " For she said if only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Mark 5:28, her thinking that if she could only touch his robe that she would be healed is evidence that she had to fight her way through the crowd to get to Jesus.
- This woman had not said a word to Christ and had not even identified herself to Him. She didn't ask Him to make a decision to help her. She was probably too afraid and humble to do those things. But she did what she could, reaching out to Christ in faith. "Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction" Mark 5:29
- Although many people would have touched Jesus, when the woman with the issue of blood touched Him, Jesus asked "Who touched My clothes?" (Mark 5:30) When the disciples asked Him how we could ask such a question given the circumstances, He responded "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." (Luke 8:46). Unlike everyone else in the crowd that was touching Jesus without intent, the woman with the issue of blood touched Him intentionally and because of it, she was healed.

+ Gift of Peace:

- The Son of God knew who had touched Him, of course, but asked who it was in order to give her an opportunity to confess her faith, to make

clear to herself and to those in the crowd that our Lord's healing mercy extended even to her, that His mercy overcomes all the uncleanness and misery of those who come to Him in humble repentance. "And He said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go on peace, and be healed of your affliction" Mark 5:34

- "make known that the peace His mouth wove was the crown that crowned her faith. "your faith has saved you." If it was faith that restored her to life it is clear that He crowned her faith with a crown. This is why he cried out, "who touched my garments?" He said this so all the people might know who touched more than anyone else did. She chose to honor him more than others do, first, by approaching from behind, and second, in that she touched the fringe of his cloak. It was also fitting that he would honor her before all of these, she who chose to honor Him more than all these." - St. Ephrem the Syrian

+ Conclusion:

- At different times in our lives, we will all identify this woman. Perhaps we have a long-term struggle, a weakness or cross that we have borne for years. Perhaps we wrestle with some deep embarrassment or humiliation in our lives that we are afraid to acknowledge even to God, let alone other people. Maybe we have done or suffered something that makes us feel unclean or unworthy in our relationship. Maybe we can't find the words to express our pain even to God in prayer, much less to others. We may feel cut off from the Lord and separated from family and friends. If that's the case, we should follow this woman's example of touching the hem of His garment, of reaching out to Christ for mercy, healing, strength, and forgiveness as best we can. He will not embarrass us or send us away. Instead, He will respond graciously, as He always did to humble, sincere people who came to Him with faith, love, and repentance. We won't make Him unclean; instead, He will make us His beloved sons and daughters.
- Faith is something we all think we have, but when we are actually in need and a time of faith, we choose to throw it away.
- As we pray in the liturgy, "And we, too, who are sojourners in this place, keep us in Your faith,"
- Faith cannot be under circumstances, it must be always and constant.
- When we are troubled either in school or in work regarding faith, we should rely on God through that He will talk for us when we are in need.

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 6:
Towards Lent



Lesson 6.6: Narrow Gate and the Carrying my Cross

Objective

To understand what it means to carry your Cross and how to seek the Kingdom of Heaven while going through the narrow gate.

Application

Try to challenge yourself this week and practice self control and discipline when it comes to a sin or struggle you're facing. After seeking guidance, ask for difficult exercises from your guide that are challenging - and learn to walk this narrow gate.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Galatians 2:20](#), [Matthew 16:24](#), [Luke 14:27](#), [Luke 13:24](#), [Matthew 7:13-14](#), [Acts 14:22](#), [2 Corinthians 11:10-16](#)



Liturgy: [The Feast of the Cross](#)



Patristics: [Fr. Faltaus el-Souriyani](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: The struggles of St. Paul when he was preaching



Other: [Carry the Cross](#), [LAcopts Article](#), [The Narrow Gate](#), [Carrying the Cross](#), [Bishop Serapion](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + In Luke 9:23, Jesus looks at his disciples and tells them, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it."
 - In Roman times, the cross was seen as a terrifying object of torture, suffering, and execution. If you were carrying a cross, you were on your way to be crucified. When Jesus makes this statement, the disciples must have been terrified.
 - St. Paul struggled during his ministry and preaching of Jesus Christ. But that never stopped him or discouraged to preach the word of Jesus Christ.
 - Even when St. Paul was imprisoned, he still wrote letters to those he was preaching to and he carried his cross through it all.
- + So, what does it mean to carry your cross?
 - Carrying the cross is bearing suffering and partaking in Christ's suffering. St. Peter considered that bearing suffering for the sake of Christ is the same as partaking in Christ's sufferings; he wrote, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12)
 - Carrying the Cross in the form of spiritual struggles and self-control. We need to strive in our spiritual life and control our thoughts and senses.
 - We also struggle in prayer, fasting, and prostrations (metanoias), which are all examples of carrying the cross of spiritual struggle. The early Church experienced persecutions and presented thousands of martyrs.
 - Struggling in the service in the Church or our community and seeking the salvation of our neighbor is another form of carrying the Cross.
 - Enduring with thanks the trials of illness and poverty is yet another form of carrying the Cross.
- + Jesus Christ calls us to carry the Cross and we each have our own Cross to bear.
 - Jesus said: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (Matthew 16:24). "And he who does not take his cross, and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." (Matthew 10:38).
 - As Christians, we try to live our life according to the will of God. We commit to obey His commandments and we do not live as the culture tells us to. Living this way comes with persecution, temptation, and pain
 - We all have our struggles to bear and when we pray, fast and read what the Bible tells us to, we are able to bear the struggles and the cross that

was given to us.

- The last part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ says: “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14).
- The evils and temptations of the world are easy to fall into it and make it easy for us to follow. Our goal is to receive eternal salvation and Jesus Christ Himself said it is not easy to obtain it. Going through the narrow gate is the key to our eternal salvation. The wide gate is the trick of the devil in his war against man and God.
- The temptations of the world are broad and easy in the beginning, but it ends in destruction. On the other hand, the narrow gate is difficult and challenging in the beginning but the end is eternal salvation.
- Choosing good vs evil isn't always easy and it's not meant to be easy. We are meant to have struggles and hardships but when we choose Christ and follow His teachings, we achieve the best reward which is our eternal salvation.
- Discipleship to Christ goes hand in hand with suffering. In Acts, St. Luke records an event in the apostle Paul's life that helps us understand our experiences of profound suffering. When God called Paul from being the church's persecutor to be a gospel preacher, the Lord showed him how much he would suffer for the sake of His name (Acts 9:10-16)
- St. Paul expressed it all in 2 Corinthians 11:23-29, “*Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*”
- Our celebration of the Cross is actually a celebration of Christ's victory over Satan and conquering both sin and death. Also, in celebrating the Feast of the Cross, we are reminded that we are called to carry the cross. As our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, we also must be crucified; we must have fellowship in the likeness of His death so we may enjoy the blessings of His resurrection, as St. Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal. 2:20)

+ Some aspects of the narrow gate include:

- 1. Self-denial: It means that you should forget oneself, your own prestige, dignity, and rights in the love of God and people. (Matthew 16:24)
- 2. Renunciation: The Lord said to the rich man, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Matthew 19:21). The rich man said, “I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and goods. And I will say to my soul: Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” (Luke 12: 18-19). The rich man chose the broad gate vs the narrow gate and it led to him losing his life.
- 3. Disciplining the body: Body-disciplining means staying away from the sins of lust of the flesh and eyes, pride, envy or any of the mother's sins. Body-disciplining can be obtained through fasting and avoiding gluttony.
- 4. Self-control: This includes control over one's desires, lusts of the flesh, our words, our actions and control over one's mind and thoughts. When we control our thoughts, bodily desires, it prevents us from straying to improper things, in sinful thoughts, or in day dreams.
- 5. Labor for God's sake and in ministry: Labor for God's sake has always been the pride of the saints. Some labor in ministry (Ex. St. Paul). One who enters by the narrow gate and labors, will certainly rejoice at the fruit.
- 6. Endurance & Self Reproach: Bearing tribulations, without complaining. One who bears tribulations will have no desire to take revenge. Jesus said: “whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Matthew 5:39). Therefore, when someone offends you, rebuke yourself without any opposition between your inner self and your outward action.
- "In order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, you need to tread on the path of pain-the same path which our Lord Jesus trod upon while He was bearing your cross, and follow Him." Fr. Faltalous el-Souriyani
- "The narrow path is unattractive by nature but becomes easy when we choose to follow it, because of our hope for the future." St. John Chrysostom

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 6:
Towards Lent



Lesson 6.S7*: The Power of the Cross and His Name

Objective

To understand the importance of expressing the sign of the cross regularly with meaning and faith.

Application

When faced with struggles, evil thoughts, or temptations take refuge in the power of the cross!

References and Resources



Scripture: [1Corinthians 1:18](#), [Matthew 22:44](#), [Matthew 26:64](#), [Matthew 25:33-34](#), [Exodus 14:21](#), [Exodus 12:12-13](#), [Exodus 40](#), [Colossians 2:13-14](#), [John 3:14](#), [Luke 23:34](#), [Galatians 2:20](#)



Liturgy: [The sign of the cross](#)



Patristics: [Eldor Cleopa](#), [St. Isaac the Syrian](#)



Story: Feast of the Cross [Tout 17](#), [Baramhat 10](#), [Tobe 5](#),



Other: [The Feast of the Cross](#); [Legacy Curriculum Grade 9 Sept W3, pg 43](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What does the Cross represent to Christians?

- The Cross is salvation, eternal life, forgiveness of sins, sanctification, love, hope, peace. It is power, strength, honor, blessing. The Cross wards off evil, shield, security, weapon, victory, conqueror. The Cross is reconciliation between God and man.
- Before Christ's crucifixion the cross represented shame to the crucified and their family. It is the punishment for the worst of criminals.
- The cross was the most horrible device of execution known in history among the Romans. Used for degrading, despising and torturing criminals to death.
- The death of Christ on the cross came to transform defeat into victory, death into life. Making the Cross a beacon of transformation.
- "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." 1 Corinthians 1:18. Here St. Paul does not mention that the crucifixion only portrays the power of God, but rather simply the cross is the power of God. It has a transformative power to all of us.

+ Why is the right hand used to make the sign of the Cross?

- "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'" Matthew 22:44
- "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heavens." (Matthew 26:64)
- "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left..." Matthew 25:33-42

+ What are the signs of the Cross in the Old Testament?

- Opening of the Red Sea (Ex 14:21) - sky above, water on both sides and floor of the sea
- Passover (Ex 12:12-13) - The blood the lamb on top of the door and right and left posts
- The way God instructed the Israelites to pitch their camps. N, S, E, W.
- The way the Tabernacle is set up (Ex 40) - Arc of Covenant, the altar, laver, the incense altar, and mercy seat are in a straight line. In the tabernacle of meeting in front of the door on either side is the table of showbread and lampstand.

+ What are the stories behind the two feasts of the Cross?

- **First:** The Holy Cross was found by Queen Helen, the mother of Emperor Constantine, under a pile of dirt in Golgotha in 326 AD. The Jewish

leaders became angry because the sepulcher of Jesus Christ performed many miracles. So they ordered the people to dump their household dirt over the sepulcher to cover it and prevent visitors. After 200 years, it became a great heap.

- Queen Helen found an old Jewish man who told her that the Holy Cross is under the pile of dirt. She ordered the pile to be removed. There was a funeral procession going by. When the dead man was laid on the cross, he rose. Immediately Queen Helen knew this was Christ's cross. She built a church where the Cross was found. The consecration of the church is one of the feasts celebrated on the 17th of Tout.
- Second: A piece of the Holy Cross was taken from the church of the Cross by a persian prince and returned by Emperor Heraclius to its rightful place in 628 AD. This feast is celebrated on the 10th of Baramhat.
- The days the two feasts for the Cross are celebrated with a Cross is carried during the processions around the church.

+ Why do the faithful make the sign of the Cross?

- The sign of the cross thereby is a proclamation of our faith, a redemptive Creed.
- The Cross embodies the greatest and most important Christian creeds. The Lord Christ tasted death on it. This proves that He has true flesh, the same as that of all people.
- Reconciliation, Redemption, justification and forgiveness of debts (Col 2:13,14) all came through the Cross.
- The sign of the Cross gives peace, suranity, focus, cleanses the evil thoughts and gives power.
- In 312 AD Emperor Constantine saw the sign of the cross in the sky with the words "By this sign you will conquer". Tobe 5
- The Emperor placed the sign of the Cross on his banner and his army's shields. He went on to win the battle.
- Because of Constantine many converted to Christianity.

+ How do Christians benefit from the sign of the Cross?

- The Cross is an emblem to which every Christian believes and clings on to because of its spiritual and doctrinal meanings.
- The Cross is found in churches, in all our sculptures. It is worn around our neck. It is used to bless oneself by making the sign of the Cross. Prayers start and end with the sign of the Cross. The food is blessed with the sign of the Cross before it is consumed.
- The sign of the Cross is the declaration of one's faith. The sign of the Cross represents boasting about the faith, holding fast to it and showing love.
- The men of the clergy carry it in their hands and they bless themselves and others around them with it. The clothing of the clergy is adorned with the Cross for its benediction and its power.
- The sign of the cross is done numerous times during the liturgy.
- The sign of the Cross is used in all the ecclesiastical mysteries (Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Communion, Ordination, Marriage, Unction of the sick), all the signs and the consecrations of the church.
- "Do not do anything without signing yourself with the sign of the Cross! When you depart on a journey, when you begin your work, when you go to study, when you are alone, and when you are with other people, seal yourself with the Holy Cross on your forehead, your body, your chest, your heart, your lips, your eyes, your ears. All of you should be sealed with the sign of Christ's victory over hell. Then you will no longer be afraid of charms, evil spirits, or sorcery, because these are dissolved by the power of the Cross like wax before fire and like dust before the wind." – Elder Cleopa

+ What is the power of the Cross?

- We see that there is a power when we do the sign of the Cross, which Satan dreads. Satan's purpose is to ruin human beings and this was all destroyed and lost when Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross. Therefore, Satan dreads the sign of the Cross when it is done with faith and reverence.
- Moses and the Bronze serpent saved God's people (John 3:14), so will the sign of the Cross.
- The cross empowers us and exemplifies forgiveness to us. We remember how our sins were forgiven and how our Lord Jesus Christ addressed the Heavenly Father saying (while He was on the Cross): "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34)
- When we make the sign of the Cross, we remember that God came down from Heaven to our earth, and transported people from the left side to the right side, from obscurity to light, and from death to life.
- Dwelling in the gift of the Cross allows us to become beacons of Cross. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).
- "The knowledge of the cross is concealed in the sufferings of the cross. And the more our participation in its sufferings, the greater the perception we gain through the cross." St. Isaac the Syrian



Theme: Repentance

Building Block 6:
Towards Lent



Lesson 6.8: The Holy Week & The Feast of Resurrection

Objective

To understand the significance of each day's journey and events.

Application

Take this week and every reading from each day to reflect on your life and what things you might want or need to change, to focus on fasting, prayer and repentance.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 12:12-19](#), [Matthew 23:27-28](#), [Matthew 21:18-19](#), [Mark 11:20-21](#), [Matthew 11:15-18](#), [Matthew 25:14-26:2](#), [Matthew 25:1-13](#), [John 11:55-57](#), [Matthew 26:6-16](#), [Matthew 26:20-29](#), [Philippians 1:29](#), [Colossians 3:4](#)



Liturgy: [Living Holy week](#), [Pascha](#), [Holy Liturgy of the Feast of Resurrection](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Ephrem the Syrian](#), [St. Cyril of Jerusalem](#), [St. John the Wonderworker](#)



Story: [Jesus Enter Jerusalem](#)



Other: [Living Holy Week](#), [How to Benefit From Holy Week](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is Holy Pascha week?

- Holy Pascha (Passover) week is the holiest week of the year. Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection are the foundation upon which Christianity is built upon. Living Holy Week
- The church focuses on living Jesus Christ's journey throughout the whole week. Hence the general funeral prayer after Palm Sunday Liturgy.
- During this week, we pass through the suffering of our Lord to the Paradise on the Apocalypse night.
- During the Pascha week the Agpyea is not prayed. The focus is on Christ's suffering. Instead the Pascha hours are prayed, which are arranged according to the events of the week.

+ Hosanna (Palm) Sunday

Consider this discussion: How did the resurrection of Lazarus affect the response of the crowd on Palm Sunday? Did Jesus enter Jerusalem on a warhorse surrounded with an army? Why not? (He came to bring His love, coming on a peaceful donkey) What was the significance of the donkey? Whose prophecy was being fulfilled? (Zechariah) What does "Hosanna" mean? ("I ask you to save me") Where did the greeting the people gave Jesus on Palm Sunday come from? (Psalm 118: 25-26) Thus Jesus is being recognized as King. What is the significance of the greeting, "Son of David"? (Jesus is recognized as the Messiah.) Did Jesus sneak into the city, afraid of its leaders since He knew what they would do to Him only a few days later? What would you have done in that situation? Does the raising of Lazarus and the triumphal entry into Jerusalem have any effect on the priests who will later condemn Jesus? (It is because of these and the response of the people, that He was judged and condemned.)

- This event occurred after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.
- On this day, we declare Jesus Christ our King!
- When the time came for our Salvation, Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem publicly among the people who came to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem.
- When Jesus Christ approached the city, the multitude started to praise Him saying "Hosanna in the Highest. This is the King of Israel. Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord of Hosts." John 12:12-19
- The people were looking at Jesus Christ as an earthly king.



+ Monday: The Tree of Life

- On this day, Jesus Christ reveals to us His power over all creation. Each creation is intended for a specific purpose. Man and tree are alike and are intended to bear fruit. When they don't bear fruit and only appear to the world as fruitful, it is deceiving, hypocritical and displeases God. Matthew 23:27-28
- On the way from Bethany to the temple, the Lord Jesus Christ cursed a fig tree that was full of leaves and did not have any fruit. This was an example of those who called themselves believers and showed they had good exteriors but were fruitless. The fruitless fig tree in Matthew 21:18-19 and Mark 11:20-21
- "The fig tree with its broad leaves represents the wide road. Also it reminds us of the sin which Adam tried to cover with its leaves." St. John Chrysostom
- Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in it. Then Jesus taught in the temple and worked miracles. The chief priests were angered and started to plot His death. Matthew 11:15-18
- The evening of Monday is meant for us to get ready for the second coming. We are getting ready to share in Christ's sufferings and this can only be achieved through faith.

+ Tuesday: The Judge of the World

- On this day, Jesus Christ teaches us about the Kingdom of Heaven and the end of the world. He talked to His disciples about faith and about the example made by the fig tree.
- The Pharisees sought to fight with Jesus Christ in the temple but the Lord used this time to teach and talk to them about the Day of Judgment and used parables such as the parable of the talents to convey this message. Matthew 25:14-26:2
- The Church stresses the Second Coming, the end of the world and urges us to get ready. Jesus Christ reminds us that He is coming at an hour which we do not know and we need to have our lamps lit and ready. The parable of the 10 virgins; 5 wise and 5 foolish. Matthew 25:1-13
- The last hour of Tuesday eve the priests and Jewish authority planned His capture. John 11:55-57

+ Wednesday: Day of Love and Betrayal

- On this day, we read about the love of Mary of Bethany and how much she sacrificed her livelihood to anoint Jesus Christ for His Burial. At the same time, we witness the betrayal of Judas Iscariot. Matthew 26:6-16
- When Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus Christ, this symbolizes the soul making an amendment to God for the treason of His disciple. It symbolizes humility and true love for our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that we may wash the feet of Jesus Christ with our tears of repentance like Mary of Bethany did.
- Judas criticized Mary for wasting the cost of the expensive perfume on Jesus Christ by saying it could've been sold and the money used to give to the poor. But Jesus Christ encourages her to continue and serve Him for she had done this for preparation for His burial.
- Mary gave her heart to Jesus Christ and Judas criticized her out of selfishness and jealousy. Mary of Bethany sacrificed her life and all her money for Jesus Christ and Judas stole from the money box and betrayed Christ for 30 silver coins.
- Mary acted out of loyalty, love and humility whereas Judas out of betrayal and jealousy. He thought about money and forgetting about our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Mary was serving the poor through Jesus Christ while Judas was preventing and discouraging service to both.

+ Maundy (Covenant) Thursday

- Jesus Christ instituted the Last Supper, giving us the bread that comes from Heaven, the giver of life, His Holy Body and His Precious Blood. He fulfilled the prophecy, showing the disciples that He replaced the first covenant (eating the paschal meal) with a new covenant. "...after supper, He took bread...and the cup...and gave it to them saying 'take, this is My Body...this is My Blood which is the new covenant...do this in memory of me.'" Matthew 26:20-29.
- Jesus Christ also washed the feet of His disciples and this symbolizes Him purifying their hearts from vanity and teaching them the greatest should be the least. We learn humility, love for our neighbor through this act.
- Following the Liturgy of the Water, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy of the Eucharist. The reason we celebrate the liturgy on Thursday is because that evening, Jesus Christ established the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist after the Last Supper.

- *Why do we celebrate the Eucharist? Are they truly His body and blood or only a symbol? How do they become His body and blood? (a mystery!) What can happen if they are taken unworthily?*



- As we approach the Crucifixion, the number and intensity of events steadily increases. It starts with the Last Supper, the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Final message to the Apostles, Peter's denial 3 times, the prayer at Gethsemane, Judas' Betrayal and the round of trials.

+ Good Friday

- This day has the most prayers prayed, readings read, hymns chanted than any other day of the year. This is all because of the perfect sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ and the day is focused on the Crucifixion.
- This day represents pain, the day of sorrows. It is the commandment for us "not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Philippians 1:29. When we are participating in the Holy Pascha week through fasting, prayer and repentance, we suffer for His sake. Suffering is a gift from God, so that we can experience His satisfaction. Through meditation of the Cross, we witness His Divine love for us.
- This day of suffering for God is at the same time a day of rejoicing for all humankind who obtain Salvation through the Cross. Achieving what was unthinkable, Salvation and eternal life at the price of Jesus Christ's Body & Blood.
- At the Cross, the Church contemplates the great love that manifested on the Cross while our Savior Jesus Christ went through the unknown and unimaginable-death. This moment is truly a blessing and unique in that the devil was terrified and tied and those who had slept in hope rejoiced.
- This is the moment that the thief entered Paradise, opening the door to paradise for humankind. Once our Savior Jesus Christ had gone through the terror of death, this terror vanished. No longer would those who die in Christ would be enslaved by death.
 - *Which thief was wise and why? Who was the noble Joseph? What did he do?*
- The sufferings of our Lord are the price of our salvation for which we are rejoicing. No words or greetings are spoken after Good Friday. We contemplate the sufferings and ultimate sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ while we stand at the Cross-the source of our rejoicing.

+ Bright Saturday

- Passover is a joyful celebration, from which we pass over from death to life, from sin to holiness, from Hades to Paradise.
- All the prayers and rites are praises for the passage from death to life. The Church introduces us to life in Heaven.
- As the gate to eternity, the Resurrection has three powerful effects upon our lives. It promises us 1) A New Life, 2) Eternal Glory and 3) Restoration to the Image of God.
- The Resurrection is the gateway to lasting victory. It is a promise of Eternal Glory. When Jesus Christ appears in glory, we will appear with Him in glory too. Colossians 3:4
- The Resurrection gives us Christians hope and trust in the heavenly world. With the Resurrection we realize that nothing is impossible.
- To die with Jesus Christ is the end of our "mortal life" and the Resurrection with Jesus Christ is the beginning of our "everlasting life".
- Believing in the Resurrection leads to a life of righteousness and virtue. Love of eternity makes the righteous long for something greater and more eminent than what the world gives.
- "The Lamb of God communicates with us on the holy and light-bearing night of Resurrection. We pray for this when we are just beginning to prepare for Lent, and afterwards many times during the course of the Great Fast: that the lord would vouchsafe us to partake of the Holy Mysteries on the night of Holy Pascha. At that time the grace of God acts in a special way upon men's hearts. We partake of the Christ Resurrected, we become partakers of His Resurrection. " St. John the Wonderworker
- "Let us praise Him, Who prevailed and quickened us by His stripes! Praise we Him, Who took away the curse by His thorns! Praise we Him Who put death to death by His dying. - St. Ephrem the Syrian;
- "For it was not a mere man who died for us, but the Son of God, God made man." St. Cyril of Jerusalem



Building Block 7: Life Matters

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 7.1: Life and Faith: Timothy vs. Demas

Building Block 7:
Life Matters



Objective

To understand what faithfulness is and how to live a life of faithfulness through the example of St. Timothy.

Application

One way to grow as disciples is to study the disciples in the Bible. The life of Timothy gives us many examples that we can use in our personal lives. Put together a list of things you can learn about Timothy from the Bible, as well as lessons that we can apply to our own lives.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Corinthians 4:17](#), [Phil. 2:19-22](#), [1 Tim. 5:23](#), [Corinthians 4:14](#), [2 Timothy 4:10](#), [Phylimon 24](#), [2 Timothy 4:10](#), [Matthew 7:16-20](#), [2 Corinthians 13:5](#), [Luke 18:42](#), [Mark 10:52](#), [2 Corinthians 6:4-10](#), [2 Corinthians 11:23-28](#), [Mark 16:16](#), [John 3:16](#)



Liturgy: [Keep us in Your faith"](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#), [Saint Theophan the Recluse](#)



Story: [Life of St. Timothy](#)



Other: [Life of Faith by H. H. Pope Shenouda III](#), [St George Greek Orthodox Church](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Timothy Vs Demas

Consider this discussion: What do you think it means to follow? What are some of your favorite people or things to follow and keep up with? Do you show that same kind of devotion to Jesus? Why or why not? Do you find it easy or hard to commit to something for a long period of time? What would help you stay strong in your commitment to follow Jesus? Do people know that you are a follower of Jesus, or do they have to guess?

- Timothy:

- Timothy was a close companion and messenger of Paul the Apostle. He was called by Paul his "dear and faithful child in the Lord" 1 Corinthians 4:17. Timothy appears to have been entirely at Paul's disposal from Paul's visit to Lystra on the Second Journey until the time of Paul's death in Rome, a period of perhaps 17 years. Timothy was by nature reserved and timid. Paul nevertheless commissioned Timothy to strengthen the recalcitrant Corinthians in their faith and in their loyalty to Paul.
- For all his shyness, Timothy could be trusted above many others for his pastoral concern and his gentle tact in dealing with awkward situations. When in prison, Paul wrote to the Christian community at Philippi, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But Timothy's worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel." (Philippians 2:19-22) Although Timothy may have been subject to "frequent ailments" (1 Timothy 5:23), he seems to have been constantly ready to undertake dangerous journeys on difficult errands for Paul. His deliberate action leading to his martyrdom (some thirty years after Paul's) shows a similar courage, if not quite the same aggressive initiative as that of the apostle.

- Demas:

- On the other hand, Demas was mentioned 3 times by St Paul in Corinthians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:10 & Phylimon 24. Demas used to serve with St Paul but he couldn't continue & departed from St. Paul. "for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia." 2 Timothy 4:10
- The difference between St Timothy & Demas is the foundation of their belief, their Faith. St Timothy believed in God & trusted Him. He forsake the earthly matters however Demas loved the world and forsake God.
- Difficult times reveal the quality of one's transformation. Moments don't define the quality of our faith, they reveal it.
- Great Christians can fall. Demas was a guy that no one perhaps would have suspected to abandon his brethren in hard times.



- Demas was unable to stay focused on the temporary nature of this life; his love of this world outweighed his love for the next life.

+ What is Faith?

- Faith is not simply a belief but it is a way of life and how we live a life of faith.
- How can you know if your faith is true faith? You can test your faith by the fruits of the Holy Spirit in your life. Jesus Christ said, "You will know them by their fruits....every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (*Matthew 7:16-20*). So you can test yourself and ask yourself 'Does your faith bear fruit?'
- Faith is a higher power than our limited senses. Our senses only detect physical or materialistic things. We can't physically see or feel faith but it's something inside of us that helps us throughout our lives.
- Faith is not only a prayer that we pray but a way of life and a way we live our lives. If you are living a life of faith, the fruits of faith will be apparent in your everyday lives. As St. Paul said, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

+ Faith is the foundation of everything.

- By having faith, you allow and accept for miracles (or the grace of God) to occur in your life no matter how small or big they are.
- There are many examples in the Holy Bible that display faith and miracles: When Jesus Christ healed the blind man of Jericho he said: "Your faith has healed you" (Luke 18:42, Mark 10:52). When Jesus Christ healed the man with leprosy, "Your faith has made you well" (Luke 17:19). To the sick woman He said, "Take heart daughter, your faith has healed you" (Matthew 9:22).
- These people all had faith and because of their faith, they were healed.
- Oftentimes, healings come not from the miracle worker but from the faith of the person being healed. For this reason Christ says: "Your faith has healed you" (Luke 18:42, Mark 10:52).

+ Faith will be faced with Obstacles.

Compare St. Paul's facing trials and imprisonments for the faith, to Demas' faith.

- St. Paul explains what it is to be a follower of God (2 Corinthians 6:4-10) "But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much [a]patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by [b]sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." and what he had to endure to be His follower (2 Corinthians 11:23-28) "Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches."
- Demas: 2 Timothy 4:10. Left, because he 'loved' the world. You may consider discussing the simplicity of the obstacle, but the truthfulness and relatability of it. As such, we must truly pray with the priest saying "keep us in your faith" (Basilian liturgy, after commemoration of the saints)
- Sadly, examples like Demas are still lived out today by those who choose the temporary benefits of this world over the eternal riches of heaven.
- "This is the work of faith: If you believe, suffer all things; if you do not suffer, you do not believe. For are not the things promised [so great], that he who believes would choose to suffer even ten thousand deaths? The kingdom of heaven is set before him - and immortality, and eternal life. Therefore, whoever believes will suffer all things. Then faith is shown through his works. In truth, one might have said: Not merely did you believe, but through your works you manifested it - through your steadfastness through your zeal." St. John Chrysostom

+ Faith and belief in the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of heaven

- We can not see the Holy Spirit, but we presume its existence. When a person dies, we say that his spirit, which we have not seen, has left his body.
- Faith is concerned with the destiny of this spirit, if it will go to heaven or to hell.



- All these matters, the Holy Spirit, resurrection, eternity, judgment, heaven, grace and hell are all unseen things. But with having faith, we have a belief in those things. No one can speak about eternal life and all things associated with it except by faith. The same goes if you believe in the second life, you believe in unseen matters and therefore have FAITH.
- Faith is crucial and the beginning of the road which leads to God and our eternal salvation. Without faith you can not be united with God and if you're not united with God, you can not obtain eternal salvation. Just as St. Mark says **"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"** (Mark 16:16) and St. John **"That whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16). Therefore, we need to have faith and a strong faith in order to be saved and receive the kingdom of God.
- We receive salvation when we partake of the Holy Eucharist but taking communion without faith is simply eating bread and drinking wine. You need to have faith and truly believe that the Eucharist is the Holy Body and Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

+ How can we apply Faith in our lives?

- "The final goal of man is communion with God. The path to this communion has been precisely defined: faith, and walking in the Commandments with the help of God's grace." -Saint Theophan the Recluse
- Prayer: establish a regular time and a private place. You should have a specific rule for both morning and evening. Don't try to "wing it." This is not a relaxation exercise, but a path of communion with your God. The Orthodox prayer books are filled with prayers that have been well-tested and used for hundreds of years. Prayer does not need to be a creative activity. Above all, you need to be sincere. Keep your awareness in your heart and concentrate on the words of the prayer. Once you establish a rule, always keep it. Work with your spiritual Father on this.
- Participation: participate in the church events. The Church in Her Holy wisdom offers us a cycle of fasting and feasting. This cycle is based on the life of Christ. The key is to learn to follow it, to participate in it, and not to allow other activities in life to be viewed as more important. Follow the prescribed fast times. Participate in the major feast days of the Church. Plan your schedule to make this a reality.
- Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner" This prayer has the potential to transform your consciousness and bring you closer to God. It is a prayer rooted deeply in the tradition of the Church. It is a prayer to be repeated over and over, many times. You can begin to develop the use of this prayer by incorporating a number of repetitions in your daily prayer rule. It is a simple prayer and you can learn to say it everywhere and at any time. In fact, your aim should be to make it an unending prayer. In this way your whole life becomes a life of prayer.
- Watchfulness: Watchfulness is the action to guard us from our automatic reactions to thoughts stimulated by our senses. It is being attentive to your inner self.
- Taming passions: This task begins with acknowledging that you ARE often controlled by your likes and dislikes. Begin by learning to say no when you are being led to indulge in something you know is not good for you. Gaining discipline in what you eat is a first place to start. This is one of the benefits of the fasting we are advised to do.
- Putting others first: It is selfless relationships that lead us to happiness and a life close to God. This is what Christ meant when He asked us to love our neighbor as ourselves. You cannot act as an isolated being and be close to God.
- Spiritual fellowship: Who you spend your time with makes a difference. If you choose wisely, you will get the encouragement you need. If you do not, you will find you are encouraged to give up the struggle and instead seek a life of pleasure and self-satisfaction. It is a common saying that you are known by the company you keep.
- Reading the scripture & the Holy fathers: What you read has an impact on the way you think. So does what you watch on TV or at the movies. Think about what you want to let into your mind to influence your thinking. Your reading should be something that will be a positive impact on your spiritual growth, that will shape your mind and orient it towards God.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 7.S2* (Apostles Feast): The Role of the Apostles and the Great Commission

Building Block 7:
Life Matters



Objective

Understand the role of the Apostles and how we continue to live out the mission God set for them.

Application

Let us pick one of these 10 points and try to focus on it this week.

Remember our calling to be forerunners of God. Every person we meet, we either prepare them to meet God, or prevent them.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Mark 16:15](#), [Acts 2:2-4](#), [Matthew 5:14,16](#), [John 15:16](#), [Colossians 3:23-24](#), [1 Peter 4:10](#), [Luke 10:1-20](#).



Liturgy: [The reading of Praxis and Synaxarium](#)



Patristics: [St Cyril of Alexandria on Luke homely 61 & 62](#)



Story: [Pentecost day](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Pentecost Day-Mission begins and Jesus calls the apostles

Consider discussing this as an introduction: The great commission was not just a suggestion Jesus made to the disciples; it was a command based off of the greatest commandment, which is love God and love your neighbor as yourself. Why is every Christian called to be a witness? Why aren't most Christians more bold in sharing their faith? Can you be a "witness" without using any words? Why or why not? If every believer took this responsibility seriously, would the gospel reach the ends of the earth?

- On the ascension day Jesus told His disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15 & He told them to wait for the Holy Spirit, the comforter. Which they received on Pentecost day.
- "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:2-4

+ Jesus calls us too:

Consider discussing in what ways we are being called prior to justifying the call in the section below.

- The Apostles were sent out by Jesus Christ to prepare the cities that Jesus Christ would soon enter. This was a great mission He gave them, but this mission applies to us as well. To be an apostle means to 'be sent' according to the word's meaning from the Greek.
- We are called to be sent into the world, wherever it may be, and prepare others to meet Jesus Christ. Everytime someone meets us, we should be preparing them to meet Jesus Christ, and even desire that they see Christ in us.
- We read a passage of the Acts of the Apostles every liturgy to see how the Holy Spirit was working in the early church. The book of the Acts of the Apostles has no ending since the Holy Spirit is still working in the church. That is why the Synaxarium is read after it in every liturgy.
- Jesus calls who believes in Him to be different than the world. He called us "the salt of the world, the light of the world". "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor. How shall it be seasoned?" Matthew 5:13. We are called to season the world to make the world taste God in us. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" Matthew 5:14,16
- He called for us all to labor & bear fruit. To serve others and lead them to know God & glorify Him. "You did not choose Me, but I chose and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." John 15:16. "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" Colossians 3:23-24
- He chose us to serve one another "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of

God” I Peter 4:10

+ How to be a good apostle?

- 10 Points We Can Learn From the Great Commission:

1. The 72 were sent as forerunners to the cities where Christ would soon go (Luke 10:1). We are also called to be forerunners of Christ. Every time we meet someone, we are either preparing a way for the Lord, or we are an obstacle for this person to see the Lord. Either preparing or preventing an encounter with Christ.
2. Christ tells them they are outnumbered (Luke 10:2). We work/serve from the position of the underdog. Despite it being a difficult challenge set out for us, he tells us it is a great/noble mission.
3. We are weak/vulnerable as lambs among wolves (Luke 10:3). We are weak, vulnerable. Our strength comes from Him since He is the Good Shepherd. We have nothing to fear since He is always with us.
 - St Cyril of Alexandria says, "How then does he command the holy apostles, who are innocent men and “sheep,” to seek the company of wolves, and go to them of their own will? Isn't the danger apparent? Are they not set up as ready prey for their attacks? How can a sheep prevail over a wolf? How can one so peaceful conquer the savageness of beasts of prey? “Yes,” he says, “for they all have me as their Shepherd: small and great, people and princes, teachers and students. I will be with you, help you, and deliver you from all evil. I will tame the savage beasts. I will change wolves into sheep, and I will make the persecutors become the helpers of the persecuted. I will make those who wrong my ministers to be sharers in their pious designs. I make and unmake all things, and nothing can resist my will.” (Commentary on Luke, Homily 61).
4. We must be fully reliant on Him (Luke 10:4). We can not rely on gimmicks or earthly tools. Our only support is Christ.
 - St. Cyril of Alexandria comments on this and says "When preaching to people everywhere the Word that he spoke and calling the inhabitants of the whole earth to salvation, he requires them to travel about without purse, bag or shoes. They are to travel rapidly from city to city and from place to place. Let no one say that the object of his teaching was to make the holy Apostles refuse the use of the ordinary articles of equipment. What good or what harm would it do them to have shoes on their feet or go without them? By this command, he does wish them to learn and to attempt to practice that they must lay all thought of their livelihood on him. They must call to mind the saint who said, “Cast your care on the Lord, and he will feed you.” He gives what is needed for life to the saints." (Commentary on Luke, Homily 62).
 - We should learn from this that no matter what we may be using or have in our lives to help us (school, technology, clothing, etc.) all of this is meaningless and useless without Christ.
5. He only expects us to bring the peace of the Kingdom of God wherever we go (Luke 10:5,6). He does not expect that we have extreme talents.
 - If we have a real relationship with Christ, we will have the Kingdom of Peace/Heaven within us, so naturally wherever we go we will bring this with us. He ultimately wants us to be ourselves, He does not want us to put on a show.
6. Be content with what we have in our lives (Luke 10:7,8). Whatever reward is given to us, let us be happy and thankful for it.
7. With whatever means God has given us, use them for His service (Luke 10:9). it may be physically healing the sick, but it could also be bringing healing to a person who is downcast, or giving someone hope. To heal someone's sickness can come in many forms.
8. Do not worry about people's rejection (Luke 10:10,11). Do not take it personally if someone rejects your offer of peace and healing. If they do not desire to see Christ, that is their free will.
 - Christ tells us whoever rejects us, is rejecting Him, and if they reject Him, they reject the Father (Luke 10:16). Think about how much honor God is giving us. We are representatives of Jesus Christ the Son of God. When we serve one another, do not make it about ourselves.
9. We will come back victorious by glorifying Christ (Luke 10:17-19). We will see the hand of God working with us. He has given us authority of the power of the evil one.
10. Rejoice because our names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20). We are joyful not for what we have done in service, but because we are given the grace to be with God in the everlasting life. That is the ultimate prize. It is about our identity, not our utility. Our worth is in who we are, not what we do.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 7.3: Boundaries with Friends / Self Esteem

Building Block 7:
Life Matters



Objective

Understand what healthy friendships look like and how to set appropriate boundaries and limits

Application

Choose friends that bring you closer to Christ. Be that good friend to those around you

References and Resources



Scripture: [Proverbs 17:17](#), [John 15:13](#), [1 Corinthians chapter 15](#), [Proverbs 13:20](#), [Colossians 3:12-14](#), [Proverbs 18:24](#), [Proverbs 27:6](#), [Philippians 2:3-5](#), [1 Samuel 18:1-23:15-18](#); [Wisdom of Sirach 6:5-17 \(LXX\)](#)



Liturgy: [Greet one another](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Ambrose](#)



Story: [David & Jonathan](#)



Other: [Choosing the Right Friends](#), [Article on Friendship](#), [Video Series on Friendship](#), [How stuff works?](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Friend or follower?

- "Friendships are relationships that involve two very critical dimensions – interdependence and voluntary participation," explains Northern Illinois University psychologist and friendship expert Dr. Suzanne Degges-White in an email interview.
- In fact, research has revealed that it takes about 50 hours' worth of face time for a mere acquaintance to become a casual friend, then 90 hours to upgrade to the status of a standard friend. Then, it takes about 200 additional hours of interaction for a "close friendship" to develop! [source: Hellman].
- The four core types of friendship
- Acquaintances: They're the people who aren't complete strangers, who you run into regularly at a place like the coffee shop, but you don't really know.
- Casual Friends: are those that we try to run into or mix with.
- Standard Friends: They're the people you trade secrets with.
- Close Friends: are the rarest type of friend and the kind of friend that we all need to have in our lives. It's the type of friend who loves you no matter what. "A friend loves at all times" (Proverbs 17:17) So, love is a vital part of a true friendship, true love or friendship is the one that gives and not takes."
- It's important to note that in today's social media-heavy society, people often get confused about their friend status. "The process of actually 'making true friends' hasn't changed! What has changed is the blanket labeling of acquaintances, acquaintances of acquaintances, and close friends all with the same title, 'friend,' Degges-White says. "All of the followers, FB friends, etc. are not all going to even be 'true friend candidates,' as you probably have little in common, seldom (if ever) even see them in person, and probably couldn't call on them for much in the way of support."

+ Who are my Friends?

- A Friend could be a blessing & could be a curse.
- Young people face severe peer pressure to act in certain ways, to talk in certain ways, to dress in certain ways, to join certain groups, and to try certain things. Any deviation from what is considered the "normal" or popular thing to do can result in ridicule and rejection.
- Negative peer pressure can cause confusion between peer values & family or church values.



- Positive peer pressure challenges each other to goodness. True Friends are also willing to sacrifice and persevere with each other, “Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

+ So Don’t be fooled. It really matters

- There is a nice saying which says, “tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are.” Your friends reveal you, and your personality. “Evil company corrupts good habits.” 1 Corinthians chapter 15)
- “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed” (Proverbs 13:20).
- If your friend is negatively influencing you by encouraging any behavior that is outside of the guidelines of God's image and likeness, then the friendship should be re-evaluated.
- Proverbs 12:26 says "The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray."
- Ungodly friendships lead to 3 different scenarios: 1) You will attract that person to God and a spiritual life. 2) You will walk a middle ground and do some things that are good and some things that are bad and you start to change slowly and negatively. 3) You've been dragged the other way and towards a bad direction and everything you've done good is destroyed.

+ How to be a true friend?

- Read this passage and discuss, *“Pleasant speech gains more friends for itself, and a sweet-speaking tongue will multiply pleasant exchanges. Let those who are at peace with you be many, but let only one in a thousand be your advisor. If you make friends, test them thoroughly and don't trust them quickly. Some are friends when it is convenient, but they won't stay around during hard times. There are friends who turn into enemies, and they will reveal your disgraceful arguments. There are friends who are companions at your table, but they won't stay during hard times. They will act as if your belongings are theirs, and they will be bold toward your household slaves. If you are brought low, they will be against you, and they will abandon you. Stay away from your enemies, and be careful with your friends. Trustworthy friends are a strong shelter; whoever finds one has found a treasure. Trustworthy friends have no price, and no one can estimate their worth. Trustworthy friends are life's medicine, and those who fear the Lord will find them. Those who fear the Lord will direct their friendships well, because they will associate with people of like mind.”* (Sirach 6:5-17)
- Ben Sirach says, *Let those who are at peace with you be many*, this what we do in the liturgy right after the reconciliation prayers is to greet one another with the holy kiss as a sign of being at peace with all.
- Love: “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” (Colossians 3:12-14)
- Kindness: “A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24) Treat people in the way you expect them to treat you.
- Honesty: “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” (Proverbs 27:6). This means that a true friend will always persevere
- Sacrifice/Support: “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-5). A true friend shows continual loyalty as was the case with David and Jonathan in the Old Testament. Jonathan helped him even at the cost of Saul’s anger and Jonathan’s own claim to the throne (1 Samuel 18:1 – 23:15-18).
- Saint John Chrysostom: He says in his homily on 1 Thessalonians Chapter 2. “He who loves, ought so to love, that if he were asked even for his soul or life, and it were possible, he would not refuse it... Truly a faithful friend is the medicine of life. (Ecc. 6:16). Truly a faithful friend is a strong defense (Ecc. 6:14). For what will not a genuine friend perform?... Though you should name infinite treasures, none of them is comparable to a genuine friend... If anyone has a friend such as I speak of, he will acknowledge the truth of my words. Though he sees his friend every day, he is not satisfied. For him he prays for the same things as for himself... from a friend we may both ask a favor, and receive one without suspicion... I speak of spiritual friends, who prefer nothing to friendship. Such was Paul, who would willingly have given his soul, even though not asked.... But consider, in the tinge of the apostles, I do not speak of the chief men, but of the believers themselves generally, ‘all,’ he says, ‘were of one heart and soul: and neither did anyone say that any of the things possessed was his own ... and they distributed to each, as anyone had need’”
- Saint Ambrose says: “Preserve, then, my sons, that friendship ye have begun with your brethren, for nothing in the world is more beautiful than that. It is indeed a comfort in this life to have one to whom thou canst open thy heart, with whom thou canst share confidences, and to whom thou canst entrust the secrets of thy heart. It is a comfort to have a trusty man by thy side, who will rejoice with thee in prosperity, sympathize in troubles, encourage in persecution. What good friends those Hebrew children were whom the flames of the fiery furnace did



not separate from their love of each other! Of them we have already spoken. Holy David says well: “Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant, inseparable in their life, in death they were not divided.” Let not thy warning be harsh, nor thy rebuke bitter, for as friendship ought to avoid slavery, so, too, ought it to be free from arrogance. For what is a friend but a partner in love, to whom thou unitest and attachest thy soul, and with whom thou blendest so as to desire from being two to become one; to whom thou entrustest thyself as to a second self, from whom thou dearest nothing, and from whom thou demands nothing dishonorable for the sake of thine own advantage. Friendship is not meant as a source of revenue, but is full of seamlessness, full of grace. Friendship is a virtue, not a way of making money. It is produced, not by money, but by esteem, not by the offer of rewards, but by a mutual rivalry in doing kindness.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 7.4: Addiction / Roots and Causes

Building Block 7:
Life Matters



Objective

Understand the 6 steps that take us from temptation, to sin. Understanding the way to combat this is through the grace of God with resilience.

Application

We must stand fast and be vigilant of the attacks of the devil, to prevent his temptations from reaching the third stage. This can be done by simply saying "no, I do not want to partake of this sin. Lord Jesus, help me." Regularly pray the Jesus prayer as a way to constantly have our focus on Him. Never lose hope if we become addicted, but understand that those before have been in the same position and through the grace of God, God has allowed them to overcome the passion. We need resilience. Can not defeat it by ourselves, so we cry out to God for mercy and strength. (Discuss the Prayer after Our Father which the Priest prays.) Biggest thing is to learn our triggers, avoid them, and never lose hope.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Corinthians 6:12](#), [1 Corinthians 3:16](#), [Gal 5:1](#), [Matthew 5:28](#), [Romans 7:14-20](#), [John 4:13,14](#), [Matthew 11:28](#), [Luke 15:23,24](#), [Isaiah 43:25](#), [Isaiah 49:16](#), [Zechariah 2:8](#), [Genesis 39:9](#), [1 Corinthians 15:33](#), [2 Thessalonians 3:10](#).



Liturgy: [Litany of the Sick](#); [The Prayer after 'Our Father' addressed to the father, \(inaudible prayer by the priest\)](#) [Liturgy of St. Basil](#)



Patristics: Priest George Maximov, [St. Augustine](#)



Story: [Joseph the righteous](#)



Other: [Unseen Warfare by Theophan the Recluse](#); [Suscopts Article on Addiction](#), [CAAM Articles](#), [Legacy SUS Curriculum](#) [GIO Filler Lesson](#), [Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is an addiction?

- Addiction is a bad habit which results in losing control over a specific behavior or drugs until the person becomes submissive to that habit's effect throughout his daily activities. St Paul explained "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." [1 Corinthians 6:12](#)
- There are different types of addiction;
 - Substance use: displayed by compulsive substance use. People with Substance use disorder(SUD) have an intense focus on using a certain substance(s) such as alcohol, tobacco, or illicit drugs, to the point where the person's ability to function in day to day life becomes impaired.
 - Behavioral addiction: is the failure to resist an impulse, drive, or temptation to perform an act that is harmful to the person or to others. Examples are Workaholics, internet, video game, pornography, sex, eating, gambling, and social media.

+ There are many consequences of addiction, whether Substance or Behavioral.

1. Physical side effects; Change of sleep and/or appetite schedule, Headaches or chronic pain, Sweating, muscle tensions, Tightness in chest & shortness of breath, Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, Heart palpitation, infection of heart lining and valves, Liver and Kidney disease, Lung complications, including pneumonia, collapsed veins.
2. Psychological side effects; Anxiety, Restless, Depression, Poor concentration, Irritability, Suicidal thoughts.
3. Social side effects; Distancing oneself from relationships (divorce, loneliness), Aggressiveness, Failure in performing well at school or work.
4. Spiritual side effects;
 - Destroying God's Temple (the addict body). "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?" [1 Corinthians 3:16](#)
 - Hindering a person's repentance.



- Losing the True Freedom. Saint Paul exhorts us to remain steadfast in the freedom which Christ has bestowed upon us and not be entangled under the yoke of any kind of slavery. He said, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” *Gal 5:1*.
- Separation from God by being enslaved to sin. Addiction is a compounded sin, since one sin leads to another. Addiction leads the addict to wicked and harmful friendships, stealing, fornication, and many other sins. The addict becomes a slave, who has lost all the spiritual values and moral principles. Addiction leads him from one sin to another.

+ No one goes straight from being tempted, to being addicted.

Discuss the 6 steps that lead to sinful addiction.

- 1. Provocation/Disturbance
 - Can be a simple image or thought.
 - It is the bait that aims to lure us into sin.
 - This is not a sin, since it is only us being exposed to sin.
- 2. Disturbance
 - When the bait has done something within us,
 - Stirs up thoughts
 - We become aware that we have been given an opportunity to either sin, or not.
 - Still, we have not sinned. But, the next step is crucial.
- 3. Coupling/Mingling
 - When we consider what has been offered.
 - This is where it becomes either a sin, or victory.
 - If we think about it, and desire it, then we have sinned.
 - These 3 stages happen extremely quickly, in a matter of seconds.
- 4. Assent
 - Willful yielding to the thought that has been presented.
 - Us agreeing to partake of the sin.
 - Begin to imagine ourselves committing the sin.
 - We have sinned in our hearts. “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” *Matthew 5:28*
 - By these 4 steps happening frequently, it leads to the next step
- 5. Captivity
 - Our heart has been taken hostage by the thought.
 - Permanent lingering of the thought.
 - We now bypass the first 2 stages, and jump right into coupling without being provoked with temptation.
 - The sin has begun to be an addiction
 - We indulge into it, it becomes second nature.
 - Begin to say things like “it just happened”.
- 6. Development of a Passion
 - We begin to become slaves of the devil. This should be a scary thought, but it is a reality.
 - This is when we develop an addiction/dependency on sin.
 - Satan now ‘has the keys to our heart’. He no longer needs to tempt us by knocking, but freely controls us.
 - We reach what St. Paul described. “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” *Romans 7:14-20*

+ How to protect from/treat Addiction?

- I. Trust in The Lord;

- God is the only fulfilling source for mankind. The Samaritan woman was in deep need. Jesus was the only one who fulfilled her needs. "Jesus answered and said to her, "whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." *John 4:13,14*. Trusting the Lord leads to rest & peace. It gives a great & true sense of acceptance. *St. Augustine* said: "There is a vacuum in all of us, and our hearts are not at rest until we find our rest in God."
- 2. Hold oneself accountable.
 - The church has a leading role: the youth may see the sons of Christ, inside the church, as blessed examples, whether they be monks, clergy or marrying laity convincing him or her that it is quite possible to live with God and stick to values. Father of Confession is a great example of someone to hold the addict accountable spiritually & can guide him to the right direction for treatment (if needed). The community of the church is supposed to be encouraging & supportive as it's mentioned in *litany of the sick* "The sinners who have repented, count them with Your faithful, Your faithful, count with Your martyrs."
- 3. Don't look back;
 - Submit the past to God. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" *Matthew 11:28*. In the Prodigal Son's story, the father was waiting eagerly for the son & when he returned the Father celebrated "Let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." *Luke 15:23,24*. God is waiting for the repentance of the addict regardless of their condition. "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins." *Isaiah 43:25*
- 4. Remember the value of mankind in God's eyes;
 - The good Shepherd left the 99 sheep and went to find the lost one. God cares for everyone. "See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;" *Isaiah 49:16* "for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye." *Zechariah 2:8*
- 5. Self-Control;
 - Big part of prevention from addiction is to avoid it. A youth should have discernment to know what's right & what's wrong and also a strong will to say "No" to the wrong choices. That skill develops by getting closer to God & His commandments & allowing the Holy Spirit to work. Joseph the Righteous had discernment "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" *Genesis 39:9*. Joseph had God in front of him all the time.
- 6. Choose Friends wisely;
 - Peer pressure has a tremendous effect on youth. So choosing close friends is crucial. St. Paul said "Don not be deceived; "Evil company corrupts good habits" *1 Corinthians 15:33*
- 7. Time management;
 - When a youth is busy with good edifying things to do, there will be no time for distractions. As St. Paul said "he who is idle let him not eat" *2 Thessalonians 3:10*. Also Abba Anthony the great in his early monastic life, an angel of the Lord appeared to him teaching him how to manage his time between praying, working, reading...
- 8. Addicts need medical treatment in order to become rid of their biological dependence on the drug; this is called 'detoxification.'
 - The addict also needs psychological and social care so that he may once more become a normal person, both psychologically and socially. The most critical and effective factor in the treatment of addicts, however, is the desire of the addict himself to be cured and do away with addiction. There are multiple of Christian programs that fight addiction. "The Program for a Better Life", "Triumphant Christian Church"

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 7.5: Sex, Sexuality and Homosexuality

Building Block 7:
Life Matters



Objective

To understand the church view of sex which is a blessed and sanctified gift from God.

Application

View sex and our sexuality as God given, treat it with reverence.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 19](#), [Leviticus 18:22](#), [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#), [1 Timothy 1:10](#), [Romans 1:26,27](#), [John 9:3](#), [Mark 2:17](#), [Ephesians 5:24-26](#), [Matthew 5:28](#), [Genesis 1:27-28](#)



Liturgy: [Prayer of Reconciliation](#); [The Crowning prayer](#)



Patristics: [Marriage and Virginit by Origen](#), [Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#); [John Chrysostom](#)



Story: Adam and Eve were created in God's image and likeness



Other: [What is the Coptic Church's view on Sex and Sexuality? Fr. Anthony Mourad](#), [What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense by Sherif Girgis](#); [Fr Antony Paul: Homosexuality and the Orthodox Church](#),



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Clarify that sexuality is God given, blessed and a gift.
 - Sexual awareness is constantly stimulated by sex-saturated news and entertainment media. Sexual content is not only blatantly displayed, but objects that have no sexuality are labeled as sexy-from cars to computers and beverages to body lotions.
 - Is this the way we should treat sexuality?
 - The society is in a kind of sexual wilderness, lacking right directions and guidelines.
 - But where sex and marriage came from? God revealed that He created both sex and marriage. His reasons for doing so are nothing short of wonderful. Ignorance of God's purpose for sex has brought about enormous problems.
- + Why did God create sex and marriage?
 - The teachings of the Coptic Orthodox Church which are derived from two sources: Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition are:
 - Sex is an expression of intimacy/love (marriage). St. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:24-26 "Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." God created this sustained interest in sex as a means for men and women to *express love in marriage*.
 - Given to us to fight lust (define lust if needed). Chris said in Matthew 5:28 "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his hear."
 - Used for procreation. Genesis 1:27-28 "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them and God said to them. "Be fruitful and multiply". The statement that God created them male and female is the first reference to human sexuality. The statement that men and women are to *reproduce* is part of the blessing that God pronounced in this verse.
 - Sexual love is good in its proper time and place, with God in mind.
 - Give an example of a sharp kitchen knife. When put in the hands of a child, it is a dangerous item that can cause serious damage to many

people. When in the hands of a chef, it is used to create delicious food. The knife (likened to sex) is not wrong, it is actually very useful, but when put in the wrong hands, and used in the wrong context, it is extremely damaging.

- Sex, like any gift of God, can be misused. God clearly labels that as sin
- Sex outside of God's design is damaging. (This is anything outside the context of a loving marriage between a man and woman.)
- The church has always seen marriage and marital relations as honorable.
- By embracing God's intention for human sexuality, we combat lust. In the Coptic Orthodox service of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony we pray that God, "Grant them purity"
- "Origen defends Christian marriage, as a type of unity of the Church with Christ. Since God has joined them together (a man and a woman in marriage), for this reason there is a gift for those joined together by God."
- St. John Chrysostom says: "From the beginning God has been revealed as the fashioner, by his providence, of this union of man and woman, and He has spoken of the two as one: 'male and female He created them'"

+ Homosexual behaviour is separation from God

- Confirm within the youth, that scripture does indeed teach us that homosexuality is a sin. (Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:10, Romans 1:26,27)
- Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty wrote regarding 1 Corinthians 6:9 "The apostle Paul fears that they might be deceived; And what is more serious is to be deceived, not by someone from outside, but by their own hearts and erroneous thoughts; or by the leaders who were supposed to lead them along the true royal path."
- To understand homosexuality, we must go from the beginning and understand that God created the world, and He created man and woman in His image and likeness. Understand we were made to be like Him, and anything that takes us away from this identity is sin. It is 'missing the mark of God's image and likeness.
- Homosexuality is as any other sin, it just happens to be trendy in our present day.
- We pray in the liturgy, the prayer of reconciliation, "O God, the Great, the Eternal who formed man in incorruption."
- Everything was created in incorruption, but the fall of man, brought in spiritual disease which led to death. Everything we see in the world currently that is not according to God's plan for creation, is because of the fall, they are the natural consequences of humanity choosing to not dwell with God. (plagues, evil, illnesses, etc.)
- Homosexuality is just one of many things that is not according to our image and likeness, that we are dealing with as a result of the fall.
- Our sexuality is something God given and should be revered and practiced according to God's original design and purpose: between a man and woman. Homosexuality is one of many wrong expressions of sexuality. As Christians, we are called to speak the truth in love, and love the sinner, while hating the sin. Therefore, we ought to watch the way we treat others.

+ Nature or Nurture?

- The two extremes are to either celebrate the disease (this should not be offensive, disease just means a disorder of structure or function in an organism. If this is seen to be offensive, it can be described as a genetic mutation or variation), or to victimize the victim. There is no need to be on either end.
- Let us look at homosexuality from a scientific perspective.
- Distinguish Causality v.s. Predispositions.
 - Pre-dispositions are like someone who is predisposed to addiction. The mutation of their genetics that happens in the womb causes them to be more likely to become addicted to substance than a normally functioning person. This does not make them addicted, only makes them more susceptible. Someone who has this did not choose to have this, but they will end up having consequences that the majority of society doesn't.
 - Causality is when a mutation of genetics makes something happen. For example, autoimmune diseases, diabetes, cystic fibrosis and other diseases that are caused by a genetic mutation. This is not in the victim's control.
- Now, we need to distinguish between Nature and Nurture.
 - Nurture is anything that is an external influence on you. (Society, culture, friends, etc.)
 - For example, someone with a predisposition to addiction, can't be addicted to alcohol unless they are exposed to alcohol. This is an example of nurture. Only way to find out their predisposition is through being exposed.
 - For example, if someone grew up on a farm and never went to school. They may have been very talented in math and science, but since they were never exposed to those disciplines, they won't ever know they had that talent.
 - Nature would be your genetics, your internal influences.



- To test whether something is caused by nature, we look at identical twins since they have identical genetics.
- If one twin expresses a gene and the other doesn't, then we know it is not fully nature. This means that there is some nurture involved that determines how this gene is expressed. This means it is likely a pre-disposition. If they both express the gene the same way (like hair color), we can say it is caused by nature and not influenced by nurture.
- The reason this matters, is that in studies regarding homosexuality, they have found there are identical twins where one has same sex attraction and the other does not, meaning that people can be predisposed to homosexuality, but they are not born that way. Their external environment in which they grow up has an effect on their sexuality.
- Society wants to tell us that if you have same-sex attraction, it is because you were born this way so no one can judge you. What science tells us is that this is not true. People may be born predisposed to same sex attraction, but their environment or nurture affects how this is expressed.
- Now, we may ask whose fault is all this? A lot of this is due to the fall of humanity, simple consequences to our actions. At the end of the day, it does not matter whose fault this is. Think of the story of the man born blind. Jesus answered their question of whose fault this was by saying neither the man or his parents. God would be glorified through this disease. (John 9:3)

+ Now, how should we deal with homosexuality?

- We should deal with it the same way that we deal with someone who is predisposed to addiction. Like all temptations, passions and sins, homosexual people can be cured, and homosexual actions can cease. With God all things are possible. We wouldn't tell the addict person "Go get some alcohol and get drunk. Be yourself. This is how you were born." We would instead have compassion on them that they are born with this predisposition to being addicted, and help them stay clear of things like alcohol because we know that they are more likely to become addicted. We do not blame them for this, but we do not encourage them to get addicted.
- Same goes with someone who deals with same sex attraction. We have extreme compassion for them because we know they have a very tough battle to fight, but we do not encourage them to act on their desires.
- When homosexual Christians are willing to struggle, and when they receive patient, compassionate and authentically loving assistance from their families and friends – each of whom is struggling with his or her own temptations and sins; for no one is without this struggle in one form or another, and no one is without sin but God – the Lord guarantees victory in ways known to Himself. The victory, however, belongs only to the courageous souls who acknowledge their condition, confess their sins, and reach out for help with the genuine desire to be healed.
- Treat those who have same sex attraction with compassion. This does not mean we tolerate their behavior. Our Lord Jesus said He came for the sick (Mark 2:17), and St. John Chrysostom said "The Church is a hospital, and not a courtroom, for souls. She does not condemn on behalf of sins, but grants remission of sins."

- + If you are dealing with same sex attraction, it is important to not label yourself as a homosexual. You are someone who struggles with sexuality from a same sex attraction perspective, but this does not define you. Seek counsel and help from a priest or servant with experience with whom you feel comfortable, since this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 7.6: Music in the Modern World

Building Block 7:
Life Matters



Objective

To Understand the subtle impact of Music (both towards good and towards evil)

Application

Look up the songs you listen to, read the lyrics without its associated music and see, are these words encouraging unChristian behaviors? If so, cut it out.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Ephesians 5:19](#), [Rev. 14:2,3](#), [Psalm 150](#)



Liturgy: [Distribution Hymn Psalm 150](#)



Patristics: [Philostorgius Epitome B2C2](#), [Athanasius, Against the Arians Discourse I Chapter 1.4](#), [St. John Chrysostom Homily 22](#)



Story: St. Athanasius defending the Faith against Arius



Other: [Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles, Fr. Michael Varlmos, Our Pastimes, Medical News Today](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Does listening to secular Music go against Christianity?

Discuss: Can you violate your Christian morality by listening to music? If so, how?

- Ask yourself: Are these lyrics causing me to doubt my faith or the reality of God's sovereignty (Hebrews 11:1)? Do the words of this song cause me to dwell upon things of the world that draw me away from God's will for my life (Philippians 4:8)? Is this song inspiring negative thoughts or words to work their way into my life (1 John 2:1)?
- Look up the songs you listen to, read the lyrics without its associated music and see, are these words encouraging unChristian behaviors? If so, cut it out.
- In determining whether or not to listen to secular music, there are three primary factors to consider: 1) the purpose of music, 2) the style of music, and 3) the content of the lyrics.
- The most famous musician in the Bible, King David, primarily used music for the purpose of worshiping God (Psalm 4:1; 6:1, 54:1, 55:1; 61:1; 67:1; 76:1)
- In the New Testament, the apostle Paul instructs Christians to encourage one another with music, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19)
- Unfortunately there are churches and Christians who want more upbeat and contemporary music and others who claim to worship best in a "rock concert" type of environment.
- Whatever a person allows to occupy his mind will sooner or later determine his speech and his actions. This is the premise behind Philippians 4:8 and Colossians 3:2, 5. "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." (Philippians 4:8). "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth ... Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Colossians 3:2, 5) establishing wholesome thought patterns. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says we should, "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."
- These Scriptures give a clear picture of the kind of music we should not listen to
- "From the beginning of the 19th Century and through the 20th Century, history shows us that human beings were becoming more secular and materialistic. In the world of art, music, and even architecture, there was an emphasis on external beauty and less so on the inner, spiritual nature of things in general. In painting, canvasses became huge and depicted emotional and realistic events. Eventually, art

affected bold colors and abstract figures. Music became loud, filled with emotion and complexity. Even church music in our Archdiocese was affected by this Romantic trend. We tried to copy what other denominations were doing. More emphasis was placed on the music and the text began to disappear into the background. This music is not intended merely for singing, whether in the loft or from the pew, but it is to be prayed. To truly pray, we must live and approach this music the way our saints did: in a state of repentance. To repent means to change our ways, to initiate a new beginning to our relationship with God. It is living a life of faith, love, humility and obedience. It is placing our souls in the hands of our spiritual fathers who strive to guide us by the teachings of Jesus Christ and His saints.” (Fr. Michael Varlmos)

+ What is the effect of music on the body, soul & spirit?

- Music is considered to be an essential component of the creation in the human soul, to balance the human soul and the human feelings.
- Music is the language of the heart. It talks to the thoughts, the will and to emotions. Mr. David Tame said in his article, ‘The Secret Power of Music’, that music is the language of all languages, and we are safe to say that among all arts, nothing like music carries the power to move or change emotions and feelings. Nothing competes against drugs as music does affect the human soul.
- The Church believes in the role of music in the spiritual life of man, and the strong relationship between music and the spirit. Praising is the utmost work of the heavenly hosts. As if all these ranks and hosts in heaven are like ‘musical chorus” announcing their love to God, not by musical instruments or fleshly voices, but by their natures and will, where they offer a wonderful note beyond comprehension.
- When man elevates spiritually and becomes submissive to the Holy Spirit, he feels that all his inner nature; spirit, emotions and feelings, are transformed into a unique spiritual instrument, the Spirit of God plays on it, to offer and compose an unutterable song.

+ Is music even necessary?

- Beethoven said: Music is the ultimate way to the other world. DeCartes said: Among all arts, there is none that unite in harmony with religion as music does.
- Aristotle said, "Music has the power to form a personality."
- The spiritual music is composed and played by spiritual people, where it's tone and rhythm are inspired by the Spirit, and its goal is to glorify God, thank Him, and praise the Most High, thus, expressing our love and adoration to the Pantocrator, as the Apostle Paul said; " speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).
- This type and style of music is a spiritual means which edifies and is a great gift which quenches the heart, disciplines the soul, and elevates the spirit to heaven.

+ What are the side effects of earthly music?

Discuss: Can you Listen to music with explicit music without going against its Purpose? It's natural purpose to be: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Colossians 3:16)

- A researcher from the University of Missouri conducted a study into the effects of music on reckless behavior. The study found that adolescents who liked hard rock showed a higher level of reckless behavior, such as drug use, unprotected sex, casual sex, drunk driving, speeding and vandalism. Girls who listened to rock music were also found to have low self esteem. The researchers commented, however, that they believed that “sensation seeking” behavior was to blame for these acts, and not rock music. They noted an exception with regard to unprotected sex, but the theory remains that people who seek sensations, such as those provided by the acts listed above, are driven to rock music—rather than rock music causing the reckless behavior.
- Analysis showed that anxiety and neuroticism were higher in participants who tended to listen to sad or aggressive music to express negative feelings, particularly in males. "This style of listening results in the feeling of expression of negative feelings, not necessarily improving the negative mood," says Dr. Suvi Saarikallio, co-author of the study and developer of the Music in Mood Regulation (MMR) test.
- Music has a tremendous effect on humans. It can affect what they believe in. In the early church, heresies were often spread through music.
- The following was said by Philotogrius: “Arius, after his secession from the church, composed several songs to be sung by sailors, and by millers, and by travelers along the high road, and others of the same kind, which he adapted to certain tunes, as he thought suitable in each separate case, and thus by degrees seduced the minds of the unlearned by the attractiveness of his songs to the adoption of his own impiety.”
- Similarly, St. Athanasius begins his book Against the Arians with critiquing his songs (written in the Thalia): "How then can they be Christians, who...after abandoning the oracles of divine Scripture, call Arius's Thaliæ a new wisdom? And with reason too, for they are announcing a new heresy. And hence a man may marvel, that, whereas many have written many treatises and abundant homilies upon the Old Testament and the New, yet in none of them is a Thalia found."



+ Benefits of sacred music

- Just like music at one point was used to spread heresies, likewise music can be used to teach worship.
- Praising turns earth into heaven! Praising is mainly and foremost is the work of all the Angels, but rather their food, as saint John Chrysostom said; “that praising attracts the angels to serve , that’s why the Church of the Old and the New Testaments are Churches of praises, glorifications and singing.”
- "And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. And they sang as it were a new song before the Throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders.." (Rev. 14:2,3).
- It has many benefits and gives power in changing the evil desires to good, as it leads the audience or those hymning/singing the words to humbleness and contrition, and remains in the soul the spirit of virtue and the love of goodness, as they try to put aside sin, progressing to hating it as it softens the heart and elevate the soul to God, thus, sharing with the heavenly hosts in heavenly praises. [Coptic Hymns, George Kiryllos, p.42, 2002]
- Hymns allow the believers to converse with God through their emotions and feelings, sharing in what God offers or grants to them in the sacraments. In Psalm 150 in the distribution in the liturgy we praise God in all way possible “Praise Him in the firmament of heaven, Praise Him in all in saints, Praise Him for His mighty acts....”
- Praising is lifting the heart, mind, feelings and desires upward where Christ is seated on the right of His Father.
- Praising and church hymns are supplications, beseeching and praising offered to the Holy God to receive blessings, grace and thanking Him for His great love.
- Music is one of the most powerful forces known to man. It communicates in ways beyond our comprehension. The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church recognized this and were very selective in what type of music was appropriate for our worship. The same can be said for our iconography, church architecture, rubrics of our worship service, vestments, etc. In the Orthodox Church, music was used to emphasize the meaning of the words of the hymn. It was not supposed to sound similar to secular music. Hymns were written and composed to be prayed to a simple melody that can either be done by a single individual or by a one hundred-voice choir. The words of the hymn were always more important than the music. The music was there to add color, support and amplify the meaning of the text. The Church music was meant to penetrate the depth of our heart and there to “prick it,” that is, to wound it into repentance, contrition, and humility, which is the only way to bring us to pray. Fr. Michael Varlmos

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 7: Life Matters



Lesson 7.7: Orthodoxy View on Death and Judgment

Objective

Understand the Orthodox perspective on death as being a departure into the afterlife, something we should not fear. Understand the severity of our judgment, but have faith and confidence in God's mercy. As Orthodox Christians, we believe in the necessity of both grace and works for salvation.

Application

We need to learn to not be afraid of death, but constantly be reminded of it as a stimulus and reminder to repentance. We should also be judging ourselves daily and regularly through confession.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Wisdom of Solomon 1:13](#), [Matthew 10:28](#), [Ezek 18:32](#), [1 Corinthians 15:22, 28](#), [Colossians 1:17-20](#), [Lamentations 3:31-33](#), [1 Timothy 4:10](#), [Mt 23:33](#), [Mt 25:46](#), [Luke 13:23-25](#), [Luke 16:23](#), [John 3:36](#)



Liturgy: [Litany of the Departed](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom Commentary](#)



Story: [St. Peter the Worshiper](#)



Other: [HG Bishop Youssef Q&A on Judgment Day, Book: The Orthodox Way \(pg. 135-138\)](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Two Deaths

- Distinguish the first and second death. The human being is made up of Body and Soul. A body alone is not a person, a soul alone is not a person, but rather only together body and soul does the human fully exist.
 - First death is our physical death, the death of our bodies.
 - Second death is the death of our soul, being condemned to hades/removal from the source of life which is God.
- That man should die is not the will of God, for as the scripture says, "God did not make death."
- "God did not make death, and takes no pleasure in the destruction of any living thing; He created all things that they might have being" Wisdom of Solomon 1:13
- Our Lord teaches us not to be afraid of the first death which can be inflicted by man, but rather we should be concerned of the second type which is in the power of God. "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 10:28

+ There is no death but a departure.

- Litany of the Departed- "For there is no death for you servant but a departure..."
- Death is our passageway into the afterlife
- If our concern for death does not lead to repentance, then it is unhealthy for us."For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God; so turn and live" Ezek 18:32. The Desert Fathers taught us to contemplate on death as a constant reminder to repent and prepare for the afterlife.

+ The Judgment of God

- We believe in a just and merciful God. During the Divine Liturgy, the priest prays, "He has appointed a Day for recompense, on which He will appear to judge the world in righteousness, and give each one according to his deeds." The congregation responds by imploring God, "According to Your mercy, O Lord, and not according to our sins." Regardless of anyone's deeds of kindness, no matter how noble or honorable, God's mercy is far more generous than we deserve.
- Discuss: Universal Salvation which teaches that all sinful and alienated human souls—because of divine love and mercy—will ultimately be

reconciled to God. Universalists use some of the following verses to support their claim. Attempt to refute by finding verses.

- I Corinthians 15:22, 28: "All die in Adam, you see, and all will be made alive in the Messiah."
- Colossians 1:17-20: "And he is ahead, prior to all else and in him all things hold together; and he himself is supreme, the head over the body, the church. He is the start of it all, firstborn from realms of the dead; so in all things he might be the chief. For in him all the Fullness was glad to dwell and through him to reconcile all to himself, making peace through the blood of his cross, through him - yes, things on the earth, and also the things in the heavens.."
- Lamentations 3:31-33: "For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."
- I Timothy 4:10: "For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe." We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.
- Some refutation verses: "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Mt 23:33, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Mt 25:46, " Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from'" Luke 13:23-25, In the story of the foolish rich man & Lazarus "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Luke 16:23, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." John 3:36
- The Story of St. Peter the Worshiper is a great reflection of God's judgment. He was at first a tax collector, who was very cruel and merciless. One day, God sent him a poor man to ask him for a little food, and it thus happened that his servant arrived at the same time when the poor man was standing before him, with bread. The tax collector took a loaf of bread and hit the poor man with it on his head, not as an act of mercy, but to get rid of him so that he might not come back again. That same night, Peter, the tax collector, saw a vision in his sleep, as though he was in the judgment day, where the scale of justice was erected, and he saw some people clothed in black in the ugliest forms. They came and put his sins and his injustices in the left pan of the scale. Then a group of the angels of light, with beautiful countenances and in white clothes, came and stood beside the right pan of the scale. They appeared perplexed, for they did not find anything to put in the pan. One of them came forward, and put in the loaf of bread with which he had hit the head of the poor man, and said, "There is nothing for this man except this loaf of bread." At this moment, Peter woke up from his sleep trembling and afraid. He started to rebuke himself for all that he had done. He started to be exceedingly merciful and compassionate, and he even gave his own tunic away. When nothing was left of his property, he left his town and sold himself as a slave, and paid the price to the poor. When his good deeds became well known, he fled to the wilderness of St. Macarius, where he became a monk and lived an ascetic life with great devotion and good repute, that made him worthy to know the day of his departure
- Our Lord, and the rest of scripture speaks of a coming Judgment Day.
- Our Orthodox Church teaches we will be judged both according to our works, AND God's infinite mercy.
 - "But someone will say, You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" James 2:18-20.
 - Many times in the liturgy do we confess to God that our actions are sufficient, and that we ask to be judged according to His mercy. ("for no one is pure without blemish, even though his life be a single day..." According to your mercy O Lord, and not according to our sins")
 - Judgment is in essence us judging ourselves, everyday we live on earth, we are making the decision of whether we want to live with God for eternity, or have nothing to do with Him. That is why our church teaches us to judge ourselves daily through repentance, and practice the sacrament of confession. "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged." I Corinthians 11:31

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 7: Life Matters



Lesson 7.8: Church's Support against Peer Pressure

Objective

To understand the church view of all earthly forms of peer pressure.

Application

Develop godly and holy relationships in the church. Push each other to strive towards holiness. Understand your worth and do not do anything that goes against your image and likeness for the sake of pleasing others. What can you take a stand for this week?

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 15:13](#), [Matthew 26:50](#), [Luke 23:34](#), [1 Corinthians chapter 15](#), [Proverbs 13:20](#), [John 15:15](#), [Isaiah 49:16](#)



Liturgy: [Litany of the Assembly](#)



Patristics: [St. Augustine, Confessions, 2.3](#)



Story: [St. Augustine: His Struggle Against Peer Pressure](#)



Other: [Know who you are - HG Bishop Anqaelos](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Conforming for Acceptance

- Defining Peer Pressure: Social pressure by members of one's peer group to take a certain action, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted.
- By definition, Peer Pressure is forcing a member of a group to;
 1. Take a certain action
 2. Adopt certain values
 3. Conform to the group's rules
- And the goal is to be accepted.
 - There are two types of Peer Pressure, Positive Peer Pressure, which you are alike with the group so whatever you're pressured to do is compatible with your values. In that case, peer pressure is encouraging you to keep up with your beliefs. Positive peer pressure challenges each other to goodness. True Friends are also willing to sacrifice and persevere with each other, "Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one's life for his friends." (John 15:13).
 - Or Negative Peer Pressure, when you are in a group that is different from you. In that case you will be pressured to do what you don't actually believe in. So it's really important to pick that group that we belong to. Negative peer pressure can cause confusion between peer values & family or church values.
 - To differentiate between both kinds, ask yourself: Do I do things I shouldn't just because I'm afraid of what people will think of me? Do I try to recognize God's words in the advice of parents, priests, and other people worthy of my respect?
 - Another problem with peer peer pressure is that it gives a false impression of acceptance. A group member should do everything like the rest of the group just to be accepted. In fact, that's not the case. We are always accepted with no condition in God's eyes. Jesus accepted everyone to Himself even Judas who betrayed Him. He called him "friend" Matthew 26:50 even while he was betraying Him. The Jews & the Romans who crucified Jesus, Jesus was excusing them "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." Luke 23:34.

+ Your Friends reveal who you are

- There is a nice saying which says, "tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are." Your friends reveal you, and your personality. "Evil company corrupts good habits." 1 Corinthians chapter 15,
- "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed" (Proverbs 13:20).



- If your friend is negatively influencing you by encouraging any behavior that is outside of the guidelines of God's image and likeness, then the friendship should be re-evaluated. In the Litany of the Assemblies, we pray "Remember O Lord, our assemblies bless them". Our gatherings should be blessed.

+ Our identity is found in the God, who we encounter through the Church

- It's really important to know who we are otherwise we will be washed as it's called the "mob mentality". Mob mentality, also called herd mentality, describes how humans adopt behaviors, buy merchandise, and follow trends based on their circle of influence. It explains how one's point of view can be easily altered by those around them.
- We are created in God's own image. We are His children "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" John 15:15. He loves us unconditionally "See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands" Isaiah 49:16.

+ The Bible, Church, and Peer-Pressure

- The Church does not promote or condone peer pressure. Actually our church is a living example of how to stand firm for your faith.
- Our beautiful Coptic orthodox church chose to be faithful and obedient to God. In the Coptic Church, persecution is perceived as a Biblical part of living out the Christian faith. Coptic Christians have known persecution for centuries.
- The church teaches that God wants people to honor Him by living a life that pleases Him. And that includes following God first, not friends. Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."
- Read Daniel 3:4-7. Why did they refuse to bow? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew in their hearts what was right and wrong. They understood God's commands, and they wanted to be obedient to Him. This meant that they had to take a stand to be different than everyone else even though there might be consequences.
- Read Daniel 3:28-30.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego made a choice to stand against the pressure. While their peers were bowing down to the golden image, they chose to be faithful and obedient to God. Even when it cost them, they stood firm and did what was right.
- In your school, you will be tempted by peer pressure. It may be a temptation to wear certain clothes in order to fit in with the "popular" crowd. It may be pressure to bully or make fun of others.
- When negative peer pressure comes, you will have to make a choice. A choice to go with the flow or to take a stand for what is right.
- God has us deal with peer pressure for a good reason - James 1:2-4 enduring and overcoming peer pressure makes you a better Christian - if we stand firm against peer pressure, God will help us, often work things out in our favor - God never allows us to be in situations we can't overcome.

+ The fall and rise of St. Augustine through Friendships

- He dealt with peer pressure poorly, and looked back at it with regret. It is a very relatable story to what happens currently in highschool settings.
- St Augustine said about himself "So I rushed on blindly. Among my peers I was ashamed to be less shameless when I heard them bragging about their disgraceful acts—boasting all the more according to the greatness of their baseness. I took pleasure in doing it, not just for the pleasure's sake, but for the praise. Is there anything but vice that is worthy of dispraise? Yet I made myself worse than I was to keep from being dispraised! And when I hadn't sinned as much as the really dissolute ones, I'd say that I had done what I hadn't, so that I wouldn't seem more miserable for being more innocent, or less respectable for being chaste." -St. Augustine, Confessions, 2.3
- Just like his straying was due to friendships, his healthy return also came through his relationship with St. Ambrose: "To Milan I came, to Ambrose the Bishop... whose eloquent discourse did then plentifully dispense unto Thy people the flour of Thy wheat, the gladness of Thy oil, and the sober inebriation of Thy wine. To him was I unknowingly led by Thee, that by him I might knowingly be led to Thee." - The Confessions Book 5



Building Block 8: The Liturgy

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 8.1: A Brief History of Worship in the Orthodox Church

Building Block 8:
The Liturgy



Objective

To appreciate the Holy Liturgy more by knowing its rich history.

Application

Look at the liturgy with a new set of eyes. Incorporate it into how you look at the Church and Tradition in general. Appreciate the work of all the Christians before us who contributed to our modern prayer; also understand our role in preserving and developing our beloved worship.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Acts 2:42, I Corinthians 11:23-25](#)



Liturgy: [The 3 liturgy of St. Basil, St. Cyril, and St. Gregory](#),



Patristics: [John of Kronstadt](#)



Story: [The Last Supper was the first Liturgy](#)



Other: [Detailed LP](#), [Development of the Eucharist](#), [Deacon Albair](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + The first liturgy ever was on the Last Supper and Jesus Christ Himself was doing it.
 - From there the Apostles and Disciples took what they learned and passed it onto the people they preached to:
 - St Paul tells us this in his epistle: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is [e]broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This is done, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." (I Corinthians 11:23-25)
 - When the Disciples spread this tradition that they received from Jesus Christ, they wanted to do it exactly like Christ. So, they used to do it at night, since Jesus Christ did it at night.
 - As Christianity spread in Egypt, the first community were likely Jewish. They started meeting in houses or random gathering rooms to do the Synaxis (reading Scripture and sermon)
 - Then St. Mark eventually came to establish the Church in Egypt and he brought traditions that he learned. That was until the end of the 1st Century.
- + With the 2nd Century, the dynamic began to change.
 - Gentiles began to outnumber Jewish converts and evening liturgies began to be less popular as morning liturgies on Sundays began to become more standard.
 - The Eucharist Dialogue was introduced: "The Lord is with you", "And also with you" ... at the beginning of the anaphora.
 - The "Holy, Holy, Holy" hymns and prayers were introduced.
 - Epiclesis (invocation of the Holy Spirit) was introduced.
- + In the 3rd Century, a couple more developments took place.
 - A Doxology was added at the end of the service, before the Holy Holy Holy
 - This Doxology was simply a short hymn or prayer giving glory to God (something like "For yours is the Glory, dominion forever amen")
 - Prayers were more and more taking place in dedicated Churches rather than in people's apartments or meeting rooms.
 - Up to this point many prayers were not written, but rather it relied on the prayer style of the priest or bishop.



+ In the 4th Century, a lot of development happened.

- Synaxis began to be a standard part of the Liturgy.
- Liturgical texts began to be written down and standardized.
- As the councils took place, the fathers wanted to make sure that all prayers matched the accepted theology, so they wrote down and standardized prayers.
- Standard Prayers and Hymns began to also be assigned to the people.
- Evening liturgies disappeared.
- Standard offertory prayers were introduced.
- One of the written liturgies was based on the tradition that St. Mark brought to Egypt, and so it was called the Liturgy of St. Mark.
- The Eucharistic dialogue, thanksgiving prayers (including breaking of bread and thanksgiving over the cup), invocation, and communion became known as liturgy of the Faithful.

+ In the 5th Century, further development began to take place.

- The Synaxis became the liturgy of Catechumen who were people who wanted to be Christians and were learning the Christian teaching before they got baptized.
- The Catechumen used to leave after the liturgy of the Catechumen ended and were not allowed to stay for the liturgy of the faithful.
- St. Cyril I of Alexandria updated the liturgy of St. Mark. Translated priest parts to Coptic from Greek. Deacon responses in Greek for those who did not understand Coptic.
- St. Cyril added a few prayers (Major Epiclesis and litanies). Updated the text to be more theologically descriptive. Because of this great effort of St. Cyril, the Liturgy eventually became known as the Liturgy of St. Cyril.
- The Byzantine Liturgies were introduced to Egypt in this century. Liturgy of St. Basil, attributed to St. Basil the Great – a Liturgy prayed to the Father. Liturgy of St. Gregory, attributed to St. Gregory the Theologian – a Liturgy prayed to the Son (Christ).
- The prayer of reconciliation after the liturgy of Catechumens was added as a part of the liturgy.

+ In the 7th Century, the last major development in the overall shape of the liturgy.

- The liturgy of the Catechumens became the liturgy of the Word as the Catechumen rank began to disappear from the church.
- The offertory was moved before the liturgy of the word.
- The overall order became what we know today.: Offertory - Word - Reconciliation - Faithful

+ Later developments:

- More prayers and hymns were developed over the other centuries, but the main structure did not change much.
- The liturgy prayers began to be translated to Arabic around 10c. but gained popularity in the 12c. where Arabic was much more spoken than Coptic.
- Pope Gabriel II (12c) limited the numbers of liturgies in our church to three (St. Basil, St. Gregor, St. Cyril) – there used to be many other liturgies before that.
- Some Greek Hymns from the Eastern Orthodox Church entered the church during the time of Pope Cyril V (19th c)
- Pope Kyrillos VI (20c.) popularized daily liturgies in the Coptic church.
- As churches began to spread outside Egypt, Coptic liturgies began to be translated into English (and other languages) during the 20th Century papacies of Pope Kyrillos VI and Pope Shenouda III.
- "There is nothing on Earth higher, greater or more holy than the Divine Liturgy; nothing more solemn, nothing more life-giving." - John of Kronstadt
- "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' [a]doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 2:42

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 8.2: The Eucharist, Historical, Applications and Benefits

Building Block 8:
The Liturgy



Objective

To understand the importance of the Eucharist in our lives, its significance, its Institution, and how we can be worthy to receive it.

Application

A non-orthodox young man/woman may ask you and say: “It is better for us to feed on Christ through the Gospel and prayers only”, what will you say to him according to your study of the Lord’s commandment concerning the mystery of Eucharist?

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 22:19](#), [John 6:56](#), [John 15:5](#), [John 6:54,58](#), [John 6:53,55,57](#), [Matthew 26:28](#), [1 Corinthians 10:17](#)



Liturgy: [The offering of the Lamb/The Prayer of Preparation](#)



Patristics: [St. Theodore](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: [The Last Supper](#)



Theology Academy:

- ▶ [The Didache: Agape vs Eucharist \(Early Christian...](#)
- ▶ [The Didache: The Christian Passover \(Early Chris...](#)



Other: [History of The Liturgy \(Pages 135-138\) Legacy Curriculum GII](#), [SUSCopts Article on the Sacraments](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Origins and roots of the Liturgy & Eucharist

- The Eucharist is the central rite of the Christian religion, in which bread and wine are consecrated by an ordained priest and with the attendance of the members of the congregation in obedience to Jesus' command at the Last Supper, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19)
- In the Orthodox Church this act is regarded as a sacrament, which symbolizes and affects the union of Christ with the faithful.
- The central act of liturgy from earliest times was the Eucharistic assembly, the commemorative celebration of the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ and, thereby, to participate in the mystery of Salvation.
- The Divine Liturgy is the central function in all Coptic sacraments. It is like standing before the Lord. Indeed, all the numerous sacraments connected with baptism, matrimony, unction of the sick and the rest converge upon the Liturgy and should end with Holy Communion.
- St. John Chrysostom says, “*Every time there is performed the liturgy of this awesome sacrifice, which is the clear image of the heavenly realities, we should imagine that we are in heaven.*” (Homily 15, chapter 20)

+ Details of the Eucharist

- The Holy Bread is stamped with a cross surrounded by twelve smaller crosses and an inscription from the Coptic Trisagion: “Agios O Theos, Agios Ischyros, Agios thanatos,” from a hymn sung by Nicodemus and Joseph at the Lord’s entombment, “Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal!”
- The Holy Bread is then pierced five times around the central cross, symbolizing the 4 nails, and the spear used in the Passion (three on the right side-two nails and one spear) and two on the left.
- The chosen Holy Bread is called Hamal, meaning the “Lamb.”



- St. Theodore says, “The two deacons on either side of the altar are symbolic of the two angels standing by the tomb at the time of resurrection because the altar stands for the tomb where the Sacrifice was laid.”
- The Divine Liturgy requires a sequence of movements or rites including readings, kneeling, raising of hands, bowing of head, the kiss of peace and standing.

+ The Six Meanings of The Eucharist:

- The Eucharist has six meanings that no other sacrament has, nor any other Church service can achieve.
- 1. Thanksgiving (Eucharist): This is the first part of any prayer where man thanks, blesses and glorifies God for His divinity and His work in creation and in salvation.
- 2. Remembrance (Anamnesis): Following the words of Christ at the Last Supper we (remember) Him in His work of salvation “For every time you eat this Bread, and drink of this cup, you preach My death, confess My resurrection and remember Me til I come.”
- 3. Oblation (Sacrifice): which is an anamnesis of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross, the Church, as His body, offers herself and all her members within this one eternal Sacrifice.
- 4. Presence of God: The Eucharist is a Trinitarian action in which is manifested the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- 5. Intercession: In the Eucharist, the Church intercedes for the living and the dead through Christ.
- 6. Communion: With each member participating in the one Body and Blood of Christ, they are no longer separate individuals but One Church, the Bride of the Lamb.
 - “At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His body and blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us” (Sacrosanctum Concilium 47).

+ Benefits of the Sacrament:

- 1. Abiding in Lord Jesus Christ: “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (John 6:56). Consequently we bear the fruits of the spirit, “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5)
- 2. Obtaining Eternal Life: “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day... He who eats this bread will live forever” (John 6:54,58)
- 3. Growth & Maintenance of Our Spiritual Life: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you... For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed... he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (John 6:53,55,57)
- 4. Salvation & Remission of Sins: “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28)
- 5. Unification of Believers: “For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17)

+ There is nothing Holier

- There is nothing on earth holier, higher, and more solemn and life giving than the Liturgy. The Liturgy is the constant reiteration of God’s love for mankind and an all-powerful petition for the salvation of the whole world and every individual person.
- The Eucharistic Sacrifice, or Christ’s most Pure Body and Blood, is the inexhaustible source of reconciliation with God, the mercy of purification, sanctification, and renewal for all believers, an active prayer for the bringing to Christ of all peoples of the world.
- In the liturgy the Church is presented to the Golgotha, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to enjoy the sacrificial Blood of her Savior, practicing the saving deeds of her heavenly Father. In other words the Eucharist is an anamnesis of the redeeming action of Christ in the mysterious sense that it is still active and continuous.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 8.3: Liturgy is Scriptural Prayers

Building Block 8:
The Liturgy



Objective

Understand the prayer aspect of our Liturgy
To appreciate the Holy Liturgy more by knowing that it is based on The Holy Bible.

Application

Understand the importance of prayer in our life and appreciate the opportunity given to us during the Liturgy.

Look at the Liturgy with a new set of eyes. Incorporate it into how you look at the Church and Bible in general.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 26:26-30](#), [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#), [Acts 2:42](#), [Acts 2:46-47](#), [2 Corinthians 13:12](#), [Romans 5:12](#), [Luke 2:13-14](#), [Isaiah 6:3](#), [2 Thessalonians 3:16](#), [Psalm 118:24-26](#), [Psalm 113:5-6](#), [Psalm 146:6](#), [Revelation 4:4](#), [Revelation 5:8](#), [Acts 13-14](#), [16-17](#), [20-21](#), [Malachi 1:11](#), [1 Corinthians 14:40](#)



Liturgy: The 3 Liturgies of [St. Cyril](#), [St. Basil](#), [St. Gregory](#)



Patristics: [John of Kronstadt](#)



Story: [The Last Supper was the first Liturgy](#)



Other: [G10 Detailed Lesson Plans](#) Kholagy 1902 by Fr. Abdel Messeh El Masoudi, "Liturgy in the Bible/The Bible in the Liturgy." Patheos.com. October 23, 2017. [Bishop Metaos. The Spirituality of the Holy Liturgy in the Coptic Orthodox Church.](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Liturgy is mentioned in the Bible

- Although the liturgy is not quoted in the Bible, it is mentioned through the mentioning of the Eucharist (Communion) and assembling in prayer.
- The first Liturgy ever is mentioned in Bible and performed by Jesus Christ Himself during the Last Supper: "Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Matthew 26:26-30)
- The liturgy was passed down by the Apostles, and this is also mentioned in the Bible:
- "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is [e]broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
- The Apostles and early Christian took communion often and this is also mentioned in the Bible.
- They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42)
- Continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of



heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

+ Not only is the Liturgy in the Bible, The Bible is in the Liturgy!

- The prayers of the liturgies are taken from passages of the Bible, here are some example:
- 1. Greet one another with a Holy Kiss (2 Corinthians 13:12)
- 2. Death entered the world through the envy of the devil (Romans 5:12)
- 3. ...multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:13-14)
- 4. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isaiah 6:3)
- 5. Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:16)
- 6. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! (Psalm 118:24-26)
- 7. Who is like the Lord our God, Who dwells on high, Who humbles Himself to behold, The things that are in the heavens and in the earth? (Psalm 113:5-6)
- 8. Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever (Psalm 146:6)

+ The rituals we do in Church are also based on the Bible

- Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders (presbyters) sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads (Revelation 4:4)
- Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8)
- 1. These two passages from revelation describe the Presbyters (which could be translated as elder, but that is what we call Priests = Presbyters)
- 2. They are wearing white, a crown, and holding a bowl of incense... sound familiar?
- The institution narrative based on the bible as we saw in Mt 26, Mk 14, Lk 22, and 1 Cor 11
- The Pauline Circuit is based on the bible too, as it represents the missionary journeys of St. Paul (Acts 13-14, 16-17, 20-21)
- Incense is mentioned in many passages in the Bible, here is just one: "From the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My Name shall be great among the gentiles, in every place incense shall be offered to My Name, and a pure offering" (Malachi 1:11).

+ All the prayers in the liturgy are organized in an orderly manner following the advice of St. Paul: "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40)

- Our Liturgy has many different prayers. Here are a few examples:
- 1. Dedicated Prayers: These are prayers that are dedicated to one main theme (Ex. The prayer of Thanksgiving, The prayer of Reconciliation)
- 2. Litanies: These are prayers in which we ask something from God (Ex. Litany of the Gospel, Litany of the sick, Litany of the peace, Litanies for the patriarch, bishops, and clergy, Litany of mercy)
- 3. Doxologies: These prayers/hymns are sung to glorify God, either directly or through His saints.
- 4. Hymns: Are prayers that are put to a melody so they can be sung (chanted) by the people.
- 5. Responses: These are short replies to prayers
- 6. Open prayers: There are many chances during the liturgy to just lift your heart up to God and say your own personal prayer.

+ Bringing the Bible into Life

- The liturgical prayers and rituals, when understood and practiced correctly, should bring the Bible to life before our very eyes.
- Standing in Church smelling the incense should remind us of the tabernacle and temple reminding us of the Old Testament.
- Praying in an atmosphere surrounded by the apostles, disciples, and saints, should remind us of the commandments and ways of the New Testament.
- "When you are before the altar where Christ reposes, you ought no longer to think that you are amongst men; but believe that there are troops of angels and archangels standing by you, and trembling with respect before the sovereign Master of Heaven and earth. Therefore, when you are in church, be there in silence, fear, and veneration." St. John Chrysostom
- Looking ahead at the altar with Jesus Christ sitting on his throne in the bosom of the father, and the priest offering prayer before him, should remind us of the throne room from Revelation.



- Hearing the story of salvation during the liturgical prayer which tells the story from Adam's creation to the ascension of Christ and preaching of the apostles, should act as a summary for the books of scripture.
- Overall, the liturgy should be a constant reminder of the Bible!
- "There is nothing on Earth higher, greater or more holy than the Divine Liturgy; nothing more solemn, nothing more life-giving." - John of Kronstadt

Theme: Repentance

Building Block 8: The Liturgy



Lesson 8.4: Liturgy is Forgiveness and Worship

Objective

Understand the forgiveness aspect of our Liturgy
Understand the Worship part of the liturgy.

Application

Utilize the liturgy as a powerful tool in worshipping God with Body, Mind, and Spirit.
To understand the importance of forgiveness and redemption in the liturgy and live those aspects in every liturgy we attend. To develop a deeper appreciation for the Eucharist.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Corinthians 11: 23-26](#), [Psalm 95:2, 6-7](#),
[Revelation 4:9-11](#), [Psalms 95:6](#), [John 4:23-24](#), [Matthew 26:28](#)



Liturgy: [The Reconciliation Prayer](#)



Patristics: [St. Basil the Great](#)



Story: The Story of Salvation



Other: [GIO Detailed Lesson Plans](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ We can connect the liturgy to forgiveness of sins in three ways:

Ask the students the following questions: Can the church help us re-live with Christ through the process we received remission of sins? Christ is our forgiveness; can the church give us Christ Himself in some way? Do we worship during the liturgy? Why? Can we say that our Liturgy is a form of worship?

- 1. The liturgy describes the story of salvation where we received redemption from sin.
 - We were created on His image, Then we fell in sin, Result of sin, death and corruption entered the world and then Christ came to save us from sin and the results of sin (death and corruption)
 - Liturgy of St. Basil – Prayer of Reconciliation: O God, the Great, the Eternal, who formed man in incorruption; and death, which entered into the world through the envy of the Devil, You have destroyed by the life-giving manifestation of Your only-begotten Son, our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ.
- 2. Throughout the Liturgy we pray for the forgiveness of sins in many of our prayers.
 - The priest prays the absolution (like the one after confession) three times during the liturgy. After Matins, At the Absolution of Ministers, After the fraction & Our Father
 - The priest prays: We ask You O Lamb of God who carries the sin of the world, hear us and have mercy on us, and forgive us our sins. (Offertory)
 - There are congregation hymns and responses that focus on the forgiveness of sin: "Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Saint Mary, O Lord, grant us the forgiveness of our sins." "Loose, remit, and forgive us, O God, our iniquities which we have committed willingly and which we have committed unwillingly, which we have committed knowingly and which we have committed unknowingly; the hidden and the manifest, O Lord, forgive us."
- 3. Finally, the communion itself is given for the remission of sin.
 - Redemption of sins was fulfilled through crucifixion and resurrection of Christ as he redeemed all our sins (past, present, and future). The Eucharist is an extension of Christ's salvation as it allows us to partake and remember His death and crucifixion.
 - "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (1 Corinthians 11: 23-26)
 - "For every time you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you proclaim My Death, confess My Resurrection, and remember Me till I



come.” (Liturgy of St. Basil – Institution Narrative)

- "... given for us for salvation, remission of sins, and eternal life to those who partake of Him. I believe, I believe, I believe that this is true. Amen." (Liturgy of St. Basil – Confession)
- "Pray that God may have mercy and compassion on us, hear us, help us and accept the supplications and prayers of His saints for that which is good on our behalf at all times. And make us worthy to partake of the communion of His holy and blessed mysteries, for the remission of our sins." (Deacon Response)
- "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:28)

+ What is Worship?

- Worship is the expression of respect/ reverence and appreciation/adoration. In other words, every time we worship we are telling God a few things:
- 1. We respect and revere you: "Worship God in fear and trembling – (Liturgy Deacon response)
- 2. We appreciate everything you do for us: "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving. Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand." (Psalm 95:2, 6-7)
- 3. We adore you because you're so worthy of worship: "Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (Revelation 4:9-11)

+ How do we Worship?

- We worship with everything we got! Body, Mind, and Spirit.
- 1. Body: In our Coptic Tradition, Worship usually includes some action of bowing down, kneeling, or putting our face to the floor.
 - This is to help us humble ourselves before God in appreciation and respect. This is also based on the Bible: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker." (Psalms 95:6)
 - Bow your heads to the Lord – Deacon Response, Let us Bow our knees: Have mercy on us O God our Savior (Prostrations), Come let us kneel down, let us entreat Christ our Savior. (First Hour prayer)
- 2. Worshipping with our Mind and Emotions: During the Liturgy, our church puts beautiful hymns and prayers that move our emotions and fill our mind with prayerful thoughts. These hymns are connected to worship so that our body and our thoughts and emotions go together.
 - We worship the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit: Hail to the church, the house of the angels (Morning Doxology)
 - We worship you O Christ, with your Good Father, and the Holy Spirit for you have come and saved us (Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Faithful)
- 3. Worshipping in the Spirit: As we engage our bodies in worship by bowing and our minds/emotions in worship by chanting, we must lead by spirit through prayer.
 - Christ Himself tells us that our Worship should be spiritual: "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23-24)
 - Truth is Christ Himself and His word. As we worship in church we truly believe that Christ is present with us and that His Body and Blood are truly on the altar.
 - We worship Your Holy Body... and Your Precious Blood (Liturgy of St. Basil), I believe. Amen – as we bow down
 - Spirit is when our spirit engages with the Holy Spirit in this thing we call "prayer."
 - This is why worship usually is accompanied by one of three forms of prayers, if not all: Praise (Through Chanting), Thanksgiving (Expressing gratitude to God), Entreating (Asking God, this is common during Metanias Prostrations when we ask God for mercy). "
 - We praise you; we bless you; we serve you, and we worship you." (Liturgy of St. Basil), "Therefore, we praise You, bless You, serve You, worship You, glorify You and give thanks to You at all times." (Liturgy of St. Gregory)
 - "This is how you pray continually - not by offering prayer in words, but by joining yourself to God through your whole way of life, so that your life becomes one continuous and uninterrupted prayer." - St. Basil the Great

+ Why do we Worship?



- God loves when we worship, not because he needs, or wants, our adoration but rather because it's fulfilling for us to do so.
- You were not in need of my servitude, but rather, I in need of Your Lordship (Liturgy of St. Gregory)
- We are so overcome by God's presence, that we worship with all of our hearts at how amazing God is.
- The church is a mirror of heaven. The heavenly worship all the time as we have seen and so we join them in preparation for our wonderful eternal home.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 8.5: The Liturgical "ANAPHORA" / Exposition & Living it

Building Block 8:
The Liturgy



Objective

Understand and appreciate the "Anaphora" part of the Liturgy

Application

When we partake of the Holy Communion, we are one with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and we need to carry that outside the Church in our daily lives and we need to remember that when we talk, think or act with each other.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Corinthians 15:5-8](#)



Liturgy: [St. Cyril, The 3 Liturgies of St. Basil, St. Cyril, and St. Gregory](#)



Patristics: [St. Justin Martyr First Apology 66:1-20](#)



Story: [The Last Supper](#)



Other: [Journey to Heaven Video Series](#), [Article on the Eucharist](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Shutting the Doors:

The Anaphora is the most solemn part of the Divine Liturgy, or the Holy Sacrifice of the Liturgy, during which the offerings of bread and wine are consecrated as the Holy Body and Precious blood of Jesus Christ.

You may consider using liturgy books or videos as visual aids.

- For centuries it was the practice of the Church to admit all persons to the first part of the Divine Liturgy, while reserving the second part strictly for those who were formally committed to Christ through baptism and chrismation in the Church. Non-baptized persons were not permitted even to witness the offering and receiving of Holy Communion by the faithful Christians. Thus the first part of the Divine Liturgy came to be called the Liturgy of the Catechumens, that is, the liturgy of those who were receiving instructions in the Christian Faith in order to become members of the Church through baptism and chrismation. The second part of the Divine Liturgy came to be called the Liturgy of the Faithful.
- Although it is generally the practice in the Orthodox Church today to allow non-Coptic Orthodox Christians, to witness the Liturgy of the Faithful, it is still the practice to reserve actual participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion only to members of the Coptic Orthodox Church who are fully committed to the life and teachings of the Orthodox Faith as preserved, proclaimed and practiced by the Church throughout its history.
- In the liturgy, all that Christ did and suffered are represented symbolically. Contemplating what Christ did on our behalf helps to prepare us to approach the Holy Communion.

+ Parts of the Pre-Anaphora (Liturgy of the Faithful)

- The Priest washes his hands with water and shakes off the excess water towards the congregation. This symbolizes that the Priest is not responsible for any of the sins committed by the congregation. He has washed his hands from their sins. It is also a sign of warning that anyone approaching the table of the Lord unworthily, will be responsible for his own condemnation.
- Next the congregation (The Faithful and Believers) say the Orthodox Creed.
- Then the Priest prays the 'Prayer of Reconciliation'. "O God the Great and the Eternal, who formed man in incorruption, and death which entered into the world by the envy of the devil, you have destroyed...by the life-giving manifestation of your only Begotten Son, our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ"



- The Priest is recounting the creation, the fall of man and the redemption and salvation of man through Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus Christ reconciled us back to God, we have to be reconciled with one another and forgive each other.
- The Priest is holding a veil in the shape of an upside down triangle during this prayer and this represents the barrier between us and Heaven because Heaven was closed between us and God. The Priest then puts it down after the prayer to represent the opening of Heaven through the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Priest now lifts the larger veil (The Prosfarine) off the altar and this represents that Heaven is now open and we have access to God.
- The deacon tells the congregation to "greet one another with a Holy Kiss" which represents the reconciliation between each other.

+ Parts of the Anaphora (Liturgy of the Faithful)

- The Priest says: "The Lord be with you" the congregation replies back "And with your Spirit" ...Priest: "Lift up your hearts." Response "We have them with the Lord." Priest "Let us give thanks to the Lord." Response: "It is meet and right." The last part represents that it is fitting that we give thanks to God that he allowed us to partake of the Sacrifice.
- We stand and look towards the East. We stand because we are in the presence of God and we look towards the East because that was where the garden of Eden was placed and where man was created there. Man was created in purity, holiness and righteousness and it is for us to return to that. Jesus Christ will also be coming from the East in the second coming.
- The Priest then enumerates all the Heavenly Host that are praising God (Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Authorities, Thrones, Dominions, Powers) then the Cherubim and Seraphim and finally Us.

+ Agios

- The Priest then prays about the Incarnation and puts incense in the censur which represents His Incarnation.
- The Priest then prays "He descended into Hades through the cross" and crosses his hands over his chest and kisses the altar 2 times. The Cross is where Jesus Christ offered His salvation to us and the Altar has the sacrifice that we are offering to God for our salvation. The Cross and Altar are equivalent.
- The Priest then 'washes' his hands over the smoke from the incense to represent purifying his hands before touching the Body and Blood Jesus Christ. He also brings some of the incense smoke towards the bread and wine which represents the spices and incense that was used to cover Jesus Christ's body before he was buried in the tomb.

+ Institution Narrative

- Then the Institution Narrative is said and the deacons inside the altar are holding candles because the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is now exposed. The Priest goes through the exact reenactment that Jesus Christ did during the Last Supper. This is also called the Anamnesis which is not only remembering or recounting the events that happened during the Last Supper but reliving it.
- The Priest then breaks the bread in 4 places without separating it completely because not a single bone was broken in the Body of Jesus Christ. He blesses the bread and wine 3 times.
- "Not as common bread or common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, . . . is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus" (St. Justin Martyr, First Apology 66:I-20).
- "When [Christ] gave the bread he did not say, 'This is the symbol of my body,' but, 'This is my body.' In the same way, when he gave the cup of his blood he did not say, 'This is the symbol of my blood,' but, 'This is my blood,' for he wanted us to look upon the [Eucharistic elements], after their reception of grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit, not according to their nature, but to receive them as they are, the body and blood of our Lord."
- The Priest then moves the chalice from West to East representing that we were living in darkness and have come to the light and North to South representing that we were once separated from God and now have come back to His right Hand.
- The Priest then commemorates "His holy Passion, His Resurrection, His Ascension, His sitting at your Hand, O Father and His Second Coming from the Heavens."
- How can we commemorate "His Second Coming" if it has not happened yet? This tells us that the Divine Liturgy is beyond time and transcends time. It is not bound by time.
- The Priest continues saying "We offer unto you these gifts from what is Yours." This means that we are offering gifts (bread and wine) to God in which He created them and He offers us back the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.



- The Epiclesis is next and this is when the Holy Spirit descends unto the bread and wine and changes it to the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. We also ask the Holy Spirit to descend on us and sanctify us too.
- We are all bowing down during this time. Now Jesus Christ is on the altar and he puts the Cross away and doesn't bless the congregation anymore and doesn't turn away from the altar.

+ Post-Institution

- The seven short litanies are prayed next (Peace, Fathers, Ministers, Mercy, Salvation, Seasons, Oblations)
- The Commemoration of the Saints is prayed next. A memorial of all those who have pleased God from the beginning. Then the Priest prays for the departed.
- The Fraction is next and the Priest prays to keep the Church strong in Faith, Guide us to the Kingdom and Thanksgiving. He then starts to divide the Body of Christ.
- The Priest breaks the Body of Christ into 12 parts. It is done this way to represent the appearance of Jesus Christ to the Disciples after the Resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)
- Then we pray the Lord's Prayer and the Priest prays Inaudible Prayers
- The Priest then takes the middle piece of the Body (The Spadicon) into the Blood and anoints the rest of the Body with the Blood to represent all the wounds that were on Jesus Christ's Body. He then places the Spadicon into the blood upside down to represent when Jesus Christ was on His back as they were nailing Him to the Cross.
- The Confession is the end and the Priest holds the Body in the paten at the same level of the Chalice which shows that they are equal and belong to each other.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 8.6: After the Liturgy; Connecting Heaven and Earth

Building Block 8:
The Liturgy



Objective

To understand how to live the liturgy outside the church

Application

To live a God-driven life, in accordance with the Bible, balancing between service, prayer, liturgical worship, and fellowship.

References and Resources



Scripture: [James 1:22](#), [Acts 2:46-47](#), [Proverbs 27:17](#),
[Matthew 25:34-36](#), [Matthew 6:6](#)



Liturgy: The 3 Liturgies of [St. Cyril](#), [St. Basil](#), [St. Gregory](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: St. Jerome and St. Augustine



Other: [G10 Detailed Lesson Plans](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What happens after the Liturgy?

- So far we talked about prayer, worship, forgiveness, and scripture in the Liturgy, but what happens next?
- We should take the example of Jesus Christ. He used to pray for hours but then would go around doing good and serving others.
- The liturgy should prepare us for service. There should be something we're gaining during liturgy that helps us spread God's love to the world.
- There are parts that need to be balanced to live a full liturgical experience in our lives (Hearing and proclaiming God's word, Praying and Partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, Having fellowship with others in church, Serving outside of Church, Having a church in your home)

+ Hearing and proclaiming God's word

- This should continue after the liturgy in our daily lives, whether through Bible Study groups, a Bible Reading Plan, or Daily quiet time.
- This can't be done through only reading the Bible, instead, we have to live the Bible. Don't read the Bible, Live the Bible! As St. James said: "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." (James 1:22)
- Finally, we need to spread the Word to others. We need to proclaim His goodness. This could start by having conversations with a friend or a Bible Study group where we can discuss and interpret and get deeper. Later on, in life this can be done through teaching (Sunday School, Sermons, leading Bible Studies, etc.)
- We say this in the Liturgy: "Amen, Amen, Amen. You death O Lord we Proclaim. Your Holy Resurrection and Ascension into the heavens we confess."
- As we mentioned in previous lessons, one of the best ways to preach the Gospel is through our actions. Our love. How we treat others.

+ Praying and Partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ

- This is the Liturgy in the Church where we pray, get recharged through the Body and Blood of Christ and then go into the world.
- "So, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:46-47)

+ Having fellowship with others in church



- This is by being an active member in the Body of Christ. This can be done by attending meetings (like Sunday School), helping out with service, and just having friendly social time with people at church.
- This helps us come closer to one another and helps us be more united in fellowship. The wonderful thing here would be that we could strengthen each other when one falls.
- As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

+ Serving outside of Church

- Our roots grow deeper in God and the Church through living His word, having Fellowship with God through communion, and having fellowship with other believers in the Church. Once we have our roots, we need to spread.
- Acts of service is a great way to spread God's love and follow his commandments.
- "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'" (Matthew 25:34-36)
- "Do you wish to honor the body of Christ? Then do not disdain him when you see him in rags. After having honored Him in the church with silken vestments, do not leave Him to die of cold outside for lack of clothing. For it is the same Jesus who says, 'this is my body' and who says, 'I was hungry, and you did not feed me.'" St. John Chrysostom
- Finally, this completes the Liturgy (remember, Liturgy means "work of the people")

+ Having a church in your home

- We can't connect with God only one day a week for a couple hours and think we're growing in Him; we must have a daily prayer; our houses must be churches!
- A good way to do it is to have a prayer corner or a prayer altar in your room. You can put your favorite icons and candles there too if it helps remind you to pray.
- " But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matthew 6:6)

+ The Examples of St. Jerome and St. Augustine

- St. Jerome – A Fourth Century Doctor of the Church, Jerome made the Bible more accessible to everyday people when he translated it into Latin from its original Hebrew and Greek. St. Jerome is famous for saying, "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." We can follow in Jerome's evangelizing footsteps by loving the Word of God.
- St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo: St. Augustine was known for his sinful life prior to his conversion. He continues to inspire people, not only because of his conversion, but also with the greatness of his writings—most famously his Confessions—which have had a profound impact on Christian thought down to the present day.



Building Block 9: Wisdom and Discernment



Theme: Repentance

Building Block 9:
Wisdom and
Discernment



Lesson 9.1: Submission – Depend not on Your Own Understanding

Objective

Understanding the dangers of relying on your own knowledge, and the importance of the value of discipleship through a father of confession/spiritual guide.

Application

Ask yourself and reflect on: How do I exhibit a life of Submission in my daily life? What blocks Submission from working and being exhibited in me?
Identify various areas of your life which you need to submit to. Go to your father of confession and discuss these areas.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Joshua 24:15](#), [Psalm 5:11](#), [Psalm 27:1-3](#), [John 14:15](#), [Matthew 7:21](#), [John 8:51](#), [1 Corinthians 2:16](#), [Psalm 73:22-24](#), [Psalm 73:22-24](#), [1 Timothy 2:3-7](#), [James 4:7-8](#), [Hebrews 11:24-25](#), [Titus 2:9-10](#), [Romans 8:28](#), [Romans 1:5](#), [Hebrew 13:7](#), [Acts 9:6](#), [Psalm 40:8](#), [Acts 13:22](#)



Liturgy: [Absolution of the Ministers](#)



Patristics: [Lactantius \(C.304\)](#), [Clement of Rome \(C.96\)](#), [Cyprian \(C250\)](#)



Story: The monk who did not share his thoughts with a guide (pg. 125 of [Dorotheos of Gaza](#))



Other: [SUS Diocese](#).



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Submission vs Suppression

- The definition of “Submission” is the action or fact of accepting or yielding to a superior force or to the will or authority of another person. This definition is too close to the definition of “Suppression” which is “to put down by authority or force”.
- However the Biblical meaning of “Submission” is “To be submissive; to yield without murmuring.”
- **The Discipline of Submission** means having the willingness to voluntarily submit to Christ and also to others in authority. Thus, we make a commitment and resolve to yield our will, mind, and body for God's purposes so we can better hear, receive, and obey His Word.
- A person of TRUE submission gladly accepts whatever happens in their life and with thanksgiving, knowing that it was for their well being, whether in appearance or thought it is perceived as good or bad.
- Joshua said, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

+ Why do I have to submit?

- To present ourselves as good examples of Christ “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.” (Philippians 2:5-9).
- God commanded it (Rom 13:1-2; Heb. 13:17)
- It is an act of obedience and honor to God (Mk. 14:36, John 17:4)
- There are a lot of benefits for submitting to God.
- 1- True Joy:
 - True joy means an absence of grief, anxiety, and fear. Joy is a fruit of the spirit.
 - "But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You" (Psalm 5:11).
 - Hermas (c. 150) states, "He will bestow on them the blessing which He has promised them, with much glory and joy, if only they will



keep the commandments of God, which they have received in great faith."

- 2- Peacefulness:

- A person who experiences total peace is someone who is sure that his life is in the very hands of God. He feels such peace in his heart that nothing and no one can take it away.
- A person realizes that God loves Him and is able to take him from the midst of hard times and tribulations.
- "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an entire army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident" (Psalm 27:1-3).

- 3- No Eternal Condemnation:

- Being sure of the final judgment is the end point on the path way to the life of submission.
- "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).
- If you strive to keep the Lord's commandments you can rest assured of the blessings of the life of submission.
- "Not everyone who say to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven" (Matthew 7:21).
- "Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (John 8:51).

- 4. God's Protection & Guidance:

- The Apostle Paul lived and experienced a life of submission. He said, "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16), therefore when thoughts become that of God it is a normal result of the life of submission.
- If a person submits his life completely to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord will guide their thoughts.
- David the Psalmist said, "I was so foolish and ignorant. You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel" (Psalm 73:22-24).
- "Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation" (Psalm 91:14-16).

+ Virtues that Precede the Life of Submission:

- A life of submission encourages one to acquire other spiritual virtues such as obedience, patience, and endurance. One's will is the only thing that stands against acquiring these particular virtues.
- Surrender to God vs. Surrender to Earthly Desires
- "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things" (1 Timothy 2:3-7). Faithful submission requires effort and disciplined behaviors. Discipline may include self-denial and struggle in order to surrender to God. Moses chose to suffer with the Israelites over being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:24-25).
- Humility vs. Arguments and Prideful Thoughts
- It is not possible to live the life of submission without humility. A submissive person must be sure of God, lean on God's Word, and depend on the Lord in times of unrest. A puffed up person that leans on their own thinking, and on the truths they believe to be self-evident cannot submit their lives to God in humility. "Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Titus 2:9-10).
- Feelings of the ego cannot take priority over feelings of humility. Lactantius (c. 304) wrote, "There is need of humility, fear, and devotion in the greatest degree—lest anyone should put his confidence in his integrity and innocence. For in doing this, he may incur the charge of pride and arrogance."
- Clement of Rome (c. 96) advises, "Let your children be partakers of true Christian training. Let them learn that humility is of great avail with God."
- Faith vs. Doubt
- If a person doubts God's love and care, such a person will not be able to submit his life to such a wavering trust. A person cannot be obedient to a luke-warm relationship with God. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

"Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:5). Obedience to the faith is acceptance of the Holy Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the virtue of obedience in action.

Cyprian (c. 250) said, "Abraham believed in God and it was accounted to him as righteousness. Assuredly, then, when whoever believes in God and lives in faith is found righteous and is already blessed in faithful Abraham."

+ I can do it myself. (the dangerous of not having a spiritual guidance)

- 'Take a look at the brother whom the evil one loved, about whom he used to say to Abba Macarius: 'I have one brother' he said, 'who when he sees me changes like the wind.' Such people the devil loves and he always rejoices over them, the ungoverned, those who are not subject to one who has power, under God, to help them and to give them a hand.
- The devil tempted all of the monks, but all of them ran and made known his thoughts to his spiritual father and found help in time of temptation, with the result that the evil one was powerless against them! But the devil found this miserable brother depending on his own strength and having nobody to support him, and he made a plaything of him. And he told Abba Macarius about it, and gave away to him the brother's name. The holy man ran to this brother quickly and he found that this very thing was the cause of his undoing: he found him unwilling to talk about his troubles. He found he had not formed the habit of revealing his inner thoughts and for this reason the enemy was twisting him round his little finger. "When he (Macarius) was alone with him the old man (Macarius) asked him, 'How are you getting on?' The brother replied, 'Thanks to your prayers, all goes well.' The old man asked: 'Do not your thoughts war against you?' He replied: 'Up to now, it is all right,' for he was afraid to admit anything. The old man said to him, 'See how many years I have lived as an ascetic, and am praised by all, and though I am old, the spirit of fornication troubles me.' The brother said, 'Believe me, abba, it is the same with me.'" Then the devil came back and tried to tempt him, and found him stiffened up and no longer falling for his tricks. He departed at last without success; he departed put to shame, and by this very brother. Now you understand why the enemy hates anyone who takes the precaution of revealing his secret thoughts: because he wants to destroy us. Now you understand why he loves those who stake out their own paths: because they work together with the devil, they themselves lay snares for themselves.' Adapted from Dorotheos of Gaza, pg 125-126.
- It's wise & beneficial to follow those who have experience. "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follows, considering the outcome of their conduct." (Hebrew 13:7). An example of following the church Fathers is in our liturgy when the priest prays the Absolution of the Ministers, the church is showing our line of discipleship through the fathers of the church.

+ Characteristics of the Life of Submission:

- Submission of One's Strong Will
When a person submits his will it means that he has no other will which differs from that of God's. Saul of Tarsus asked God when He appeared to him near Damascus: "Lord what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6). From that point in time onward, Saul of Tarsus with complete submission to God was the turning point in the life of this great apostle, then St. Paul.
- Behavior Will Match the Will of God; King David would exclaim, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). King David was willing to obey God. "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will" (Acts 13:22).
- God will Guide the Thoughts of the Submissive: St. Paul who lived an active life of submission said, "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). God will guide the thoughts of those submissive to Him. "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:7-8)



Theme: Repentance

Lesson 9.2: Anxiety

Building Block 9:
Wisdom and
Discernment



Objective

Understand the cause of anxiety, the way to resist it and how to distinguish between the sin of being anxious, and the clinical form of depression.

Application

Examine yourself to identify any weakness you may have to learn more about any anxiety you have because of your focus on the material things.

Speak to a medical professional if your anxiety is out of control and you think it may be clinical.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Hebrews 11:1](#), [Hebrews 11:6](#), [Matthew 6:25-34](#), [Romans 12:2](#), [Philippians 4:6](#)



Liturgy: [The litanies of the Unction of the Sick](#)



Patristics: [Commentary by St. John Chrysostom Homily 13](#)



Story: [Martha](#); [Elisha](#)



Other: [Anxiety: Part 1](#), [HG Bishop Yousef, Part 2](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Anxiety and Fear

Consider having this discussion: What types of things make you worried? Who do you turn to when you are afraid? Do you trust that God can take care of you? How does it make you feel knowing that God cares more about you than the birds and the flowers? What should we focus on instead of being anxious?

- Anxiety is a psychological, physiological condition experienced in both body and soul constantly occupying thoughts causing somatic symptoms and ailments such as headache, chest tightness, skin rashes and others. Anxiety can range from a simple healthy type required for survival, self defense and meeting goals to serious pathological types that require more serious clinical treatment.
- While fear is a reaction to a present threatening element or frightening action (for example fear from a dark room or a wild animal); anxiety is a negative unpleasant anticipatory concern about the future (for example anxiety about losing one's job or family members). Fear can be eliminated by eliminating the cause. Anxiety, on the other hand, cannot be removed so easily because the stimulant is not in the here-and-now but in the unseen future.
- Nowadays many people worry too much and when you dig deep, there is not a serious reason. Sadly the big target right now are young people, high school, college and young graduates. These categories are suffering from anxiety but in fact, the majority of the cases are not really anxiety but a "Trust and Faith issue"

+ The Effects of Anxiety

- 1- Robber of Joy: Because of the concern over tomorrow, anxiety robs one of the ability to enjoy his present moment that might be potentially full of God's peace, goodness and blessings.
- 2- Waster of Time: Anxiety over tomorrow consumes valuable time which, if invested in positive proactive thinking, would be more profitable. There is a big difference between anxiety and caution. The first leads to preoccupying pain and preempted failure while the second leads to careful planning, wise choices and ultimate success.
- 3- Inhibitor of Sound Thinking: Preoccupation with tomorrow's unseen and consequently unrevealed, yet-to-happen incidents undermine the value of today's blessings trivializing their value and blurring our judgment.
- 4- Exterminator of Faith: Anxiety cancels Faith from the heart. By definition, Faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).
- 5- Paradoxical in Nature: The anxiety that overwhelms and overtakes people while striving to attain a better, more comfortable life is the

same anxiety that causes diseases and perhaps shortens life, and the rich people are anxious to collect get spent on doctors, drugs and hospitals.

- 6- Source of Sin: Lack of Faith in God is a sin. Our Lord never performed a miracle before checking on people's faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

+ Jesus said worry is useless:

- Jesus had a lot to say about anxiety. The most prominent passage in which Jesus speaks about it is Matthew 6:25-34, in which He uses the word anxious six times. We are not to be anxious about what we are to eat, drink, or wear, or even about the unknown circumstances of tomorrow. Another expression Jesus uses regarding anxiety is "Do not be afraid" (Matthew 10:31; Luke 12:7). Do you know how many times "Do not be afraid" is mentioned in the Bible? 366 times.
- Our trust is in God as we pray in the liturgy in the litany of the Air of Heaven and the Fruit: "For the eyes of everyone wait upon You, for you give them their food in due season."
- Martha is a significant New Testament figure, a friend of Jesus, and someone many women can identify. She lived in Bethany with her sister, Mary, and her brother, Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. The story she is commonly associated with is one referenced in Luke 10. She is in Bethany, a small town near Jerusalem, where she is hosting Jesus and the disciples. On the day that Jesus visited, Martha was focused on being a good hostess, for Jesus' sake. Her sister, Mary, however, was taking the time to listen to Jesus. This brought Martha great anxiety, which many of us can relate to. Luke 10:40-42 says, "But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.'" And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."
- Imagine waking up and finding your city surrounded by an enemy army! Elisha's servant was worried sick, terrified. But through this frightening experience, he learned a wonderful truth. *"Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."* And Elisha prayed, and said, *'LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.'* Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:16-17). Elisha didn't have a worry in the world! God had sent an angelic army to protect his servant. After surveying that breathtaking display of power, he knew what the outcome would be. He was able to show mercy to the enemy soldiers because God had rendered them harmless. From this, we learn a key principle: Introducing God into the equation changes everything, no matter how frightening the situation looks.

+ Treatment of Anxiety

- Anxiety therapy has its roots established in the Holy Bible long before secular psychology knew it as a discipline and science. Our Lord Jesus Christ specified and summarized humanity's anxiety as basically being caused by concern over "what to eat, what to drink and what to wear". Matthew 6 offers the Lord's therapy to anxiety by first liberating the mind from anxiety and then our actions will be delivered and straightened. Later on, psychologists classified anxiety based on the dichotomy of cognitive and behavioral therapy. Which is exactly what Christ teaches in Matthew 6:25-34 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink, nor about your body what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? Now if God so clothes, the grass of the field which today is and clothes you, O you of little faith? But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."
- 1- Cognitive therapy: focuses on thoughts as the seat of either positive or negative attitude. So, Cognitive Therapy embarks upon changing the negative anxious thoughts. That is exactly what St. Paul has recommended, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). And it's explained thoroughly in Matthew 6. Jesus is explaining and proving that there is no reason for us to worry. He's teaching us that we are eternal, we are of more value than the grass & the birds. God who's in control cares for the grass & the birds. How come we doubt that He won't care for us. Even if we worry, what can we accomplish? As He teaches us, can we add one cubit to our stature? Anxiety accomplishes nothing, speak to yourself! If I allow myself to fall into anxiety it will make things more difficult on you to do your daily tasks. Refuse and reject to be controlled by this useless emotion. Do your part and leave the rest to God because He's in control. All of that Jesus is trying to renew our minds to think positive & put anxiety into place.
- 2- Behavioral Therapy: The second part of the therapy is the behavioral therapy & it's mentioned in Matthew 6. After redirecting our minds to the positive thoughts, now Jesus is tackling the behavioral part. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." also in Philippians 4:6 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with

thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God: and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus” Yes we can worry but more important put it into place. Pray, supplicate & thank God for your worries. Place all your worries into God’s hand Who’s in control of everything then we can experience the heavenly peace that surpasses all understanding. In the sacrament of the Unction of the Sick, all the seven litanies, the priest starts by mentioning God’s mercies & long sufferings then ask for the healing of the person, then thanking God who loves mankind & performed many miracles out of His love & compassion to mankind.

- Actually renewal of the mind leads to change of behavior. Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT) offers a model designed to help patients differentiate between and separate themselves from their thoughts by externalizing the anxious thoughts and then deal with them separately outside of their being. They suggest writing down those thoughts and storing them in a box to be accessed later on at a special assigned time for thinking them over and finding a solution to them. The ACT offered five steps to be followed sequentially in order to overcome anxiety. All the five steps are mentioned in the bible.
- 1- Specify the anxiety-causing thoughts and write them down. Jesus said "Do not worry" (Matthew 6:25) God associated anxiety with lack of Faith. St. John Chrysostom contemplating on Jesus' Temptation on the mountain “ How then are we to get the better of him? In the way which Christ that taught us, by fleeing to God for refuge; and neither to be depressed in famine, as believing in God who is able to feed even with a word;” Homily 13 on the Gospel of Matthew
- 2- Do not let those thoughts control you. Jesus said "look at the birds of the air" (Matthew 6:26).
- 3- Replace defeat with assurance that your thoughts are under your control. "Are you not of more value than they (birds of the air)?" (Matthew 6:26)
- 4- Live in your present moment. "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34)
- 5- Act towards solving those problems. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 9.3: You and Your Family

Building Block 9:
Wisdom and
Discernment



Objective

Understand the value of family, each person's role within it and how it's a gift by God as a model of the Church

Application

- + Strive to honor our parents in everything, give them priority even when you may be missing out on something fun. What is one thing you will do this week to show your parents how to honor them?
- + Offer to serve your family before the church.
- + Neither God or the church wants you to prioritize serving the church before your family.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Ephesians 5:25](#), [Ephesians 5:22](#), [Ephesians 6:1-4](#), [Proverbs 22:6](#), [Sirach 3:3-18](#)



Liturgy: [Litany of the Assemblies](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom on Marriage and Family Life](#), [Homily 21 St. John Chrysostom](#), [Homily 12 on Colossia](#)



Story: [Abraham's Family](#).



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Christian Family.

Consider having this discussion: Why do you think that God created families? What do you think God had in mind with moms and dads and children and grandparents?

Read Joshua 24:15: Ask yourself, if my family were asked to make a choice right now, would we serve God even if everyone around us was not choosing God? Share about a family relationship that makes you happy. Why? Share about a family relationship that is a challenge to you. Why? What do you wish your parents knew or would do? How could your family serve God and share His love as a family?

- The Christian Family is the building block of the Church. "If we thus regulate our own houses, we shall be also fit for the management of the Church. For indeed a house is a little Church." St John Chrysostom.
- A biblical example of a great family is "Abraham, Sarah & Isaac" "Consider Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and the three hundred and eighteen born in his house. How the whole house was harmoniously knit together, how the whole was full of piety and fulfilled the Apostolic injunction. St. John Chrysostom.
- Sarah honored Abraham & used to call him "My lord". Abraham loved Sarah dearly & obeyed her commandments. Even the 318 servants who were born in the house of Abraham, didn't hesitate to risk their lives & go to war with Abraham. "Now when Abraham heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan" Genesis 14:14. "When husband and wife and children and servants are all interested in the same things, great is the harmony of the house. St. John Chrysostom

+ The Dynamics of the Christian Family.

- Each member of the Christian Family has a role. All the roles in the family are not contradicting but complementing each other in an harmonious way.
- For the husbands; "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her," Ephesians 5:25. Also St John Chrysostom said if the wives were asked to obey & to submit to the husbands as to the Lord, the husbands also should love their wives as Christ loves the Church "You have seen the measure of obedience, hear also the measure of love. Would you have your wife obedient unto you, as the Church is to Christ? Take then yourself the same provident care for her, as Christ takes for the Church." St. John Chrysostom
- For the wives; "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" Ephesians 5:22. St. John Chysostom elaborated on this saying "Because when they are in harmony, the children are well brought up, and the domestics are in good order, and neighbors, and friends, and relations enjoy the fragrance." St. John Chrysostom
- For Children; "Children , Obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with



promise” Ephesian 6:1-2

- Children should obey their parents, as it’s mentioned, “for this is right”. There are also many other reasons mentioned in The Wisdom of Sirach 3:3-18 “For God has honored the father in the sons, and, when seeking the judgment of the mother, he has confirmed it in the children, He who loved God will plead with him on behalf of sins, and will keep himself away from sin, and will be heeded in the prayers of his days. And, like one who stores up treasure, also is he who honors his mother. He who honors his father will find happiness in his own children, and he will be heeded in the day of his prayer. He who honors his father will live a long life. And he who obeys his father will be a refreshment to his mother. He who fears the Lord honors his parents, and he will serve them as masters, for it is they who conceived him. In word and deed, and in all things, honor your father with patience, so that a blessing may come to you from him, and so that his blessing may remain to the very end. The blessing of the father strengthens the houses of the sons; but the curse of the mother uproots even its foundation. do not boast in the disgrace of your father; for his shame is not your glory. For the glory of the man is from the honor of his father, and a father without honor is a discredit to the son. Son, support your father in his old age, and do not grieve him in his life. And if his mind should fail, show kindness; and do not spurn him when you are in your strength. For almsgiving to the father will never be forgotten. For even in return for the sin of the mother, good will be repaid to you. And you will be built up in justice, and you will be remembered in the day of tribulation. And your sins will dissolve like ice in warm weather. What an evil fornicator has he who forsake his father! And whoever exasperates his mother is accursed by God”.
- The parents’ main responsibility is to teach their children the way of God. “Train Up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” Proverbs 22:6
- Parents must train their children in virtues , reading the bible together and teaching the spirit of the church at home.
- In revealing the virtues to them, the parents are revealing to their children the image of God formed within them.
- Though education is important, St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the greater importance of instilling values in children. “If we do our best to educate ourselves and our families in virtue, then God will assist us to bring the work to perfection”
- “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” and you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” Ephesians 6:1-4. Also in the Litany of the assemblies the priest prays “Houses of prayer, houses of purity, houses of blessing. Grant them to us O Lord, and to your servants who will come after us, forever.”

+ Home sweet home.

- A true Christian Family is a source of blessings. It should be a sneak peak to heaven.
- St. John Chrysostom wrote, “Turn your home into heaven; you will do this not when you change the walls or rebuild the foundation, but when you invite the Almighty Lord to your repast. God never disregards any kind of supper. Where there is spiritual science, there is humility, sincerity and modesty. Where the husband, and the wife, and the children are in accord and united by the bonds of virtue, there is Christ among them.”
- A family that loves God together can be an awesome thing for the world to see. And as members of the Body of Christ, the Church, we ought to love each other and pray for each other. The church applies that by praying for her members placing the Litany of the Assemblies in the liturgy to pray for our gatherings.

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 9.4: Generational Gap

Building Block 9:
Wisdom and
Discernment



Objective

Understand the generation gap that needs understanding in order to communicate effectively.

Application

Whenever we are in conflict with a different generation, we should stop and examine what they may mean. Let us be slow to criticize the thoughts or ideas of another generation, since we may be misunderstanding them, or not understanding where they are coming from.

References and Resources



Scripture: [II Timothy 3:15](#), [Psalm 133:1](#), [Psalm 37:23](#), [Ephesians 5:25](#), [Deuteronomy 6:6-7](#), [Joel 1:1-3](#), [Thessalonians 2:15](#), [Ephesians 6:1-4](#)



Liturgy: [Before the intro of the Fraction. "As it was, and shall be. It is from generation to generation..."](#)



Patristics: [St. Irenaeus](#)



Story: [The Story of Abraham](#)



Others: [Why can't we just get along together? Part 1](#), [Generational & Cultural Diversity. Part 2](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is a Generation Gap?

Consider having this discussion: Do you think that differences in English proficiency between children and their parents have any influence on the family power structures? Do you think that gaps in the degree of acculturation between one and his/her parents affect your family relationships? Do you think that God prefers to work within the scheme of many generations interacting with each other more than an isolated generation?

- Differences of outlook or opinion between people of different generations.
- Another definition is "A generation gap refers to the chasm that separates the beliefs and behaviors belonging to members of two different generations. More specifically, a generation gap can be used to describe the differences in thoughts, actions, and tastes exhibited by members of younger generations versus older ones."

+ Why can't we get along together?

- "Why Can't We Just Get Along Together?" is a frequently asked question among members of the same family noticeably or unnoticeably verbally or silently.
- The answer to this question is not just an applied method but rather a practical life. In order for a family to "get along" and experience spiritual growth and success, they must do the things that the Lord Jesus Christ preached and taught by example.
- Generation gaps are caused by increased life expectancy, rapid changes in society, and the mobility of society. Add to this different culture & different language in most of our Egyptian communities in the Western Countries. All of these differences cause a huge gap between the parents & their children.

+ How do we get along?

- First and foremost understand that there is a gap (both ways, whether you are the parent or the child). Your parent thinks differently, he/she doesn't hate you. Try to acknowledge the existence of that gap so you can deal with it.
- Do not be quick to judge or accuse the other generation. Willingly put yourself in the other party's shoes. Try to find excuses for their actions. That will get you all closer & close that gap.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ did that for us when He incarnated & became man in order to live with us & be like us (without the sin) to save us & bring us as a new creation to the Father.



- Communicate more with each other. Spending time together will help both generations to understand each other. Communication is not just verbally. 65% is a nonverbal communication. As more as you communicate, as more as you will understand the other, that will close the gap between you & get you closer to each other
- Have a common ground. Find something that both of you like to do. Keep the habit of enjoying that activity together.
- For a family to grow and function well there must be a designated time for prayer, reading the Holy Bible, and admonishing each other to do those things which are lawful, right, and obedient in the sight of God.
- Worship of the Lord Jesus Christ and attending the Divine Liturgy on an anticipated and consistent schedule as a family must be a priority.
- Such a willingness and gracious obedience to the Lord gives birth to a truly happy family.
- "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 3:15).
- Cross experiences: That goes both ways. Parents want to give their children all their experiences in life, but on the other hand they should be more receptive to learn from their children. Kids nowadays know more than their parents in some areas. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

+ Examples of Biblical Family that get along.

- Abraham the father of faith, Abraham's faith was not impulsive, not-all-or-nothing in intensity, nor was it lukewarm. Abraham was the head of a household of faith in a continual growth process. He led that family's faith through his love of God and willingness to obey Him.
- It seems he discovered good works first, a type of justification by ongoing faith, and exemplified an active love of God. What family would not want to follow such a father?
- "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way" (Psalm 37:23). Through Abraham's love for God, he further had a great capacity of love for his wife Sarah, and for his son Isaac. This love tied his family together in unison. Abraham put God first and foremost before himself and his family as evidenced in his willingness to sacrifice his only son, the son of promise by Sarah, who would carry his family's name for generations to come.
- Thus, Abraham was tested and tested again but he persevered through his strong, active and proactive faith and so his family "got along". Abraham's son could look to him for guidance because Abraham looked to God for guidance. This father and son "got along".
- "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Ephesians 5:25).
- Abraham is an example of faithful loving father & we are all called the children of Abraham as St. Irenaeus (c. 180) wrote, "The promise of God that He gave to Abraham remains steadfast...For his seed is the church, which received the adoption of God through the Lord, as John the Baptist said, 'For God is able from the stones to raise up children to Abraham.' Thus also the apostle says in the Epistle to the Galatians, 'But you, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.'"

+ Why do we have to deal with the Generation gap?

- Generations serve a function. As it's mentioned in the liturgy after the Commemoration "As it was and shall be, it is from generation to generation and unto all the ages of the ages Amen"
- Each generation has to deliver God's word to the next generation. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).
- "The word of the Lord came to Joel the son of Pethuel. Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all of you inhabiting the land! Has anything like this happened in your days or even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation" (Joel 1:1-3).
- There is wisdom in the older generation that can only be received by those whose hunger for truth has forged humility within their hearts.
- If all you want to do is defend your views, you are robbing yourself of great wisdom and understanding.
- Much of what the older generation says is for our protection and good.
- There is nothing more foolish than a youth who thinks they have seen it all, trying to correct an elder!
- Each generation should happily get the experience from the previous generation. They've been there, they went through the same stage the younger generation is going through.
- "Therefore brethren stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle" (II Thessalonians 2:15). "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
- 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.' Any of you, fathers do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians



6:1-4).

- In conclusion, let us be reminded that there is actually one holy generation that God is extracting from all the ages of human history.
- It is clear from Scripture that the entire overcoming Body of Christ is actually the same generation, no matter what age they live in!
- Consider the following verse, written two thousand years ago, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people; that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9)

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 9.5: The Vanity of the World

Building Block 9:
Wisdom and
Discernment



Objective

Understand the vanity and temporal nature of the world and everything in it.
Our goal should not be on earth, but on eternal life.

Application

Strive for heavenly gifts, not earthly ones through fasting and self-denial. Learn from the lives of the saints that satisfaction was not found in the world, but with God.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Ecclesiastes 1:9-10](#), [Ecclesiastes 3:1](#), [John 12:37](#), [2 Corinthians 5:17](#), [Revelation 21:5](#), [Ecclesiastes 3:11](#), [Ecclesiastes 1:4](#), [Ecclesiastes 1:2](#), [Ecclesiastes 2:24](#), [Ecclesiastes 3:12-13](#), [Ecclesiastes 5:19](#), [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#), [Ecclesiastes 2:13](#), [Ecclesiastes 9:3-5](#), [Ecclesiastes 2:10](#), [Ecclesiastes 2:11](#), [Ecclesiastes 12:13](#), [John 6:27](#), [Matthew 6:20](#), [Ecclesiastes 12:14](#), [Psalm 19:105](#)



Liturgy: [The Liturgy of the Word, the conclusion of the Catholic Epistle](#).



Patristics: [Bishop Gregory of Nyssa-Commentary book on Ecclesiastes](#).



Story: [St. Moses the Strong](#), [St. Augustine](#), [St. Mary of Egypt](#).



Other: [Book of Ecclesiastes Commentary by Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty](#); [Legacy Curriculum Great Fast Week 0](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Under the Sun

Consider having this discussion: Why do you think King Solomon writes about life in this way? Have you ever met people who think about the world in a similar way? From verse 14, why do you believe he refers to “everything that is done under the sun” as “vanity and a striving after the wind?” Can this perspective cause sorrow?

- King Solomon, the wisest man on earth, differentiate between life under the Sun & life on top of it. Life under the Sun follows the time of the sun. However, Life on top of the Sun has no time limitation. The sun has no control over its time. There will be no night, no sun because our Lord is its sun. Therefore there will be no time. King Solosmon used the term “Under the Sun” 29 times in his book of Ecclesiastes which is only 12 chapters long.
- Life under the Sun has a beginning and an end. It’s a repetitive life, nothing new. “That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, “See, this is new”? It has already been in ancient times before us.” Ecclesiastes 1:9-10.
- Time controls everything under the sun “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under the sun” Ecclesiastes 3:1.
- While he correctly observes that there is nothing new under the sun, we as Christians affirm that through Christ there is newness, “A new commandment I give to you” John 12:37. “If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation” 2 Corinthians 5:17. “Behold, I make all things new” Revelation 21:5.
- That is the difference between life under the sun & life with Christ. Even King Solomon in Ecclesiastes said “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from the beginning to end” Ecclesiastes 3:11
- Under the Sun life passes away. “One generation passes away, and another generation comes” Ecclesiastes 1:4.



- The unsaved or natural man looks at life and says, Death ends it all, eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. This is the way the unsaved man looks at life, and this is the picture that Solomon gives us in the Book of Ecclesiastes. In fact, the entire Book shows us how the unsaved man looks at life “under the sun”. He has God remote from his human condition.
- “Vanity of vanities”: Ecclesiastes 1:2. Stated at the very beginning of the work.
- Even if you pursue wisdom and enjoy your wealth, labor faithfully, deplore injustice and wickedness; the end is always the same. “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.” Ecclesiastes 2:11.

+ Is the world evil?

- It is Ecclesiastes’ sharply critical attitude towards human conduct and the instability of earthly existence that has caught the attention of that great Cappadocian bishop, Gregory of Nyssa (c.335- 395), who composed his own commentary on this book. The phrase “Vanity of vanities” does not condemn creation but simply our misuse of what God had entrusted to our guardianship.”
- As Bishop Gregory says, “the outcome of our misuse of the patrimony entrusted to us is the illusion that we are masters of ourselves and of the earth”
- The book of Ecclesiastes clearly provides expression for such a realization. It is concerned more with the fact that everything outside God consists of non-existence.
- God is absolute virtue, and the evil not belonging to Him consists of non-existence or the deprivation of goodness. It exists insofar as we freely choose to separate ourselves from this good (God).
- Bishop Gregory employs the vivid expression of sewing ourselves onto God which works against the rending tendency of sin. The bishop of Nyssa in his commentary on Ecclesiastes’ words, A time to keep silence, says that our human intelligence must remain in silent awe and adoration at the mystery of God’s transcendence.
- The positive teachings of the book include that one should enjoy eating, drinking, and working for these activities are the simple pleasures and bases of human life, and although wisdom could not supply all the answers, the author continued to search for wisdom, where wisdom and fearing God was still the best way to approach life.
- “Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God” Ecclesiastes 2:24
- “I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor -it is the gift of God” Ecclesiastes 3:12-13.
- “As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor-this is the gift of God” Ecclesiastes 5:19.
- God wants us to enjoy His gift of life. It’s a matter of understanding that this life is a gift from Him. It’s not our own life, we were granted it.

+ Why am I here in this world?

- King Solomon asked that question in the 1st chapter in the book of Ecclesiastes “What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?” Ecclesiastes 1:3.
- There is a purpose for every single one on earth. Yes, death is the end of this life under the sun, but the author praises wisdom as being profitable “Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.” Ecclesiastes 2:13.
- The wise King Solomon explained that this life under the sun is temporary. Death will come to the righteous & the evil man so he saw that this life is an opportunity to a better eternal life. Those who are wise use this life towards a better life in Heaven.
- “This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.” Ecclesiastes 9:3-5.
- King Solomon found the answer of his question in Ecclesiastes 12:13 “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” and he continued saying “For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil” All of our works will be judge by God one day, whether it’s good or bad so the wise is he who use the opportunity of this life to keep God’s commandments & not getting attached to any of this earthly matters.
- As we say in the Liturgy of the word in the conclusion of the Catholic Epistle in every liturgy “do not love the world or the things in the world. The world is passing away, and it’s lust; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”



+ Eternal life, What's my goal in this world?

- Modern man is also a man of sight, his conclusion about life being based upon what he can see with his own eyes! But he has become so dependent upon his eyes that he is trapped. He can only perceive that which is seen.
- Failing to see God and to detect his purposes, modern man becomes weary and even lost, concurring with Ecclesiastes' finding -- all is vanity. The prevalent sense of vanity is attributed to the absence of God as a purpose of our life
- The wise King Solomon speaking out of his experience, "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor" Ecclesiastes 2:10.
- Then in the following verse he found out that "Indeed all was vanity and grasping for wind. There was no profit under the sun" Ecclesiastes 2:11.
- In conclusion of King Solomon's experience that anything under the sun (earthly matter) is vanity & grasping for wind.
- There is no profit of anything in this world so to live our lives wisely is to "fear God & keep His commandment" Ecclesiastes 12:13.
- "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to the everlasting life." John 6:27. That everlasting life is abiding in God & the church's sacraments.
- "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal" Matthew 6:20.
- Watch what you do here on earth because you will give an account to every thing you do whether it's good or bad "For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil" Ecclesiastes 12:14.
- This conclusion is not only driven from King Solomon's experience but many saints have started their lives in an ungodly way but ended up as great saints like St Moses the Strong, St Augustine & St Mary the Egyptian. (the Servant get to pick one Saint to contemplate more if needed)
- We are sojourners in this world on our way back to our heavenly home So hang on to God's word until we reach our final destination (the Eternal Life) 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path' Psalm 119:105

Theme: Repentance

Lesson 9.6: Judge Not

Building Block 9:
Wisdom and
Discernment



Objective

Understand the danger and sinfulness of judging our neighbors.

Application

We can stop judging by controlling our thoughts, confront them when you have judgeful thoughts.

If you see someone do something wrong, instead of sinning by judging, acknowledge your weakness and say to yourself, "Today them, tomorrow me."

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 7:1-2](#), [James 5:19-20](#), [1 Peter 4:8](#), [Psalm 51:3](#), [Matthew 7:3-5](#), [Galatians 6:1](#), [John 7:21-24](#), [Matthew 18:32-35](#)



Liturgy: [The Absolution of the 12th hour of the Agpeya](#).



Patristics: [St. Moses the Strong](#), [St. Isaac the Syrian](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#).



Story: [The Parable of the Unforgiving servant](#).



Other: [Judging Others](#), [Conducting our thoughts](#), [Legacy Curriculum Grade 12 Pentecost week 4](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Dangerous Judgement

Consider having this discussion: How many people here have ever done anything wrong before? Why are we so quick to pass judgment on people? Have you been judged by someone? How did it make you feel to be judged by that person? What are we really doing when we judge others?

- Judging others is in essence focusing on people's mistakes with the intention of condemning them rather than seeking their salvation.
- The act of being judgmental removes God's grace and transfers the sin of the person judged to the judgmental.
- The sin of condemning others puts one under the same verdict with which he has condemned, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matthew 7:1-2).
- Judging others is a tricky sin. A person may find multiple excuses to judge others & try to justify that sin. They may say I'm responsible for my brother or sister's actions that's why I'm judging them to correct their actions. Which could be right if it comes from someone having authority or under responsibility as a father, a mother, a priest or supervisors.
- "if anyone among you wanders from the truth and it brought back by Judging others is a compound sin. another you shall know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). The advice should be with politeness, humbleness and love.
- Judging Others could be hidden in mind. That is still a thought of Judging and it is a sin. That's why in the 12th hour of the Agpeya prayer in the absolution we pray "Lord, all our sins which we committed against You in this day, whether in deeds or in words or in thoughts or through all senses, please remit and forgive us, for the sake of Your Holy Name.

+ Judging Others is a Compound Sin

- Judging others springs from multiple sins.
- When a person judges another, he claims a false ownership putting himself in the place of God Who is the ultimate judge of the whole world.
- Unrepented heart; A person who is preoccupied with judging others more often than not neglects his repentance and the salvation of his own soul. "When someone is occupied with his own faults, he does not see those of his neighbor." - Abba Moses the Strong
- Lack of Love; It is written in the bible, "love will cover a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). By judging others, we expose their sin and not cover it.



- Self Righteousness; Self-righteousness makes one feel better than the others and judging them increases arrogance when a person compares himself to someone of a lower level. A good example of this is the Pharisee and the tax collector.
- Hypocrisy; A person who judges another for some fault which he himself does or even worse is described by the Lord Christ as a hypocrite.

+ How can I get rid of judging?

- We often can see faults in others and not see them in ourselves. It's easy to spot someone else when they are being selfish, proud, mean, unforgiving, or dishonest. It's harder to notice when we are acting that way.
- St. James tells us, "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." (James 1:22-25)
- How are we supposed to judge our own behavior when we rationalize, or excuse, what we do? St. Paul says that we have a mirror we can look into - the Bible. We can compare how Jesus acted, or how the Bible says to act, to our own behavior. What would Jesus do in this situation? What would He have said? What does the Bible say about ... ?
- The cure to being judgmental starts with a self search and a self judgment, repeating after David the Psalmist, "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me" (Psalm 51:3). Also Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'let me remove the speck from your eye, and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye. And then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.'" Matthew 7:3-5.
- Getting rid of hypocrisy and removing the pole off of one's eye is a primary step in overcoming the wrong practice of condemning and judging others. Mar Isaac: "One who looks at the plank in his own eye, will not find time to look at the speck in his brother's eye. One who connects the weak points he sees in others has found a spiritual mirror within him."
- It is good that one turns a judgmental thought into a prayerful one so much so that every judgmental thought becomes a thoughtful prayer for the person we are tempted to judge.
- St. Paul in his epistle to the Galatians urges the Galatians to salvage a fallen person instead of condemning him. "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).
- There is a big difference between judging a person and condemning an act. For example, an act of stealing deserves to be called an act of theft. However, it is not correct to label the doer as a thief. Discerning is a good virtue but judging is a bad sin. We have to discern the actions whether it's right or wrong but we always accept the person and not judge the doer.
- Stop Judging by the appearance. When Jesus was healing on the Sabbath, the Pharisees judged Him. The Lord Jesus Christ said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (John 7:21-24).
- St John Chrysostom in Homily XLIX on the Holy Gospel of St. John chapter 7 states, "For to slander Him suited their malice and wickedness. What He says is this, 'Cast out from yourselves the malice and wrath and envy and hatred which has without cause been conceived against Me: then there is nothing to hinder you from knowing that My words are indeed the words of God. For at present these things cast darkness over you, and destroy the light of right judgment. Judge not according to appearance. Do not give your decision according to your estimation of persons, but according to the nature of things, for this is to judge rightly.'"
- "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." Matthew 7:1-2.
- If we always remember the judgment day we won't judge anyone lest we be like the bad servant whom his master forgave him his big debt but that servant didn't forgive his fellow servant who owed him a small debt "Then his master, after he had called him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' and his master was angry, and delivered him to torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" Matthew 18:32-35.
- "Keep in mind God's precept that states, Judge not, and you will not be judged, and in no way meddle in the lives of others." - St. Symeon



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