



COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

12th Grade





Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Overview and Milestones	6
Acknowledgements	7
Providing Feedback	7
Disclaimer	7
Building Block 1: Service and Evangelism	8
Lesson 1.1: Laborers of His Harvest: Mission Work	9
Lesson 1.2: Orthodox Acts of Charity	11
Lesson 1.3: Be a Champion of Faith: Be Light and Salt	13
Lesson 1.4: Evangelism: Preach the Word	15
Building Block 2: Begins with us Walking with Christ	17
Lesson 2.1: Inside Out: Service & Purity	18
Lesson 2.2: His Holy One	20
Lesson 2.3: Rejection & Betrayals	22
Lesson 2.4: Living for God - God & Careers	24
Lesson 2.5: Wise Counsel from the Book of Proverbs	26
Lesson 2.6: Only One Direction: Jesus' Basic Principles for Kingdom	28
Building Block 3: What Does Orthodoxy Say About...	30
Lesson 3.1: Euthanasia	31
Lesson 3.2: Abortion	33
Lesson 3.3: Friendships	35
Lesson 3.4: Dating	38
Lesson 3.5: Normalizing Sin	41
Lesson 3.6: Abuse	43
Lesson 3.7: Men and Women: Equal Value, Different Roles	45
Building Block 4: Mission Prep: Serving God and His People	47



Lesson 4.1: Discipleship and Applying It all	48
Lesson 4.2: Our Gifts From God	50
Lesson 4.3: Our Responsibility Toward Each Other	52
Lesson 4.4: Serving the Church	54
Lesson 4.5: Models of Service	56
Lesson 4.6: Making a Difference - Individually and Collectively	58
Building Block 5: Refining Oneself: A Lenten Journey	60
Lesson 5.1: Refining Oneself	61
Lesson 5.2: Overcoming the Passions	63
Lesson 5.3: Fighting Addictions	65
Lesson 5.4: Life of Prayer: How Can I Learn How to Pray?	67
Lesson 5.5: Glory through suffering: The Holy Week Journey I	69
Lesson 5.6: From Darkness to Light: Bright Saturday	71
Lesson 5.7: Transformed through the Resurrection	74
Building Block 6: Evangelism Prep	76
Lesson 6.1: What is Christian Apologetics?	77
Lesson 6.2: Despite the Evidence, Why do some Reject God?	80
Lesson 6.3: Morality & Tolerance	82
Lesson 6.4: Does God Exist?	85
Lesson 6.5: Who Created God?	88
Lesson 6.6: How Can a Loving God Send People to hell?	91
Lesson 6.7: Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?	94
Lesson 6.8: If Christ is the Only Way, What Will Happen to Those Who Have Never Heard of Him?	97
Lesson 6.9: Has Science Disproved the Bible and Christianity?	99
Building Block 7: Orthodoxy in a Block	101
Lesson 7.1: Review of Sacraments	102
Lesson 7.2: Salvation in the Orthodox Perspective	105
Lesson 7.3: Trinity in the Orthodox Perspective	107
Lesson 7.4: Holy Tradition	109
Lesson 7.5: General Resurrection, Judgment, Heavenly Jerusalem	112
Lesson 7.6: Examples of Heroes of Faith and How They Defended the Faith	115
Lesson 7.7: Eucharist – John 6, True Body & Blood	117
Lesson 7.8: A Royal Priesthood: The Life of Sacrifice	119
Lesson 7.9: The Best Way to Live Among our Neighbors in a Loving Way, but Still Stand by our Faith	



121

Lesson 7.10: Simple but Not Easy Ways to Defend the Faith

123

Lesson 7.11: Adapting without Conforming

125

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128



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

Life of Service

Rationale: *Being more independent than ever, it becomes their choice entirely, to serve, to do well, to be a child of God. They are thus encouraged to serve, while giving as many tools as possible to know, understand and defend their faith.*

Psych Analysis



Physical

Near/To complete maturity



Intellect

Sounding like an adult, likes to verbalize their thoughts on socially controversial subject



Social

Concerned with future, interested in romantic relationships, high dependency on social media



Detailed Characteristics

Building Blocks

BB1: Service and Evangelism

Mission Work, Be a Champion of Faith, Orthodox Christian Acts of Charity, Evangelism, Be Light and Salt

BB3: Orthodoxy on...

Euthanasia, Abortion, Dating, Friendships, Normalizing Sin, Responding to Abuse, Gender Equality

BB6: Evangelism Prep

What is Christian Apologetics?, Why Do people reject God?, Is Morality Relative or Absolute?, Does God Exist?, Who Created God?, A Loving God & Hell?, Did Jesus Really Rise?, What Will Happen Non-Christians?, Science & Christianity?

BB2: Begins with us Walking With Christ

Being Pure Starts from Within, Defining Your Relationships, Dealing with Acceptance and Rejection, Living for God, Wisdom from Proverbs, Jesus 'Basic Principles for Kingdom

BB4: Serving God and His People

Our Gifts From God, Our Responsibility Toward Each Others, St. Maurice and St. Verena, Serving the Church, Discipleship, Making a Difference

BB7: Orthodoxy in a Block

The Sacraments, Salvation, The Trinity, Holy Tradition, General Resurrection, Defenders of the Faith I, Defenders of the Faith II, Eucharist - John 6, Church Ordained Ministers, Dealings as an Orthodox, Becoming a Defender of the Faith, Adapting without Conforming

BB5: A Lenten Journey

Lent Journey, Overcoming Our Passions, Desires and Addictions, How Can I Learn How to Pray?, Holy Week, Bright Saturday, Meaning of the Resurrection

End of Year Milestones & Objectives



Scripture

- + Confident with Bible Authenticity and Accuracy
- + Slowly exposed to/attempting scripture based apologetic answer



Spiritual

- + Many willing to become pre-servants
- + Sacraments are no longer rituals but a foundation & necessity of their own spiritual life
- + Personal prayers in class becomes more mature (related to lesson)



Social

- + Defends Church's position on social matters with peers (Abortion, Homosexuality, Euthanasia, etc..)
- + Sense of purpose and direction in the future



Rituals

- + Regular in all services
- + Understand the benefits of rituals



Acknowledgements

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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 I: Service and Evangelism

Theme: Service

Lesson 1.1: Laborers of His Harvest: Mission Work

Building Block 1:
Service and
Evangelism



Objective

To understand the significance of Christ's call to spread His message and how one can teach others about the Christian faith.

Application

What prevents us from becoming laborers? What are our limits? In our capacity, what can we do? What is one thing you can do this week to witness Christ?

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 9:37-38](#), [Luke 10:2](#), [Ephesians 2:10](#), [John 17:18](#), [Matthew 20:28](#), [Acts 13:47](#), [Mark 16:15](#), [Romans 10:13-14](#)



Liturgy: [The Anaphora](#)



Patristics: [St. Basil the Great](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#); [St. Jerome](#)



Story: [Daniel](#)



Other: [The Harvest is plentiful by Fr Daoud Lamei](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Missionary Work

Consider asking the students their understanding and perspective on what missionary work is.

- Some examples of missionary work: Teaching Children Abroad, Professional Talent Abroad, Evangelism, Teaching English, Help build new churches, helping Orphans, Street Children, Widows, Homeless, Prisoners
- The word "missionary" is the Latin equivalent of the Greek word, "apostle," both meaning "send," since Christ *sent out* His disciples to preach the Gospel (Matthew 10:5), first to the Jews, then to all the nations.
- The Trinity exemplifies this mission in that the Father sent the Son into the world for the salvation of mankind ([John 4:34](#), [John 6:44](#), [John 6:57](#), [John 12:49](#), [John 17:18](#)). Likewise, the Holy Spirit was sent into the world to sanctify it ([John 14:26](#), [John 15:26](#), [John 16:7](#)).

+ The Need for Mission

- Who are the laborers and why are they few? Unwillingness on our end and our excuses. (Matthew 9:37-38, Luke 10:2)
- An abundant harvest signified the multitude of people. The few laborers signified the dearth of teachers. He commands them to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. These are the laborers of whom the psalmist speaks: "May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy! He that goes forth weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him." And that I may speak in broader terms: an abundant harvest represents all the believing multitude. The few laborers imply the apostles and their imitators who are sent to the harvest." - Jerome, Commentary on Matthew 1.9.37
- It is our responsibility - it is not optional as Christians that we become laborers. (Eph 2:10, John 17:18)
- "He Himself is the farmer, He Himself is the Lord of the harvest, He Himself is the master of the prophets. For if He sent them to gather the harvest, it is clear that they do not harvest what belongs to someone else. Instead, they harvest the things that He sowed through the prophets. In calling their ministry a harvest, He was encouraging them but also empowering them to this ministry." St. John Chrysostom: The Gospel Of Matthew, Homily 32.1-2.6

+ When did mission work begin in Christianity?

Consider showing the students a map of the three missionary journeys of St. Paul.

- Starting with the Apostles, in the book of Acts, we notice the Church of Antioch sending St. Paul and St. Barnabas on their first missionary



journey to Asia Minor and Greece. St. Paul is notably known for his 3 missionary journeys to which he went out and preached the gospel across different cities.

+ How does one get involved in mission work?

- Goal of our ministry: to reconcile the people with God, to preach the Kingdom of Heaven.
- In service, our job is to plant seeds and let God take it from there.
- As mentioned previously, there are tons of types of missions, the harvest is great. Some require travel, but this very city, and this very church has its own internal mission & harvest.
- Daniel the Prophet: One could discuss how Daniel can be considered a missionary.
 - One could liken the three young men and Daniel to the mustard seed. The kingdom of God is likened to this mustard seed which grows to become a significant tree that can provide shelter for birds. Similarly in the book of Daniel, we see the integrity and genuineness of Daniel towards God. This integrity, small as a mustard seed, has come to change a kingdom that was set on evil and pagan worship and deliver the Israelites to come, worship and establish the Kingdom of God once more ([Matthew 13:31-35](#), [Daniel 2:31-45](#)).

+ Mission work gives purpose & fulfillment

Consider preparing discussion questions -- the growing sensation within many of a lack of purpose and fulfillment.

- We are God's fellow workers : Synergy (Cooperation of God and man).
- The Anaphora: Knowing, seeing and tasting His glory makes us want to praise Him. Praise Him through our tongue and praise Him through our works.
- "As it is impossible to verbally describe the sweetness of honey to one who has never tasted honey, so the goodness of God cannot be clearly communicated by way of teaching if we ourselves are not able to penetrate into the goodness of the Lord by our own experience." (St. Basil the Great, Conversations on the Psalms, 29).

Theme: Service

Lesson 1.2: Orthodox Acts of Charity

Building Block 1:
Service and
Evangelism



Objective

To understand why and how charity serves our calling of missionary work.

Application

Choose one of the acts of charity detailed in the lesson and apply it throughout your week.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 25:42-43](#), [Matthew 23:11](#), [Proverbs 19:17](#), [1 John 3:17](#), [2 Corinthians 9:7](#); [1 Peter 4:10](#); [Galatians 5:13-14](#); [1 Corinthians 9:19](#)



Liturgy: [Lent Communion Melody](#)



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



Story: [Anba Abraam, the Friend of the Poor](#)



Other: [Sermon by Fr Kyrillos Ibrahim on 'What is the difference between Christian service and social work?'](#), [Article by Bishop Youssef on 'The Virtue of Giving'](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Love & Charity

- Defining Charity: “benevolent goodwill toward or love of humanity” - Merriam-Webster
- In the Vulgate the Latin word often is used as translation of Greek agape “love” - especially Christian love of fellow man.
- Charity is not limited to financial help.
- Charity is one of the greatest forms of love.

+ Forms of charity: What can I offer?

Consider having the youth read the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In the story, it is noticed that the Good Samaritan offers an act of Charity that is not monetary. Discuss and brainstorm what situations arise in our day to day lives in which we find ourselves either actively being charitable rather than being a one who walks by inattentively.

- Luke 10:33 goes on to state that when the Samaritan saw the injured man, he had compassion on him. He went towards the injured man and responded to his needs rather than simply feeling sorry for him. How can you be active in showing compassion to someone in need?
- Consider reviewing some general charitable works of the building block: Helping Orphans, Street Children, Widows, Homeless, Prisoners
- Note that all of mankind has basic needs. And thus, charitable deeds can be simpler and more subtle. Just like in the story of the Good Samaritan.
- The following is a simple guide to noticing these needs that are common to all mankind. Human nature tends to seek: Love, Acceptance and Security. Christ demonstrated his fulfillment of these needs to us:

Consider discussing how we can show compassion with these guidelines and seeing what other basic needs we can use to inspire us to always show charity and compassion to our fellow neighbours.

- In love, St. John teaches us: “We love because He first loved us” - 1 John 4:19
- In Acceptance and security: Feeling unconditionally accepted, regardless of their behavior or appearance. God accepted us unconditionally and we ought to do the same. We read in Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
- “What is inherent in loving one’s neighbor? Looking not for your own gains, but for the spiritual and physical well-being of your



beloved one. He who loves his neighbor, manifests his love to God because God transfers his mercy on Himself.” Saint John Chrysostom

- “He who loves his neighbor as he should, will not refuse to serve him more obediently than any slave.” Saint Isaac the Syrian
- The church teaches us during Lent the importance of giving, Lent melody " Blessed are those who have mercy, who give to the poor and fast and pray"

+ Differentiating: World charity (social work) vs. christian charity

- Understanding charity from a christian point of view: giving out of our own need, giving Christ, giving with no expectation of receiving, etc...
- What differentiates christians is that they are people of prayer - without prayer and without God we become social workers.
 - “As God illuminates all people equally with the light of the sun, so do those who desire to imitate God let shine an equal ray of love on all people. For wherever love disappears, hatred immediately appears in its place. And if God is love, then hatred is the devil. Therefore as one who has love has God within himself, so he who has hatred within himself nurtures the devil within himself.” (St. Basil the Great, Homily on Asceticism, 3)
- Story of Anba Abraam : Friend of the poor - known for charity

+ Methods of Giving:

- Periodically. "On the first day of the week that there be no collections when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:2)
- Personally. "Let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper" (1 Corinthians 16:2)
- Abundantly. "He who gives, with liberality" (Romans 12:8), "Giving freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord" (1 Chronicles 29:14).
- Cheerfully. "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Theme: Service

Lesson 1.3: Be a Champion of Faith: Be Light and Salt

Building Block 1:
Service and
Evangelism



Objective

To live out our orthodox faith as a means of being salt and light to our surroundings.

Application

Like both salt and light, our relationship with God should have an obvious impact on everyone who comes in contact with it. Jesus is encouraging us to have an influence everywhere we go. Meditate on the aspects in your life that lack the image of God, and attempt to see means by which you can slowly rectify. Do this with the guidance of your spiritual guide.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 5:13-16](#); [Ephesians 5:8](#); [Colossians 4:6](#); [Luke 13:34](#); [Luke 7:36-50](#); [Joshua 6](#); [Luke 23:39-43](#); [Genesis 32:24-28](#); [1 Samuel 17](#); [1 Corinthians 9:24](#); [Philippians 3:13](#); [2 Timothy 2:15](#); [Hebrews 12:2](#)



Liturgy: [Synaxarium Reading/St. Gregory Liturgy](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: [St. John the Short and St. Bishop](#); [St. Paul](#); [St. Peter](#); [St. Philip](#); [Jeremiah the prophet and the Rechabites](#)



Other: [Sermon by Fr Nathanel Guirguis - ways to become the Light](#); [Bring Jesus the Christ to others \(instead of others to Christ\)](#); [Series by Fr Paul Guirguis - Being salty in a sugar coated world](#); [Heroes of Faith Series by HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Life of Faith: a Competition or Character Trait?

Consider a show of hands to see who thinks the expression of faith is more of a Competition, a character Trait, a bit of both, or neither.

- Living out the life of faith is not a competition with others, nor an item in a list of character traits. Rather, it is both a competition and a character trait. If one does not approach developing faith as one seeks to train for a marathon and let this lifestyle become an all encompassing character trait, then one will not achieve the desired prize. "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it." - 1 Corinthians 9:24. An athlete for instance considers what he eats, drinks prior to his training and competition. His hobbies likewise are linked. All that he does, in some shape or fashion relates to his race. Likewise is the champion of faith.
- Define Champion of faith & criteria to be one: the ones who stood firmly in their Orthodox faith and tradition and defended them till their last breath.
- Christ, an ultimate example, as usual: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. - Hebrews 12:2

+ Inspirational Examples of Champions

- Synaxarium: The lives of saints are read each day among scriptural readings in the liturgy of the word, as a reminder that the word is to take flesh in us and that we are called to live it out. Those saints did just that.
- Examples from the Bible: Jeremiah and the Rechabites who refused to drink wine to obey their father's commandment
- Examples of Saints: John the Short and his complete obedience
- "The whole past time of your faith will profit you nothing, unless now in this wicked time we also withstand coming sources of danger. ... Take heed, lest resting at our ease, as those who are called, we fall asleep in our sins. For then, the wicked prince, acquiring power over us, will thrust us away from the kingdom of the Lord. ... And you should pay attention to this all the more, my brothers, when you reflect on and see that after such great signs and wonders had been performed in Israel, they were still abandoned. Let us beware lest we be found to be, as it is written, the 'many who are called,' but not the 'few that are chosen.'" (Ante Nicene Fathers, Volume I, pg.139)



+ The Champion is a Missionary in conduct

- "The tree is made manifest by its fruit. So those who profess themselves to be Christians will be recognized by their conduct." (Ante Nicene Fathers, Volume I, pg.55)
- I must work internally on being salt and light in order to guide others, I cannot season or be light to others if I am not in tune with God.

+ Believers are Salt and Light (Matthew 5:13-16)

Consider discussing what actions make a world sugar coated and how does a christian being salt help/hurt the world?.

- Characteristics of salt: Preservative, Purifies (symbol of purification in the OT - Leviticus 2:13), Adds flavor/makes a difference, and other characteristics.
- We are called to be salt to the earth: Accept suffering joyfully and faithfully, spreading the Gospel message, bearing fruit
- Likewise, we are also called to be light - we are to share the light - not to approach God with a consumerist mindset, I also have to give light. Different arrays of lights but all have the same mission.
- "Let your light shine before all," Christ said; and he used the words "before all" advisedly. He meant, "Let your light be so bright that it illuminates not only yourself, but shines also before those needing its help..." St. John Chrysostom
- Just as we pray in liturgy: "As a light you have shone upon the lost and the ignorant" - St. Gregory Liturgy
- The Following are means we can become lights to others:
 - Intellectual (like St Paul - wrote letters and approached them intellectually, philosophical, cultural)
 - Confrontational (like St Peter, very zealous and loud)
 - Invitational (St Philip, ordinary disciple, he invited Nathanael his friend to invite to follow Christ)
 - In serving (St Bishoy the monk, 370 AD, through service and not preaching)
 - In a testimonial way (the blind man, the Samaritan woman)

Theme: Service

Lesson 1.4: Evangelism: Preach the Word

Building Block 1: Service and Evangelism



Objective

To understand what evangelism is, its different types and styles and how we can evangelize.

Application

What are the strengths and weaknesses (limits) of different styles of evangelism? Which style do you think applies to you? Which style is best for different people? What about evangelism and social media? Perhaps ask them to pick one type of evangelism and find a way to apply it.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Acts 13:47](#), [Mark 16:15](#), [Acts 20:24](#), [1 Peter 3:15](#), [2 Corinthians 5:20](#), [Ephesians 4:11](#)



Liturgy: [Amen, Amen, Amen ...](#)



Patristics: [St. Ignatius of Antioch](#); [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#)



Story: Jonah, Daniel (Silent), St Paul



Other: [The Harvest is plentiful by Fr Daoud Lamei](#), [Sermon by Bishop Youssef - Styles Used In Evangelism](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Defining Evangelism

- Evangelism is the work of God through us (using our gifts and talents)
- Evangelism of the early church, biblical evangelists (Jonah, Daniel (Silent), St Paul)
- The Congregational response Amen, Amen, Amen ... declares that which we proclaim and evangelize.

+ Is Evangelism a choice or a commandment?

- “You did not choose Me, but I chose you 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. 17 These things I command you, that you love one another.” (John 15:16)
- “Pray without ceasing on behalf of everyone. For in them there is hope of repentance so that they may attain to God. Permit them, then, to be instructed by your works, if in no other way. Be meek in response to their wrath, humble in opposition to their boasting; to their blasphemies return your prayers; in contrast to their error be steadfast in the faith; and for their cruelty display your gentleness. While we take care not to imitate their conduct, let us be found their brothers in all true kindness.” Ignatius of Antioch, A.D. 107 - 116

+ Types of Evangelism

- Active, reactive (when opportunities present themselves), passive (through living a christian life)
- “Speak when the ear is ready to listen to your words, and more preferable when it is eager to listen to you.” H.H. Pope Shenouda III
- “Since therefore you follow in the path of my words and ministry and have the mind that my true disciples should have, it follows that you should not, by your own delay, throw obstacles in the way of someone who of his own will seeks the faith and is self-called to a life of piety. Rather, you should attach yourselves as guides to those who are still ignorant and wandering and bring the gospel of salvation to those who do not yet want to learn it and eagerly encourage them to attain to the true knowledge of God, even though the mind of your hearers may be hardened into disobedience. In other words, bring them more in line with your own condition so they will advance and return to fruit bearing in God by gradually growing in what is better for them. Then they too can have fruit that always remains and is preserved, and they can also have that most desirable object of prayer—the bestowal of whatever they wish, if only they “ask in my name.” - St. Cyril of Alexandria
- Here st. Cyril inspires us to not only evangelize but ensure that we do not become promoters of unholy lifestyles. You may consider discussing challenges in school where at times, we may laugh, smile, encourage, promote certain unorthodox behaviors (bullying, swearing, dating, quarrelling, etc...)



+ Styles of Evangelism

- 1) Prophetic: Using Scriptures to call others to repent - St John the Baptist
- 2) Proclamation: Seeking opportunities to bring up and share the gospel, taking initiatives - Sermon of Peter in Acts 3, St Philip and the Eunuch
- 3) Intellectual: Making a case for Christianity, apologetic way - not using Scriptures (because they don't believe in the bible - St Paul in Acts 17)
- 4) The storyteller: Communicating the theological truth through parables and stories - Jesus used many parables.
- 5) Testimonial: Sharing your own story - recalling how God works through each one of us - the blind man, the Samaritan woman
- 6) Interactive: Create relationship with someone first to be able to share the gospel with them - someone who has left the church. St Philip called Nathanel to follow Christ.
- 7) Invitational style: Inviting someone to church - the Samaritan woman
- 8) Service: attend to the needs of people - seeking social justice - the 4 friends of the paralytic man.



Building Block 2: Begins with us Walking with Christ

Theme: Service

Lesson 2.1: Inside Out: Service & Purity

Building Block 2:
Begins with us
Walking With Christ



Objective

Our relationship with Christ should start with you recognizing the contents of our heart and working to strengthen and purify it.

Application

Evaluate and compare your identity in front of those you care about, those you respect, those from church and when I am alone. Is there any part of my life that is hidden? Seek to live in purity, honesty, and transparency.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Mark 9:35](#), [1 Corinthians 10:24](#), [Galatians 5:13-14](#), [Mark 10:45](#), [Matthew 5:8](#), [Revelations 3:20](#), [Luke 6:45](#), [Psalm 139:23-24](#)



Liturgy: [cleans us from all blemish, all hypocrisy](#)



Patristics: [St. Augustine on Chastity](#); [St. Augustine Sermon 53.6](#); St. John Chrysostom



Story: [St. Catherine of Alexandria](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Life of service begins from within

- We are all called to be servants. This, gives purpose and fulfillment (Mark 9:35, 1 Corinthians 10:24, Galatians 5:13-14, Mark 10:45)
- Goal of the servant is to deliver God to those whom he serves, in whatever shape or form he is serving.
- “Nothing is more frigid than a Christian who is indifferent to the salvation of others. Indeed I wonder if such a person can be a true Christian. To become a disciple of Christ is to obey His law of love. Love means to want the best for others, sharing with them the joy of love. So the Christian feels compelled to speak to others about the law of love, and the joy of obeying this law.” - St. John Chrysostom
- Photocopy Machine Analogy: We, as servants, become likened to copy machines. The image to Copy is Christ. The Machine is us. The papers are those whom we serve. No machine is perfect, but the more defects we have, the more defects we will print out. No paper is perfect, but the better quality of the machine the more it can handle.
- Service begins when I begin to aim to clean myself from within: Aiming for Purity.

+ The meaning of purity:

- For something to be pure, it means it is without blemish, or in it's natural essence and has not been corrupted with anything foreign.
- For example, gold can be purified in fire. When it is put in heat, all of the foreign substances rise to the top and the jeweler can then remove them, and what is left is a piece of pure gold. The jeweler can then polish and sand down the gold until his own reflection can be seen in the gold.
- This is just like our own lives, when we are put through tribulations which uncovers all the sins and blemishes from our hearts so that God can remove them from our lives. He then polishes us vigorously, which can be a painful process, but the result is us having a pure heart.

+ Purity Starts from Within

- Demonstrate two glasses, one clean and one dirty on the inside. They are both clean from the outside. Ask, “which one would you rather drink from?”
- Christ says “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.” (Matthew 23:25)
- Qualities of pure heart: Why is it important to be clean from within? What are the qualities of a clean glass?



- When we are clean, the water we pour out remains pure. Light can shine through a clear glass. Similarly, we should be pure from within to be able share the love of God with others.
- Cleanliness provides the transparency to see through. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8)

+ Rooted in the transformation of the Heart

- We should be striving for this purity of heart. The church teaches that the heart is the center of the human being. It can be understood as the eye of the soul. This is where the thoughts, the consciousness and the soul is housed. This is the door of the heart that Christ knocks at, seeking to come in (Revelations 3:20).
- The word heart is used some 105 times in 98 verses in the New Testament. It means the center of who we really are, the epicenter of our being. It is this meaning to which our Lord refers in our text.
- “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45).
- When our hearts are pure, we can see God in all of creation. King David saw him in all of creation which we can see in his Psalms. We can become fully aware of His presence in our lives because our hearts are pure.
- St. Augustine says “Chastity, or cleanness of heart, holds a glorious and distinguished place among the virtues, because she, alone, enables man to see God; hence Truth itself said, 'Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.'”
- When our hearts are pure, we become internally content and no longer have any desire for our lives other than God. We become internally fully content which allows us to control our external desires.
- St. Augustine discusses this and says "Indeed, what would one search for when one has God before one's eyes? Or what would satisfy one who would not be satisfied with God? Yes, we wish to see God. Who does not have this desire? We strive to see God. We are on fire with the desire of seeing God. But pay attention to the saying, “Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” Provide yourself with this means of seeing God."
- When our hearts and inner actions are pure, we live in honesty and transparency. We walk in the light, where nothing is hidden.

+ How can we be purified:

- How is a cup cleansed? By being washed in water. Similarly we need the Living Water to cleanse our hearts. Through continual repentance and confession, we cleanse our hearts in the Living Water.
- Prayer: We pray in the Liturgy to be cleansed from all blemish, all hypocrisy.... & "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.... a broken and clean heart, these oh God you will not despise" - Psalm 50, The importance of coming to God in Repentance with a broken heart.
- Through constant repentance and self-reflection, we pray for God to search our hearts and remove our hidden impurities. “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)
 - “The princes of evil have blinded me with their passions and by their cunningness they have robbed me of the beauty of my youth. What can I do, now that I have lost my purity? I will cry out to Christ, that He might return my beauty to me-and then will the evil ones be ashamed. My Savior cries out to me, to His disciple: do not despair of the salvation; I will restore you and forgive you your sins. I have found you and I will not leave you; for I have redeemed you with my very own Blood. 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 beforehand to meet you. He will slaughter the fatted calf, clothe you in a fine robe, and rejoice in you.” -St. Ephraim the Syrian
- By drawing near to God, He transforms our hearts. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 9:22)
- Positive response to trials/endurance: As Gold is purified through fire, so are we (1 Peter 1:6-9)
- Develop on what it is to endure and accept trials (James 1:2)
 - You can share the story of St. Catherine of Alexandria and her desire to preserve her purity.

Theme: Service

Lesson 2.2: His Holy One

Building Block 2:
Begins with us
Walking With Christ



Objective

To understand what God really wants from us in our relationships and the steps towards it.

Application

Seek to know Christ personally through an intimate relationship. Pray genuinely with King David in Psalm 131 "Surely I will not go into the chamber of my house, Or go up to the comfort of my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes Or slumber to my eyelids, Until I find a place for the LORD". Attempt to say this and pray and not leave prayer until you see and know that God is present before you.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Timothy 2:3-4](#), [John 14:6](#), [Ephesians 1:4-5](#), [Leviticus 20:26](#), [Genesis 1:26](#), [2 Peter 1:3-4](#), [1 Timothy 2:4](#), [John 10:10](#), [John 3:16](#)



Liturgy: "[Agios, Agios, Agios](#)" Prayer of the Anaphora, [Liturgy of St. Basil](#)



Patristics: [St. Cyril of Alexandria, Fr. Daniel Abba Moses Trinitarian Theology pg. 18](#); [The Epistle Of Ignatius To The Philadelphians](#)



Story: [St. Mary the Egyptian](#); [Pope kyrillos VI](#); [St. Anthony the Great](#)



Other: Divine Participation [Part 1](#) & [Part 2](#): Meet and Right Podcast;

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Pleading for my right: Be called His.

- Scripture teaches us that God desires us to be saved and have life (1 Timothy 2:4, John 10:10)
- We know our God as the "lover of mankind", which is one of the many titles we have for Him. St. Ignatius of Antioch says "For our God is a lover of mankind, and "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ""
- In John 1, a gospel which is read in the morning prayers, we read that Christ gave us "the right to become children of God". It is a right, one which must be sought. Given but not forced.
- He desires our salvation which is achieved by knowing Him, and participating in Him through a sacramental life. God desires our salvation so greatly that "He gave His only begotten Son" for our sake. (John 3:16)

+ "Be Holy for I am Holy", "The Holies are for the Holy"

- Scripture teaches that God desires for us to be holy (Ephesians 1:4-5 & Leviticus 20:26)
- To be holy can mean two things. It can mean to be sanctified or consecrated. God desires for us to be all for Him. Just like in the relationship of a married couple, each spouse expects their partner to be fully committed to them.
- It can also mean for us to not be of this world.
- The Greek word for holy is ἅγιος, or agios which is what we say in the liturgy in the many different prayers such as the prayer after the Anaphora in the liturgy of St. Basil which the priest prays. 'Gios' means earthly, and the 'a' negates the gios, so we can understand it to mean not of the earth, or exalted above the earthly things. We attribute this quality to God since He is holy by nature, and He desires for us to be holy by His divine grace.
- Ultimately, this means He desires for us to be like Him which is why He created us in His image and likeness in the beginning. (Genesis 1:26) In 2 Peter 1:3,4, this is described as being "partakers of the divine nature".
- This shows that Christ desires for us to be like Him through divine participation, meaning we receive some His attributes through His grace.
- God is holy by nature, and we can become holy by living a sacramental life in Christ. St. Cyril uses the following analogy: "fire is hot by



nature, and other things are hot by participating in its activity, like iron or wood."

- Similarly to monks who die from the world, we live as "set apart" in the world. Holy, dedicated lives, that is set apart, is not a calling for priest and monks, it is a calling for all Christians

+ Is it possible to be the friend of God?

- God desires for us to know Him personally through an intimate relationship. (1 Timothy 2:3-4). When St. Paul was writing to St. Timothy, he said that God desires all people to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4). We must understand that the truth is our Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6).
- The other key point is that the word that St. Paul originally used was translated to translate knowledge in English. This actually means much more than to just know about something. The word St. Paul used is ἐπίγνωσιν (epignósis), which means "knowledge gained through first-hand relationship".
- St. Paul was describing that God desires for us to experience Him first hand and really know Him. If you asked someone if they know the President of the United States, they would probably say yes, but they likely do not epignósis them, they simply know of them. That is often the type of relationship we have with Christ, but God desires more than that.
- Relationships are at their strongest when both sides are on the same page and have a common understanding of the meaning of their relationship. The same goes with our relationship with God.
- Jesus Christ is a real person and we can see how through a deep and personal relationship with Him, the lives of the saints were transformed. (e.g. The Patriarchs, Pope Kyrillos, St. Mary of Egypt, St. Anthony the Great, etc.)
- "So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" - Exodus 33:11

Theme: Service

Lesson 2.3: Rejection & Betrayals

Building Block 2:
Begins with us
Walking With Christ



Objective

To understand that through either experiencing acceptance or rejection, in all facets of life, one's true value lies in that they are a child of the King of King and Lord of Lords.

Application

Write 3 dealings of acceptance/rejection in a personal journal each day to give thanks for.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 50:20](#); [Jeremiah 29:11](#), [Matthew 11:18](#)



Liturgy: [Thanksgiving prayer/ Manage our lives](#)



Patristics: [Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian](#)



Story: [Joseph the Righteous](#); [Abba Macarius and the Dead](#); "A Silent Patriarch" by Fr. Daniel Fanous (p. 195-201)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Pain of Rejection and Betrayal

- Rejection, Betrayal is no stranger to prophets and kings. King David describes in Psalms 55, a pain and anguish of rejection and betrayal:
 - "My heart is in anguish within me... It is not an enemy who taunts me – then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me – then I could hide from him. But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to hold sweet converse together; within God's house we walked in fellowship... My companion stretched out his hand against his friends, he violated his covenant. His speech was smoother than butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords."
- Nothing happens accidentally or in such a way that you cannot learn from it: "Trust the Lord with all your heart, and lean not your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6). Although situations, especially those of rejection may feel "bad," know that "nothing happens accidentally or in such a way that you cannot learn from it; you must understand this at once, for this is how your trust grows in the Lord whom you have chosen to follow. The servant may then say the story of the Attempted Bombing of Saint George's Church:
- The late Father Louka Sidarous explains, "One of the things we learned at the hands of our blessed Father Pishoy Kamel was the complete uprooting of fear from our souls. This was particularly seen on the fateful day when the Church of Saint George was going to be bombed on November 17, 1975, the feast of the Great Martyr. Three months prior, a retired military officer came to seek work at the church, and so he was given the duty of cleaning the parish. On the morning of the feast, he went to clean, and found an unusual object under one of the pews. He knew exactly what it was the moment he saw it; he had experience in the military. It was a Russian bomb, which, when touched, can detonate and completely destroy an entire building. Immediately, every officer in the surrounding region was called." This story conveys that the Lord willed for everything to work exactly right such that those present can learn the words of Isaiah 41:10, "Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you."
- Hosea is called to marry a harlot, Gomer, who in turn leaves him and commits adultery. His response: he buys her back. He became a symbol of God, who is constantly rejected and betrayed by Israel, but God buys His people back.

+ Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or God? Or am I still trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." Galatians 1:10

Consider discussing the implication and difficulty or applying such a verse.

+ Facing Rejection and Betrayals



- Realize that the opinion of others often varies: In Matthew 11:18, we see this principle applied clearly. "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children." Christ Himself, "came to His own, and His own did not receive Him." He was rejected by those whom He created.
- Realize that above all else, in acceptance and rejection, we should seek to please the Lord first. Let us always ask - does this rejection or acceptance into a certain position or role, into a certain group or gathering, does it please the Lord my God? If it does not, then we ought to abandon it, knowing that heaven should be our priority above all else. In the book "A Silent Patriarch," The following story is narrated: "
- "I wish," said the grayed and broken man, "I listened to you and stayed in my diocese." After a few moments of uneasy silence, with his tears tracing his face and disappearing into his beard, he added, "When I was metropolitan, God answered each of my prayers immediately through people or words sent to me. But now as patriarch" - his hands began to shake visibly - "God has turned His back on me." These [were the] tormented words of Pope Macarius III (1872-1945)." After the death of Pope Youannis XIX in 1942, there was a debate on whom to ordain as the following patriarch. At that time, the church bylaws stated that one cannot be in an ecclesiastical position prior to papacy. That is, metropolitans were supposed to be ineligible for the role of the patriarch. However, with the death of Pope Youannis, the debate on whom to ordain erupted. While many bishops called for the ordination of the patriarch from the monks, many laymen suggested that the reform that the church needed at the time could only be brought about by an experienced bishop. "The ensuing months [of debate on whom to ordain as patriarch] saw unseemly election campaigns for candidates that had an increasingly political overtone." One day, a man confronted metropolitan Macarius about the situation of his nomination to the patriarchal throne saying, "You know holy father, my love and reverence for you, but my loyalty to the principle takes precedence even over my loyalty to you." The metropolitan answered saying with confidence, "The people want me." On the day of the patriarchal election, February 13, 1944, Macarius III was very much the people's choice. Later that same year, on August 1, 1944, having been confronted with many challenges and issues in his role, Pope Macarius with tears flowing down his beard said to the same man who confronted him earlier, "You were right; I should have remained in my bishopric; I should have not allowed the tide to carry me away." A few days later, seeing no way through the problems he faced, Pope Macarius retreated to the Monastery of St. Anthony at the Red Sea in a self-imposed exile. Upon arriving at the monastery, he insisted on walking to its gates, prostrating himself until he arrived at the church crying out "I sinned when I became patriarch. I never want to return to the cathedral, may I become lame or blind...I regret it my Lord, is there any repentance for such a sin?" This story demonstrates to us the dangers of taking "acceptance" with an arrogant heart. In acceptance, let us follow the words said in 1 Peter 5, "Yes, all of you .. be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time."
- Realize that we should neither boast in praise/acceptance nor feel devalued in humiliation/rejection.
- The servant may introduce the "Lesson from the Dead" - a story concerning the wisdom of Abba Macarius (found under references). Remember that rejection does not devalue us as children of God, it does not take away our worth - for our worth lies in being children of the King.
- Saint John Chrysostom says: "God loves us more than a father, mother, friend, or any else could love, and even more than we are able to love ourselves."

+ God the Pantocrator

- Throughout one's life, we will all experience being accepted, and being rejected; we will all experience moments of success and others of failure. However, through it all, everyday, learn to do your best, to do your part, and trust the Lord to "manage our lives as deemed fit" (Liturgy of St. Basil). In the story of Joseph, we can notice how Joseph tells his brothers saying, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive." (Genesis 50:20). Although his brothers, because of envy, forsook Joseph and sought to destroy him, the Lord still used the situation to make Joseph a successful man.
- Know also that rejection, even failure and humiliation, are often a part of the process of becoming successful. They are often the building step to being accepted into greater and better domains.
- Saint Isaac the Syrian says: "The soul that loves God has its rest in God and in God alone. In all the paths that men walk in the world, they do not attain peace until they draw nigh to hope in God." (Mar Isaac the Syrian, Homily 56, 89)
- Psalm 55, which as iterated previously, describes the prayer and pain of King David facing betrayal and rejection, concludes his psalm saying: "Cast your burden on the Lord, And He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved."



Theme: Service

Lesson 2.4: Living for God - God & Careers

Building Block 2:
Begins with us
Walking With Christ



Objective

To understand that our career is ultimately a tool to glorify God and serve His name. Whichever career we choose, it will only have value if it is done with the intention of glorifying God.

Application

In prayer, ask for God to reveal His will to you and to not let your earthly desires get in the way of making a decision. Seek guidance from your spiritual guide and from career experts to understand what different careers entail, and through self reflection, seek a career that will lie within your passions. Whatever career you choose, remember that it is for the glory of God.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Mark 8:36](#); [Mark 12:31](#); [1 Corinthians 10:31](#); ,
Wisdom of Sirach 38:34



Liturgy: [Manage our lives as ...](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom, Baptismal Instructions 6.10](#).



Story: [Calling of the Disciples](#); [Calling Barnabas and Saul for mission](#)



Other: [Sermon- Christian Perspective On Success In Career And Work](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Micro-management VS. Macro-Management

Consider having a discussion on whether God micromanages (has a will and purpose for every small detail) or macro-manages (has a will and purpose for only big decisions).

- In the end, God is willing to be involved in every small detail of your life if you wish Him to be. Accordingly we pray, "Thy Will be done".
- Making a career choice is a big decision, so understanding what God desires in our career is crucial in our decision.

+ The Purpose of Careers

- The world has influenced the purpose of careers and many have lost sight of its true purpose.
- Society teaches us that success should be desired at all costs. They have made the primary purpose of a career as income instead of fulfillment of a vocation.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own life?" (Mark 8:36)
- When we are searching out a career, if our desire is purely to make money then we have missed the mark.

+ Everything we do must glorify God

Consider a poll on what degrees they would like to apply. If time permits, allow them to elaborate why (this may also inspire some who may be uninspired in their upcoming college applications).

- The income of a job is not what gives its value, rather, its value comes from if it is done for the glory of God and love of our neighbor. St. Paul says that "Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31) and Christ teaches us that the second greatest commandment is to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). This means that our career should fulfill both of these commandments.
- St. John Chrysostom comments on what St. Paul wrote and he says "Let all the things which you undertake and accomplish have this root and foundation, namely, that they tend to the glory of God". This implies that whatever we do should be done for the purpose of glorifying God, not increasing our earthly stature.
- We must ask ourselves: Will this career allow me to use my God given gifts to glorify God and serve His people? If not, then either it should not



be pursued, or your perspective ought to change

- Our work should be a form of praise to God whether I am an accountant, doctor, musician, carpenter, or politician etc. "And their prayer is in the practice of their craft." (Wisdom of Sirach 38:34 LXX)
 - Jesus called the apostles and some other of his disciples (e.g., [Mark 3:14-19](#)), and the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Saul to be missionaries ([Acts 13:2](#)).
- + Seek guidance from your Father of Confession and from servants who have experience in the field you are interested in.
- When it comes to making a decision for your career, this requires prayer, guidance, and self reflection. The most important part is prayer, as this is how we put ourselves in the presence of God and seek His will. During the litanies of the Liturgy of the Faithful, the Priest prays "Manage our lives as deemed fit.. For the eyes of everyone wait upon You, for You give them their food in due season." This teaches us to trust in the will of God and His guidance and to trust that He will provide for our need as the Lover of Mankind.

Theme: Service

Building Block 2:
Begins with us
Walking With Christ



Lesson 2.5: Wise Counsel from the Book of Proverbs

Objective

To understand the value of the book of Proverbs with a focus on three main life lessons that can be learned from the Holy Book.

Application

The book of Proverbs has 31 chapters meaning we can take a lesson each day in a month. Aim to read one chapter a day each month and you will see a multitude of life lessons that we can learn from the divinely inspired book.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Proverbs 9:10, 11:2, 11:14, 12:15, 29:23, 1 John 4:18, Matthew 22:37](#)



Liturgy: [Wisdom Fraction by St. Epiphanius](#)



Patristics: [St. Augustine on Humility](#); [St. Anthony the Great](#)



Story: [St. Macarius and the Brother With No Guide from Dorotheos of Gaza, pg. 125,126](#)



Other: [Fear of God by Mena Rizkalla](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Overview of the King Solomon and Proverbs

Consider quizzing the youth the list of poetic books and those which are written by King Solomon.

- The poetic/wisdom books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon
- Note that King Solomon has 3 out of those books. Having seen life filled vanities (*consider defining vanity*), he came to the conclusion that all is vanity. "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,..., behold, all is vanity, and a striving for the wind". - Ecclesiastes 1:1,14
- Filled with health wisdom that leads to life, King Solomon shares the proper usage of wisdom in the Book of Proverbs.
- Proverbs 1:1-7: Summarizes the purpose of the book of Proverbs. A set of wise sayings that provide guidance and instruction. Wise is the man who hears and follows.
- There are countless lessons that can be learned from the book of Proverbs, let us discuss three of them.

I. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. 9:10

- This might sound strange to us, as St. John says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has to do with punishment. He that fears is not made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18)
- If the greatest commandment is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:37) then is Scripture contradicting itself? Of course not!
- When St. John says there is no fear in love, he uses the word φόβος (phobos), which is where the word phobia comes from. He is speaking of an irrational fear or panic. God does not desire for us to be terrified of Him.
- That is the fear St. Antony was speaking of when he said "I no longer fear God, but I love Him. For love casts out fear."
- King Solomon used the word "yir.'at" which was translated into "fear" in English., but a more accurate understanding of yir.'at in the Hebrew language is to be in awe or in total reverence.
- During the liturgy we often speak of the fear of God ("With the fear of God, let us attend", "Stand in the fear of God..."), and what we are speaking of is reverence and awe of God.
- When we meditate on God and His strength, love, and understanding, we should be left in a state of awe.
- When we realize how magnificent our God really is, we are able to humble ourselves and that allows for God to work in us which leads to Him granting us wisdom.



2. "When pride comes, then comes shame; But with the humble is wisdom." 11:2

- As we learn to fear God with reverence, we naturally will develop humility which allows for us to gain wisdom. The two (fear of God and humility) are co-existent and rely on each other.
- "Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues: hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance." - St. Augustine
- Humility is a requirement for spiritual growth since through humility we can allow for God to work in us.
- Proverbs also teaches us that contrary to what the world teaches us, humility leads to honor. "A man's pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor." (Proverbs 29:23)

3. "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety." 11:14

- Someone who has humility won't fall into the trap of trusting in their own counsel.
- "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise." (Proverbs 12:15) + The Desert Fathers stressed the importance of not trusting in your own understanding and the need for a spiritual guide.
- The following story from the book Dorotheos of Gaza of St. Macarius shows this concept:
- '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.'
- Your relationship with your spiritual guide and/or Father of Confession is how we can receive guidance.

+ Wisdom is our Savior Jesus Christ

- Ultimately, fear of God, humility, and not depending on your own understanding are all interconnected and build off each other.
- There are so many other lessons that can be learned from the book of Proverbs, all we need to do is search and apply them to our lives.
- Remember that "Wisdom is our Savior Jesus Christ" as is said in the Fraction prayer for wisdom by St. Epiphanius (you may consider reading parts of the fraction with them). When we seek wisdom, we are seeking our Lord Jesus Christ and all that we learn therewith. That is what made King Solomon's request for wisdom so pleasing before God.

Theme: Service

Building Block 2:
Begins with us
Walking With Christ



Lesson 2.6: Only One Direction: Jesus' Basic Principles for Kingdom

Objective

To understand the sermon on the mount as the constitution of Christianity. Where our Lord Jesus Christ introduces the kind of life those who seek the Kingdom of God ought to lead.

Application

When someone harms us, does evil to us, or hurts us, let us learn to show love, let us struggle to be "citizens of heaven." Next time, anyone does anything evil to us, let us return it with love. Perhaps we can ask them to show their faith through an act of love toward someone who tried to hurt them this week.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 5-7](#)



Liturgy: [The Rite of the Incense Procession](#)



Patristics: [St. Augustine](#)



Story: [Pope Kyrillos and the Sheikh of the Azhar](#)



Other: [The righteousness of the Kingdom, Fr. David Hanna](#),
[Citizens of the Kingdom by Fr. Daniel Fanous](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Character of a true disciple

- The sermon on the mount opens with the Beatitudes (5:3-12), which describe the character of a true disciple, and of the Christian who glorifies God, and will enter His kingdom.
- The sermon instructs the Disciples and believers to seek true righteousness and informs them that their good works are for the glory of God (5:13-16), not for merit and fame. It indicates that this righteousness is superior to the purely legal kind taught by the scribes (5:17-48) and practiced by the Pharisees (6:1-18).
- "whoever is puffed up is not poor in spirit." The poor in spirit are not weak; they are strong enough to be detached from the material riches of this world. The kingdom of heaven is on high but as said in Matthew 23:12, "he that humbles himself shall be exalted." - St. Augustine
- For the attainment of this goal, a series of commandments are given (6:19-7:6 negative, and 7:7-23 positive), and the Sermon closes with the parable of the builders (7:24-27), all to the astonishment of the listeners (7:27-29).

+ Our Father, the Provider

- Matthew 7 teaches us that God is our Father. That we can ask Him anything. Ask Him for the gift Love/to achieve such characteristics.
- In the Rite of the Incense procession, it declares our struggle to enter heaven. The priest processes around the altar seven times, during the readings, and the deacon goes to the opposite side of the altar. They pray the litanies of the peace, the Fathers and the Congregation. Doing this is a petition to God to let us enter to the heavenly holies and inherit the kingdom of God as the priest and the people did in the old testament, when they processed around Jericho seven times to enter it as the Lord ordered Joshua; "And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ". (Josh 6:4)

+ Becoming a citizen of the Kingdom

- Using the story of Pope Kyrillos and the sheikh of the Azhar mentioned in the sermon "Citizens of the Kingdom" by Fr. Daniel, the servant can make a case for the importance of showing the light of Christ to the world through acts of love. "The way of the kingdom is to take the anxiety, the irritation, the evil of the world, those who hate us, those who curse us, to take them in our hands and to steal them." We ought to work hard in showing love to those around us - to reciprocate hate with love, and evil with good, to bring Christ to those around us.
- God came to us to teach us what true love means.
- "They said of Abba Macarius the Great that he became, as it written, a god upon earth, because, just as God protects the world, so Abba



Macarius would cover the faults which he saw, as though he did not see them; and those which he heard, as though he did not hear them."

- To show the impact and importance of mercy, and showing love, the servant may refer to the story of a monk that was cast out because of his sins, [St. Anthony](#)
- Jesus concludes with exhortations to true righteousness, warnings about hypocritical and deceitful professions of righteousness, and instructions to build on the rock of His teachings.



Building Block 3: What Does Orthodoxy Say About...

Theme: Service

Lesson 3.1: Euthanasia

Building Block 3:
What Does
Orthodoxy Say
about...



Objective

To understand the Churches view on Euthanasia. Additionally, to understand the sanctity of human life and God's view on our sickness and weaknesses.

Application

View all human life as having honor, regardless of health. By understanding our faith and our stance on Euthanasia, we can be ready to provide a defense if we are confronted.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 2:7](#), [2 Corinthians 12:8-10](#), [Ezekiel 18:23](#)



Liturgy: , [Unction of the sick/litany of the sick](#); [Cyrillian Prayer of Reconciliation](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#); [St. Basil the Great Exegetic Homilies on the Psalm 19:8](#)



Story: [Cain and Abel](#); [Job](#)



Other: [Euthanasia by Fr. Moses Samaan](#); [SUScpts Q&A I](#), [SUScpts on DNR](#); [SUS Legacy Curriculum GII Filler 4](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Define certain key definitions and terms.

- Euthanasia actually comes from the Greek language meaning "happy death".
- Physician assisted suicide (PAS) is when the doctor gives the patient medication which will end their life, which the patient will self administer.
- Euthanasia is when doctors intervene directly to hasten the death of the patient. This can be voluntary when the patient is able to consent, or involuntary if the patient can not consent.
- The common goal between all of these is to prematurely end a life in order to preserve its honor by limiting suffering.

+ The Right to decide

Consider splitting the case in two and have them debate euthanasia. Allow them 5 minutes each to research online arguments for and against.

- Common Arguments that encourage Euthanasia:
 1. Dying with dignity,
 2. Being in control: it is 'criminal' to force them to continue to suffer.
 3. If suicide is legal, and the patient is physically able to commit suicide, why prevent assisted suicide?
 4. Why force the patient to live if there is a guarantee that his life will no longer be normal?
 5. Not being a burden to our family
 6. Giving up your hospital bed for someone else
 7. Giving your healthy organs to someone in need.

+ Good death

- The Orthodox Christian perspective is that the only good death is one in which a person approaches the end of his or her life:
 1. In the spirit of moral and spiritual purity,
 2. In hope and trust in God, and
 3. As a member of His Kingdom.
- The goal of life is not autonomy, control, or escape. The goal of life is God; the God who loves by giving Himself, His life to us and for us.



+ Value of Life

- The sixth commandment clearly states: "you shall not murder/kill"
- We all know how Cain killed his brother Abel out of jealousy and his punishment was that he was cursed from the earth. He said,, *"Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me."* (Genesis 4:14)
- Human Life is a Gift from God (Genesis 2:7) and it is therefore sanctified. God created humans in His image and likeness, and He designed us to be living beings. To go against God's image and likeness would be missing the mark- also known as sinning. The liturgy teaches us that our God is the "Author of life", and by actively ending life, we are working against God since He is Author and owner of life. By taking life, we make ourselves the owner of life, not Him.
- "The Honor of Human Life is in Life Itself: No matter what the appearance of this life is, no sickness, pain or physical weakness can destroy the honor of a person. Sin alone destroys human nature and devalues its honor." "God has given an incomprehensible honor of giving us His image and likeness, and St. Basil the Great speaks to this when he says "Nevertheless, being in such a great honor because he was created in the image of the Creator, he is honored above the heavens, above the sun, above the colors of stars. For which of the heavenly bodies was said to be an image of the most high God?" (Exegetic Homilies on the Psalms 19.8)

+ Our Coptic Orthodox Church view on Euthanasia

- Euthanasia is murder if done without the knowledge of the patient, and suicide if requested by the patient.
- Life with God focuses on life, not death.
- "God did not make death, nor does He rejoice in the loss of the living. For He created all things that they might exist... God created man for incorruption and made him in the image of His own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, yet they imitate him, who are from his side" (Wisdom 1:13-14; 2:23-24).
- "For I do not will the death of the one who dies, says the Lord." (Ezekiel 18:32)
- Pain and suffering are not reasons to desire death but rather a means through which God can glorify Himself in you. *(For the servant: Consider re-reading the lesson given in Grade 11 on suffering in case youth ask further questions on why God allows suffering during the lesson.)*
- Sickness has led many people to repentance, and purified their souls and spirits through the crucible of the pain of sickness. The sick person, during the severity of his sickness, is also an educational message for the healthy who do not realize the grace of good health, or for those who indulge in worldly matters and over-value them. It is difficult for us to define, with our human view of matters, what is beneficial for the sick. Hence, with every effort that is made to ease the pains of the sick and every prayer that is raised for the sake of his healing, we leave the matter of the life and death of the sick, in faith and total submission to our Good Lord, Who alone knows what is of benefit to the sick.
- Job suffered from diseases and sickness but the outcome of his patience was great. He realized, *"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes sees You."* (Job 42:5)
- We also read that, *"And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."* (Job 42:10)
- Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. 1 Peter 4:1-2
- God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)
- "God has not forgotten the man to whom He sends suffering and trials, but in this way is proving His closeness to him." - St John Chrysostom
- God desires what is good for mankind. When we pray the Litany of the Sick/Unction of the Sick we ask God for physical healing for those that are ill if it His will. Ultimately, God may use the sickness as a source of repentance, or something that is for the benefit of the soul. We say He is the "Lover of Mankind" and we know He does not desire the death of anyone (Ezekiel 18:23).
- The Church does allow for someone who is "brain dead" to be removed from life support (see Q&A on DNR).



Theme: Service

Lesson 3.2: Abortion

Building Block 3:
What Does
Orthodoxy Say
about...



Objective

To understand the Coptic Orthodox Church view about abortion

Application

View all life as sacred, both the unborn and the born. Be able to give a defense about the belief of the Church on abortion. Find what arguments are used to support abortion and try to provide answers.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Ephesians 4:15](#), [Exodus 20:13](#), [Leviticus 24:17](#), [Matthew 26:52](#), [Luke 1:41](#), [Psalm 22:10](#), [139:15-16](#), [Jeremiah 1:5](#)



Liturgy: [Agios Agios Agios, gregorian Liturgy](#)



Patristics: [Didache 2:1](#); [Tertullian Apology 9:8](#); [Origen Commentary on the Gospel of John 13.167-168](#)



Story: [John the Baptist leaping in the womb](#)



Other: [SUS Legacy Curriculum G11 November W2](#); [SUScpts Q&A on Abortion1](#); [SUScpts Q&A on Abortion2](#); [St. Mary Chicago Article](#); [St. Mary Chicago Article 2](#); [IA Diocese](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Definition of Abortion according to Merriam Webster

- the termination of a pregnancy after, accompanied by, resulting in, or closely followed by the death of the embryo or fetus: such as
 1. Induced abortion: performed human intervention to deliberately kill embryo/fetus
 2. Miscarriage/spontaneous abortion: death of embryo/fetus due to natural causes or trauma/accident
- Morally, however, there is a significant difference between miscarriages that happen naturally and abortions.

+ Key facts about abortion

The following link contains images detailing the process of an abortion and the final step of an abortion. The content is graphic and is to be used cautiously. If used, it is recommended to warn that the content is graphic. [The images](#) in the end portray and allow those viewing that that aborted being is indeed and clearly a formed child.

- Around 40-50 million abortions occur each year around the world.
- "Around [six-in-ten U.S. adults \(59%\)](#) say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases; 39% say it should be illegal in all or most cases...In a [December 2017 survey](#), roughly half of Americans (48%) said having an abortion is morally wrong, while 20% said it is morally acceptable and 31% said it is not a moral issue." -Pew Research Center
- Why Abortion?
 - Wants to postpone/space childbearing
 - Wants to cover up sin
 - To maintain her physical figure
 - As a form of euthanasia should the family know before delivery of a probable sickness or distortion
 - Wants no (more) children
 - Socioeconomic concerns
 - *Financial status, studying/work situation*
 - Partner-related reasons
 - *Rape/incest*



- Partner doesn't want (more) children
- Didn't love the father; was going to leave the father

- Too young/fear of parenthood
- Risks to maternal/fetal health
- No support to help with childbearing
- Abortion may not be directly mentioned in Scriptures, but the taking of an innocent life is. (Exodus 20:13, Leviticus 24:17, John 8:12, Matthew 26:52)
- Furthermore, The Didache (teachings of the Apostles) says "You shall not procure an abortion, nor destroy a newborn child." (Didache 2:1)

+ Why Abortion? My Body, My choice

- Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit
- Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. I Corinthians 3:16-17
- Even if the concept of your body is true in a worldly sense, is not the child's body a separate body or the mothers ownership? [View image.](#)
- What about the father's rights? Can you kill your child because you made him and thus is yours?

+ Why Abortion? The Rape Case

- Does this change in the event of extreme cases such as rape? As evidenced in the following point, the discussion is not about the rights of people, but rather how God defines life and our understanding of who is the owner of life. Accordingly, the church suggests alternative options for such cases, as can be read in [SUSCRIPTS Q&A, On Abortion and Adoption.](#)
- Abortion is not a solution, it will not change the fact that the woman was raped. Does the baby have any less value because it has been conceived through rape or because it is unwanted? If unwanted, then we come back to the same argument. Does an unwanted child warrant a permission to kill? Abortion will not help forget the painful event.
- Why make the child pay for the rapist's action? We are again to remember that a child is a separate individual.
- Food for thought: If abortion is not considered murder, then why is it considered double homicide when a pregnant woman is killed?

+ When does life begin in the eyes of God?

- Liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian: We say that God "brought me into existence when I was not", and "You are He who formed me". This means we recognize that God is the one who creates life. At what point does this happen then?
- It is not limited to the point in time when we physically exit the womb of our mother.
- We see that the Church recognizes life while it is still in the womb. E.g. John the Baptist leaping in the womb. Shows that the Logos is incarnate while still in the womb of St. Mary, and that there is life in St. Elizabeth.
- The Church celebrates the Annunciation, not just the Nativity showing we recognize that life is recognized at the moment of conception, not at a specific moment in the womb/at delivery.
- We see in Psalm 22:10 and Psalm 139:15-16 that we are God's while in the womb, and in Jeremiah 1:5, even before the womb we are known to God.
- The Church is not interested in scientific debates of gestational timeframes and development. It recognizes that from the point of conception, a life is formed. Therefore, to end this life would be murder.
- When one stands up against abortion, he is standing up for the voiceless and defenseless, the infants themselves; done as an imitation of Christ who also stands up for the weak and voiceless. The Scholar Origen says "When we fail to remember the one who formed a person in the womb, and formed all people's hearts individually and understands all their works, we do not perceive that God is a helper of those who are lowly and inferior, a protector of the weak, a provider of shelter of those who have been given up in despair and Savior of those who have been given up as hopeless" (Commentary on the Gospel of John 13.167-68)

+ How about the Plan B Pill (AKA Morning/Day After Pill) then?

- Plan B Pill is not supported by the church. View [Q&A Explanation & Answer.](#)
- Tertullian said "To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. That is a man which is going to be one; you have the fruit already in its seed" (Apology 9:8 [A.D. 197])

Theme: Service

Lesson 3.3: Friendships

Building Block 3:
What Does Orthodoxy
Say about...



Objective

To understand the meaning of a Godly friendship.

Application

Evaluate your current friendships, specifically those that you consider to be your closest friends.
Use this lesson to treat your friends with love and respect.
Identify one way you need or can be a better friend.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Proverbs 18:24; 18:24; John 15:13; 1; Thessalonians 5:11; Ecclesiastes 4:10; Job 6:14](#)



Liturgy: ["He loved His own who are in the world"](#)



Patristics: [St. Jerome](#) [St. Ambrose](#) [St. Augustine](#)



Story: [David and Jonathan, 1 Samuel 18; St. Augustine and friends steal a pear, Confession Book 2.4.9, Book 2.9.17](#)



Other: [Grade 11 Dec W2; SUScripts Q&A on Friendships; The Power of Christian Friendship, Fr. James Gendi](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Type of Friendships

Consider having the students write down what characteristics they look for in a friend. Then after completing their list, have them write on the other side what they believe they do that makes them good friends. You have them share their lists. Then discuss if they've met their own perspective of a good friend. Additionally, consider having the students comprise a list of their closest friends, and use them as a point of reference throughout the lesson. By the end of the lesson, ask the students if their idea of a close friend had changed, and if they need to change their "Close friends list"

- Acquaintances: People you know and occasionally speak to. They may be fellow students or coworkers. It is a relatively superficial relationship.
- Harmful friends: Harmful in their selfishness of the relationship (self-seeking) or harmful in their unholy influence leading you against your conscience and/or faith (1 Cor 15:33).
- True friends: Good friend challenge each other to goodness

+ Harmful Friends

- "Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Corinthians 15:33)
- We can truly find friends whose presence we highly enjoy or who gives us something, access to things we may not possess, such a friendship can be our downfall. At times, we may compromise our inner beliefs simply to please such a friend. These friendships are destructive to the self (as one finds himself changing from the self) and in some sense, are self-centered.
- Harmful friends may cause their friends to indulge in their bad habits such as smoking, drinking, going to places of immoral entertainment, gambling and sometimes committing crimes as St. Augustine's friends once did.
- St. Augustine and friends steal a pear: "We laughed because our hearts were tickled at the thought of deceiving the owners, who had no idea of what we were doing and would have strenuously objected. Yet, again, why did I find such delight in doing this which I would not have done alone? ... My pleasure in it was not what I stole but, rather, the act of stealing. Nor would I have enjoyed doing it alone—indeed I would not have done it! O friendship all unfriendly! You strange seducer of the soul, who hungers for mischief from impulses of mirth and wantonness, who craves another's loss without any desire for one's own profit or revenge—so that, when they say, "Let's go, let's do it," we are ashamed not to be shameless" (Conf. 2.9.17).
- Similarly, St. Augustine shares how these friendships led him to to boast about his lustful pursuits and their actual pursuits in deeds (Confessions, Book 2.3.7)



- St. Augustine admits that he was at times “delighted with their friendship,” even when he “abhorred their acts.”

+ True Friends

- Saint Ambrose says: “Preserve, then, my sons, that friendship [you] 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 [you] [can] open [your] heart, with whom [you] [can] share confidences, and to whom [you] [can] entrust the secrets of [your] heart. It is a comfort to have a trusty man by [your] side, who will rejoice with [you] in prosperity, sympathize in troubles, encourage in persecution.”
- “The friendship which can cease has never been real.” St. Jerome
- Friendship is not all about fun and games and hanging out. It is Godly firstly. You should talk about the Bible with your friend and learn hymns with them and pray for each others' well being. This doesn't mean you must force your religious views on non-religious friends, but you should live your life in such a way that it makes everyone around you ponder "Why are they different?" "What makes this person such a good friend?" "How come, whenever I need help, this is always the first person there?" Your actions will speak louder than words and we should always lead by example and the way Jesus Christ told us to lead. Eventually, you'll start getting questions about your faith. Bring God into every friendship in this way and see the difference it makes between you, and the other person. Be the example for everyone else. Lead by your example, not by your words.
- Do not let conflicts get in the way of true friendship, rather in open dialogue, revealing concerns and pains, embrace the friendship and fight for it together - that you may help each other towards God while enjoying the companionship.

+ Building a True Friend

- “In those years, when I first began to teach rhetoric in my native town, I had acquired a very dear friend, from association in our studies, of my own age, and, like myself, just rising up into the flower of youth. He had grown up with me from childhood, and we had been both classmates and playmates. But he was not then my friend, nor, indeed, afterwards, as true friendship is; for true it is not but in such as You bind together, cleaving unto You by that love which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. Romans 5:5 But yet it was too sweet, being ripened by the fervour of similar studies. For, from the true faith (which he, as a youth, had not soundly and thoroughly become master of), I had turned him aside towards those superstitious and pernicious fables which my mother mourned in me. With me this man's mind now erred, nor could my soul exist without him.” [\(Conf. 4.4.7\)](#)
- Notice the loving sternness in St. Augustine's friend's reply. There's no rejection of the person, but a rejection of a clear lifestyle.
- “And I did this as soon as he was able, for I never left him and we hung on each other overmuch—I tried to jest with him, supposing that he also would jest in return about that baptism which he had received when his mind and senses were inactive, but which he had since learned that he had received. But he recoiled from me, as if I were his enemy, and, with a remarkable and unexpected freedom, he admonished me that, if I desired to continue as his friend, I must cease to say such things” [\(Conf. 4.4.8\)](#)
- Friendship should be free from opportunism and selfishness so that it may be long lasting. It should be based on sacrifice and self-sacrifice and filled with mutual respect, serious and frank talk without reproach.
- One of the great examples of friendship is David and Jonathan 1 Samuel 18.
- Defend your friends in their absence and reveal them. Don't give ear to slander. Contemplate how St. Peter spoke about St. Paul (2 Peter 3:5)

+ Character of True Friends

Note these are characters we may look for in a friend, but most importantly also what we ought to be as friends.

Loving	"A friend loves at all times" (Proverbs 17:17).
Faithful	"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); "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Proverbs 27:6).
Sacrificial	"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."
Supportive	"A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter: he that has found one has found a treasure." (Sirach 6:14); Friends do not turn away when their friend is in need. Oftentimes our human nature takes control of our relationship with our friends and we become greedy/self absorbed rather than helping those in need around us. It is perfectly normal to need personal



	space; however, we must develop this idea of self-sacrifice for the needs of others. If we are not willing to help those closest to us, will we be willing to perform charitable deeds for strangers?
Courteous	“A pleasant voice multiplies friends, and a gracious tongue multiplies courtesies.” (Sirach 6:5); Keeping confidence makes a good friend. Friends do not gossip. (In today's society, we need to understand the differences between gossip, and seeking help for someone who desperately needs it, but cannot/will not seek help for themselves)
Positively influencing	“For what is a friend but a partner in love, to whom thou unitest and attaches! thy soul, and with whom thou blondest 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 seemliness, 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” - Ambrose. Friends bring out the best in each other. Friendship is honesty and mutual building.
The Perfect friend	Christ. A friend that must not be taken for granted. He can speak to us as a friend: Exodus 33:11

Theme: Service

Lesson 3.4: Dating

Building Block 3:
What Does Orthodoxy
Say about...



Objective

To understand the purpose of dating

Application

Prior to dating ask yourself the following questions:
Are you (spiritually/financially/mentally) ready to work a path towards marriage with another individual?

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Timothy 2:22](#); [1 Corinthians 15:33, 6:18](#); [2 Corinthians 6:14](#); [Proverbs 4:23, 30:31, 19:2](#)



Liturgy: [Conclusion of Catholic epistle](#)



Patristics: "Choose wisely." St. John Chrysostom.



Story: [Potiphar's wife](#)



Other: [St. Mary Houston DATING SEMINAR slides](#); [Dating 101 sermon by Fr. Elijah Eskander](#); [SuscoptsQ&A on Dating](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ From Friendship to Relationship

- Often, the line between a friendship and a relationship may seem blurry. We may ask ourselves, is my relationship with this boy or girl simply a friendship?
- To judge relationships, we ought to first understand the meaning of the words: relationship and friendship.
- "Friendship is about something other than the two people in the relationship"; it may be concerned with service for example. In a true friendship, something outside the two friends brings them together.
- CS Lewis writes, "We picture lovers face to face, but friends side by side; their eyes look ahead."
- On the other hand, within a relationship, those involved are concerned with each other - concerned solely with pleasing the other. That defines the line between friendships and relationships.
- We ought to protect ourselves from lust. This is why our beautiful church organised that after the reading of the Catholic Epistle in the liturgy, the reader says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. The world is passing away, and its lust; but he who does the will of God abides forever. Amen."

+ Modern Dating: An Ego-Centric Rotted Slippery Slope

- The question that we need to address here is not, "why can't I have a boyfriend/girlfriend?" but, "why do I need one?". What is the difference between having a friend of the same sex versus one from the opposite sex?
- Dating between two individuals from the opposite sex and frequently leads to physical intimacy or even pre-marital sex. Dating is usually for the sake of having fun in a very temporary relationship.
- These relationships tend to be egocentric in nature since the individuals lust/desire to satisfy their physical, social and ego needs without caring for the consequences of such relationships on the opposite gender.
- An example of such relationship was the behavior of Photiphar's wife toward Joseph, which ended by placing him in prison (Genesis 39:7-20)

+ Modern Dating: An Infatuated Dilemma

Consider discussing what is infatuation and how it impacts modern dating relationships

- In the scientific psychological literature (Beck, 1988), infatuation is related to mania. Most individuals experience the mania of infatuation

as part of the first step in dating and sexual attraction. For some, however, infatuation becomes the dominant emotion controlling their lives.

- Infatuation leads to common tendencies such as:

Tendency	Explanation
Selective Abstraction	Focusing on one event(such as beauty) while excluding others (such as a quickness to anger or offensive comments).
Arbitrary Inference	Turning an ambiguous situation (such as an angry remark) into an unwarranted conclusion (passionate love).
Personalization	Interpreting a general event in exclusively personal terms (all negative situations with a partner are my fault, "I am ruining everything").
Polarization	Perceiving or interpreting events in all or nothing terms.
Generalization	The tendency to see things in always (fulfilled in the love of partner) or never categories (no love if there is an argument).
Demanding Expectations	Beliefs that there are laws or rules that must always be obeyed. This cognitive distortion may arise later in marriage when the beliefs and feelings associated with infatuation are muted (following infatuation period, all infatuated accomplishments must continue to the highest degree, any lack becomes a significant disquality in the companion).
Catastrophizing	The perception that something is worse than it actually is.
Minimization	Due to infatuated idealization (such as being impressed by a high profile job), related decisions and outcomes are of much less importance than they actually are (job causes to sacrifice all time with partner).
Emotional Reasoning	The judgment that one's feelings are facts.

- Accordingly, the following are a few introspective questions
 1. What evidence do I have to support my emotions?
 2. Is there any other way of looking at the situation?
 3. Is the situation as bad as it seems?

+ Why? Purpose of Christian Dating

- Genuine love in marriage is modeled after the love between the three persons of the All Holy Trinity.
- When making friends with someone, as a Christian, you should ask yourself: is Jesus Christ the center of this relationship? In other words, is He blessing it? Am I growing in grace and faith within it?
- "Too often, people want what they want (or what they think they want, which is usually "happiness" in one form or another) right now. The irony of their impatience is that only by learning to wait, and by a willingness to accept the bad with the good, do we usually attain these things that are truly worthwhile."
- "Like a fruit picked green or a flower plucked before it blossoms," choosing to date immaturely can take away from the beauty of dating in the appropriate time. As is said in the book of Ecclesiastes.
- "To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted; ...A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to



dance;...A time to keep, And a time to throw away

+ When, then, am I ready?

- Seek the guidance of your father of confession. But, most adults would agree that within your first university years, you will experience a lot of change - a process of maturing into adulthood. As such, in grade 12, and for the first couple of years, one should focus on oneself, to be introspective, and to get to build one's identity in Christ. It is important in our early youth years to build a strong relationship with Christ and make Him our focus. Once that has been established, He will show us our true partner in life and bless the relationship.
- “A good time is the time when you have finished your education and you are emotionally and financially stable and capable of making a commitment for life.” - [Bishop Youssef Q&A](#)
- If you are at a mature age, spiritually grounded, financially secure, and eligible for marriage, the dating stage of becoming better acquainted with someone of interest for the genuine possibility of marriage is acceptable. Dating for the sake of dating is wrong. Dating without serious consideration of marriage is wrong.
- Dating, means the prospect of marriage is not far away, thus one essentially is responsible and fulfills the following verse responsibly...”a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Matt 19:5)
- It is important to make Christ the center of your love, and your first love. Through Him, and in Him, you will be able to selflessly love the other person more completely. Use the chance and the gift of singleness that you have now to know yourself and to serve others. By knowing yourself, you can then be able to understand who would be suitable. By serving others, you cultivate, by the grace of God, virtues that will be important in marriage. Work first on chastity:
 1. “love is born from chastity” - St. John Chrysostom Sermon on ‘Kiss Aquila and Priscilla’
 2. “lewdness comes from nothing else than a lack of love”. - St. John Chrysostom Homily 33 on I Corinthians

+ Who?

- When ready, through guidance, look for someone better than you while keeping the purpose of Dating in mind.
- Typically, the courting/christian dating period serves to get know the other person and their compatibility. Questions such as: what similarities do you share? Do you have a similar perspective regarding money, friends, in-laws, career goals, recreation, leisure activities and parenting? What about your cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds? How compatible are they? How similar are your personalities? Are you a Type A personality, and the prospect a Type B personality? Do you like to argue passionately, but the potential partner tends to avoid conflict? Is he an introvert, and are you an extravert? The extent to which two people are compatible is very important to the well-being of your relationship today and into the future. Many, not all, can be deduced from a friendship that is established prior to dating. Get to know the person casually prior to quickly jumping into a relationship “in an infatuated manner”.

+ Relationship Guidelines

- Holding hands is a sign of affection, but a date is merely someone who you are getting to know. Thus, holding hands is unacceptable, until you are engaged or with whom you have at least proposed. Kissing is unacceptable because it is a precursor for a more intimate relationship and further advances more sexual activity. The Holy Book of Proverbs is the perfect guide for righteous relationships. - [Bishop Youssef Q&A](#)

Theme: Service

Lesson 3.5: Normalizing Sin

Building Block 3:
What Does Orthodoxy
Say about...



Objective

To understand how to demonstrate the love of Christ to peers who have different beliefs and values, while rejecting sin.

Application

The normalization of sin in our societies is contributed to by passive Christians who do not have the courage to stand for the Truth. Write down some ways of how you can stand for your faith without conforming to societal trends

References and Resources



Scripture: [Mark 2:17](#); [Galatians 5:19-21](#); [John 8:44](#); [James 4:17](#); [Proverbs 17:15](#); [Isaiah 5:20](#); [2 Corinthians 10:5](#)



Liturgy: [The Litany of the Gospel](#)



Patristics: St. John Chrysostom, Homily 8, On Repentance and Almsgiving (Fathers of the Church Patristic Series); [St. Anthony the Great](#)



Story: The Church at Corinth



Other: [The Cost of our Christian Calling](#), HG Bishop Anquelo



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ My Blurred Image: Inability to distinguish wrong [Society's impact on my image]

- Development of law: Laws in societies have regularly changed and adjusted by legislators
- When society disagrees with a law, they want to normalize it, make it legal. As such, sins such as homosexuality, use of marijuana, abortion, etc... have become legal in many countries across the world.
- It is a general trend for society to want certain sins normalized. This goes for both sins that are illegal, to sins that have not been illegal: swearing, lying, abortion, divorce, fornication, homosexuality, greed, etc.
- Child murder is now a "choice."; Killing the elderly is called "death with dignity" and "compassionate."; Killing the afflicted is now the "right to die."
- On a daily basis, we see sin more prevalent and normalized within our cities. Often inappropriate images hang on public walls, sometimes people take pride in how they were successful in cheating without getting caught, or even the complete desensitization to swearing that most have experienced. So then, are these things really wrong? Do they really harm us? Does it really matter? Or even if it is not, what can I do about it anyway? Being surrounded with such a society tends to normalize and encourage us to fall away from the image we were created for. We, to, normaliz them.
- "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)

+ Distorting My Image: Unhealthy Acceptance, "Do what makes you happy"

- Society in the path of total superficiality, a worship of 'rights' and a forgetting of 'wrongs'. Moral decay of society has now taken over rationality.
- Often the motto of the world is to do what "makes you feel good." But we ought to make our motto according to the teachings of the Bible; "Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23).
- How, then, does one be in the world, but not of the world? The Catholic epistle continuously reminds us of this objective:
- "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. The world passes away, and its desires; but he who does the will of God abides forever. Amen.
- As iterated with the Friendship topic, this environment is not the one which one builds close friendships on. "Make no friendship with an



angry man, And with a furious man do not go, Lest you learn his ways, And set a snare for your soul” - Proverbs 22:24

- Embracing the lifestyle, leads to ensnarement of one’s soul. Rather it is someone who needs to be loved. Loving the sinner, not their lifestyle. Loving them as God loves them, yearning that they “be brought to the knowledge of the truth.” - I Timothy 2:4
- It is important to maintain discernment with regards to our values and who we choose to have close company with as being in company with sin “corrupts good habits” (I Cor 15:33).
- Jesus said He is the way, the truth, and the life. He said no one comes to the Father except through Him. Focus on oneself implies one is not focusing on The Way who happens to be Truth and who happens to give Life.
- “Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” Matthew 5:11
- “Blessed” meaning happy, while revealing in persecution typically will not equate with happiness in modern culture. How then is one happy? As they are on the Way, The Truth and Life. They have accepted such circumstances for His sake.
- Society’s understanding of happiness, what they convince people will make them happy, is not happiness. Let alone the sins that become normalized.

+ Touching Up My Image: Healthy Acceptance

- Unhealthy Acceptance is involvement: Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure.” - I Tim 5:22
- Accepting sin and behaviour is a type of sharing in their sin. However, one is called to accept the person. Without emulating their lifestyle.
- What then ought we to do? “We need to remember that God puts us in this world particularly for the evils that we see. Because we can redefine them. We can respond to them. We can be a force. That’s why He calls us to be His fellow workers and advocates as He is an advocate. That’s why He allows us to live certain situations because out of those situations, we end up learning and being able to help others. The book of Micah chapter 6, “what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.” [The Cost of our Christian Calling, HG Bishop Angaelos](#) So when we see injustice, we need to do justice; when we see a lack of mercy in the world, we need to love and live mercy; and when we see arrogance and self-conceitedness, and selfishness, we need to remember to walk humbly with our God. For it is in those that we will make the greatest difference, in those we will change things around us, and it is in those that we can cure the illness of the world that comes through the brokenness but can be healed through the grace of God that can be instilled through us.” - Based on the following [The Cost of our Christian Calling, HG Bishop Angaelos](#)
- Often, we might not even feel the sin that surrounds us, because we have lost sensitivity to it. As such, we ought to pray daily that our Lord may open our eyes, that we may “serve Him with all purity and righteousness, all the days of our life.”
- “A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him saying, ‘You are mad, you are not like us.’” - St. Anthony

+ Perfecting my Image of God: The impossible Task

- To understand the issue with normalizing sin, we ought to first understand our calling. What are we called to be? What does scripture actually ask of us? Scripture tells us what we ought to seek, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect,” or “Be holy, for I am holy.” Commandments that although may seem difficult, by the grace of God we can work towards, through the work of the Holy Spirit within us.
- “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isaiah 5:20)
- In I Corinthians the apostle treats a wide range of issues affecting the community of believers, including divisiveness, litigation, food offered to idols, and class divisions at the communal meal.
- By normalizing sin, the devil opens the door to a life of negligence and a gradual straying from the path of righteousness. What may begin as a simple act of “normal” may then lead to addictions and habits that control us, and bring us under subjection.
- We ought to, ““May we be worthy to hear and to act according to Your holy Gospels through the prayers of Your saints.” As the priest prays before reading the Gospel.

Theme: Service

Lesson 3.6: Abuse

Building Block 3:
What Does Orthodoxy
Say about...



Objective

To understand how to identify and respond to harassment and abuse

Application

What would you do if a friend shared with you that he/she has been abused? [encourage them to seek Godly counsel]

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Sam 13](#); [Ephesians 6:4](#); [Colossians 3:21](#); [Mark 9:36-37](#)



Liturgy: [The Litany of the Assemblies](#)



Patristics: St. Theophilus of Antioch



Story: [Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom](#)



Other: [Article by HG Bishop Yousef on Putting a stop to Bullying](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Forms of Abuse: physical, sexual, psychological, neglect
- + Physical Abuse (hitting, battering, etc.)
 - It goes without saying, the Lord Christ refused violence (Matthew 5:9, Matthew 10:16, Matthew 12:18-20, Luke 9:54-56, Matthew 21:4, Matthew 26:51-53)
 - Paul the apostle wrote, "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:17-18).
 - "You can be a fierce wolf and you do not accept to be a lowly lamb, but you cannot be one of the subjects of Christ as He is the shepherd of lambs not a shepherd of wolves." - St John Chrysostom
 - You may read and discuss Eph 5:22-33. Note that though it appears the Husband is the head and may seem to have authority, He is to love her as Christ loved the church - in a sacrificial manner. Thus, equating the two. One submits, the other sacrifices his will for his spouse. Ergo, if the husband fulfills his God given role, the wife would be submitting to Christ and receiving all that she desires. This passage does not condone physical authority.
 - God established the strength and stability of the marriage relationship when He declared, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)
 - Violence refuses love as it looks to the other person as something that should be destroyed/controlled, and not as a person who can serve/be served. Violence indicates weakness as it fears others and this fear drives it to attack others to avoid being attacked.
- + Sexual Abuse (forcible relations, inappropriate touching, glancing, language etc.)
 - Go through the story of Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom (2 Sam 13), you may use the following [Bible study](#) by Fr. Tadros Malaty or alternatively, this [bible study](#).
 - Differentiate Lust from Love: " Love is getting free from egoism, for man to give himself for the sake of his own edification , and that of others; to deal with others-specially the opposite sex-as persons who have their own dignity; While lust, on the other hand, is retiring into one's shell around his ego, seeking the fulfillment of his own self or dignity, etc.; and dealing with others as tools for his own fulfillment. Love grows every day, and makes the heart more spacious for all; while lust destroys man, narrows his heart, and will soon turn his lustful love into hate."
 - Lust is destructive: We can see this is Ammon as well as Potiphar's wife. Untamed/unfought lust is ego-centric and destructive.
 - Janadab, his friend and counsel - plotted with him instead of warning him of the dangers of lust, he incited him with a cunning plan. This



friend had an opportunity to tame/direct him to control this fantasy, but instead pushed him in a wicked direction that led to countless destruction.

- Tamar, prior to falling to his trap, warned him of the foolishness but to no avail. The lust had grown too deep. So deep that what followed his lustful act was a heart filled with hatred.
- King Solomon wisely proclaims: "The beginning of strife is like releasing water" Prov 17:14. One mischief begets another, and it is hard to say what shall be in the end of it. This is precisely what is happening within this story. Absalom plans revenge on Ammon to kill him.
- See how great a disastrous sin lust can beget? Let us not leave lust untamed and let us keep each other accountable, not encouraging lustful thoughts or behaviors as Janadab did with Ammon.

+ Psychological Abuse (calling someone by demeaning terms "You idiot, loser" (actually mild, often far worse) & Neglect (legally denying food, shelter, education, and necessary care):

- You may discuss psychological abuse as a form of bullying and contrary to the path of love described in 1 Cor 13. You may use the following [Article by HG Bishop Youssef on Putting a stop to Bullying](#)
- "Far be it for Christians to do evil deeds or that these deeds should enter their minds; for temperance dwells within them, self-restraint is practiced, monogamy is observed, chastity is guarded, injustice is exterminated, sin is rooted out, righteousness is exercised, law is administered, reverence is preserved, God is acknowledged, truth controls, grace guards, peace protects, the Holy Words guide, wisdom teaches, life directs, God reigns!" - St. Theophilus of Antioch

+ Though the lesson is mainly focusing on the dangers and roots of abuse, you may remind anyone who is a victim of abuse to be encouraged to seek godly counsel.

+ Pray that all people be free from the passions that lead to being an aggressor and most importantly that all be protected from being a victim.

- "Make us all worthy, O our Master, to partake of Your holies, unto the purification of our souls, our bodies, and our spirits; The litany for the congregation: Houses of prayer, houses of purity, Houses of blessing, grant them unto us, O Lord, and Your servants who shall come after us forever." - Litany of the assemblies

Theme: Service

Lesson 3.7: Men and Women: Equal Value, Different Roles

Building Block 3:
What Does Orthodoxy
Say about...



Objective

To understand that God made both male and females in His image and likeness and with equal value, yet their roles differ.

Application

Each one of us is called to serve the church in different ways and at different times. Speak with a spiritual guide like your Father of Confession if you want to understand the role that God desires for you to serve in. Don't seek honor, but rather desire to serve God in whatever way He desires.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 2:18](#), [Genesis 1:27,28](#), [Galatians 3:28](#), [1 Corinthians 12:12-20](#), [Ephesians 5:22-25](#)



Liturgy: [Responses of people, males and females](#)



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



Story: [St. Macarius and the two women](#); [Paradise of the Fathers Volume II, Questions and Answers on the Ascetic Rule, #4](#)



Other: [Women in Orthodoxy](#), [St. Mary and St. Antonious Church MI, USA](#); [The Role of a Woman in the Church by Father Moses Samaan](#); [Male vs Female Brain, Cambridge University](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Equality in creation

- In the beginning when God created mankind, He created both male and female equal to each other. Adam was created first, but Eve was made from the side of Adam and she was comparable to him as scripture says. (Genesis 2:18-21)
- Both male and female were created in the image of God and were created to live together with dominion over the earth and fill it through procreation. (Genesis 1:27-28)
- God made both male and females in His image and likeness and with equal value, yet their roles differ.
- Similarly to the Holy Trinity, all three hypostasis are of equal value, yet their roles differ for the sake of our salvation.

+ Physically and Psychologically Different

- Males and females were created equal, yet they were given different roles, both physically and spiritually. Biologically we know that male and females are different anatomically, physiologically, and psychologically.
- We know that females are designed for child bearing, having the blessing of motherhood that males can not partake of. According to several studies (Baron-Cohen, 2020) females also tend to be more empathetic than males, a trait that is shown as early as 12-months of age. Males tend to be more aggressive and attracted more to information systems. We also know that anatomically males are able to develop more muscle mass and strength than females.

+ Spiritually different

- Just as males and females are different physically and psychologically, we must understand that they differ in their spiritual roles as well since our bodies, souls, and spirits are tightly linked and influence each other.
- Males are called to lead the family through sacrifice and service, just as Christ (the true Bridegroom) leads the Church (the true Bride). (Ephesians 5:25) They were not created to rule in an authoritarian manner, but through love and self-denial. In fact, Christ followed a model of leadership called Servant leadership, which is on the opposite scale of an authoritative leadership.
- Females are called to a life of submission just as the Church lives in submission to Christ. (Ephesians 5:22-24)
- We must understand that the concept of submission has been perverted by society and is misunderstood because of it. We ought to



understand submission as yielding our will to another person. Now if the mission of the male is to serve and offer themselves through a life of sacrifice, and the female is supposed to submit, or yield to their mission, then in no way is this derogatory to women.

- If men and women are given different roles in the church, just as they have different roles in life, we must understand that neither is of more value than the other.
- "Many women have received power through the grace of God and have performed many deeds of manly valor." -Clement of Alexandria.

+ Aiming for Grace in the eyes of God

- With our human perception, we think that being in a position of leadership, or a member of the clergy means that we are valued more or even holier, but God does not see it this way.
- If being ordained to the clergy was simply a matter of the level of holiness that you attain, then the St. Mary the Theotokos, the pride of the human race would be a member in it, but she was not, yet she is exalted above all.
- Consider the following story about [St. Macarius and the two women](#) which illustrates that God does not place value based on clerical rank or a position of leadership, but through our devotion to Him and our pursuit for holiness in whatever role we may have.
- Women are called to live a life of holiness in many ways, but the Priesthood has been instituted by Christ and given as a role for men, just as women have been given the role of motherhood.
- Just because women are not called to serve in the clergy does not mean they do not have an equal role in the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-20) which is the church.
- Consider the many female saints we have who served in their own capacities and roles such as St. Macrina (the sister of St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa) who taught her brothers and started her own convent, or St. Photini who spread the word of Christ before any of the disciples did in Samaria.
- On the subject, St. Clement of Alexandria said: "Many women have received power through the grace of God and have performed many deeds of manly valor."

+ Equality in Value

- We see that the liturgy is the work of all the people, both clergy and laity, male and female. Each has a different role yet are equal in value.
- Ultimately, we must understand that despite being given different roles in the body of Christ, male and females are created equally. Just as the Holy Trinity is made of three Persons (Hypostasis) having different roles, yet they are equal in their divinity, like so are male and female are different in their roles, yet equal in their humanity.
- In Christ there is neither male nor female. (Galatians 3:28)
- "The virtue of man and woman is the same. For if the God of both is one, the master of both is also one; one church, one temperance, one modesty; their food is common, marriage an equal yoke; respiration, sight, hearing, knowledge, hope, obedience, love all alike. And those whose life is common, have common graces and a common salvation; common to them are love and training. "For in this world," he says, "they marry, and are given in marriage," in which alone the female is distinguished from the male; "but in that world it is so no more." St. Clement of Alexandris



Building Block 4: Mission Prep: Serving God and His People

Theme: Service

Lesson 4.1: Discipleship and Applying It all

Building Block 4:
Mission Prep: Serving
God and His People



Objective

To understand what true discipleship is and why this virtue or concept is important.

Application

Find practical ways to practice discipleship. With family friends, the priests and Sunday school teachers. Being a disciple can be as simple as carrying a box for someone to extremes as blind obedience, like St. John the Short.
Be a disciple to everyone, but in wisdom.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 14: 27, I Cor:II:I](#)



Liturgy: [Fraction to the Apostles](#)



Patristics: [St. Basil - The Long Rules.pdf](#)



Story: [Saint Paul the Simple of Egypt](#)



Other: [Called to Divine Sonship, Fr. Kyrillos Ibrahim](#); [Life of Discipleship, HG Bishop Youssef](#); [Principles of discipleship, HG Bishop Youssef](#); [SUS Legacy Curriculum GII Filler#6](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

**N.B: The lessons in this building block can easily overlap. It is recommended to skim through each lesson to ensure to minimize repetition and deliver the given objectives of each. This particular lesson will introduce the concept that service is always best achieved through guidance, ultimately God's guidance.*

+ What is discipleship and is everyone called a disciple?

The question may be an introductory discussion.

- A disciple is "a convinced adherent of a school or individual".
- "Come and follow me", the Lord says. All are called to follow and be called His disciple.
- Discipleship is a concept that contains all kinds of virtues all in one. By focusing on being a disciple, one begins a path towards acquiring from all virtues and thus becoming Christ-like. A single virtue containing all virtues.

+ True discipleship is complete submission to Christ.

- We can see in St. John the Baptist, a true follower of Christ. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 4:30).
- Discipleship makes the focus all about Jesus Christ.
- The potential: "O You who granted His holy disciples and honoured apostles the descent of the Spirit the Paraclete, upon them and gave them authority to work healings, signs and wonders - they proclaimed to us the glad tidings of His Holy name and restored us to the true faith of the Holy Trinity..." - Fraction to the apostles

+ A Disciple of the Lord.

Consider taking one of the Lord disciples and see how the given disciple fits each of the following characteristics.

- **Follow the Lord's teaching:** "If you abide in My Word you are My disciples indeed" (John 8:31); Dwell on 'Abide in My word'. It is not about just knowing or reading His word, but Abiding in the Word - following with sincerity of heart and everything done is sourced by His word.
- **Love others:** "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-50).
- **Leave everything for His sake:** "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:26,33).
- **Endurance:** "anyone who does not carry his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 4:27).



- **Humility:** *"at the feet of Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law"* (Acts 22:3). It begins with a person feeling that he needs to learn, to ask and to seek guidance.
- These Characteristics are essential in being set apart and truly setting oneself apart. St. Paul tells us, *"do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed to by the renewing of your minds."* This requires all 5 elements described above. The renewing of minds is achieved through abiding in His word, the transformation is done through sacrifices of some habits and maybe even harmless activities which in turn requires humility as it is not one's own personal will they are achieving but rather through endurance and out of love for the Lord.
- + Discipleship to one another (obedience to one another) as a means to true discipleship.
 - Discipleship is a package. If a person wants to be a perfect disciple, they must have complete obedience. Without obedience how can a person ever be a disciple if they do not do what they are told? A disciple also must obtain the virtue of silence, in order to clearly understand what they are being told. etc.
 - If a person becomes a perfect disciple, they become very Christ- like as they show the same submission that Jesus Christ had for the Father to the point of being crucified.
 - Discipleship is not just about listening, learning and doing. It is also teaching. Many times we are able to teach not by our words but by our actions. When others see that we are dedicated to the fellowship of Christ, others will want to join because they see the fruits that are perceived.
 - Read the story of St. Paul the simple and explain how it is important to be disciples to each other. Saint Paul the Simple of Egypt also lived in the fourth century and was called the Simple for his simplicity of heart and gentleness. He had been married, but when he discovered his wife's infidelity, he left her and went into the desert to Saint Anthony the Great (January 17). Paul was already 60 years old, and at first Saint Anthony would not accept Paul, saying that he was unfit for the harshness of the hermit's life. Paul stood outside the cell of the ascetic for three days, saying that he would sooner die than go from there. Then Saint Anthony took Paul into his cell, and tested his endurance and humility by hard work, severe fasting, with nightly vigils, constant singing of Psalms and prostrations. Finally, Saint Anthony decided to settle Paul into a separate cell. During the many years of ascetic exploits the Lord granted Saint Paul both discernment, and the power to cast out demons. When they brought a possessed youth to Saint Anthony, he guided the afflicted one to Saint Paul saying, "I cannot help the boy, for I have not received power over the Prince of the demons. Paul the Simple, however, does have this gift." Saint Paul expelled the demon by his simplicity and humility. After living for many years, performing numerous miracles, he departed to the Lord.
 - The easiest place to practice discipleship is in your home with your parents and siblings. Since a family does everything together, we sometimes forget to practice virtues and these are the easiest opportunities to get. At home, when your parents ask for a cup of tea, do it immediately without saying anything. Overtime, this obedience will turn into discipleship. It is good to focus on discipleship with everyone the same age or older than you and even more humbling to people younger.
 - When we ask God to help us be better disciples. He does not just make us better disciples, but He will give us the opportunity to practice it.
 - "If, indeed, the goal of Christianity is the imitation of Christ according to the measure of His incarnation, insofar as is conformable with the vocation of each individual, they who are entrusted with the guidance of many others are obliged to animate those still weaker than themselves, by their assistance, to the imitation of Christ." -St. Basil the Great, The Long Rules 43

Theme: Service

Lesson 4.2: Our Gifts From God

Building Block 4:
Mission Prep: Serving
God and His People



Objective

To understand that God bestows on each person different gifts and talents that are intended to glorify God and ultimately for the edification of all.

Application

Self-reflect and ask God to reveal His gifts and how they are intended to be used for His glory. Read through the chapters which speak of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4) in a contemplative manner in order to discern these gifts.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Corinthians 12](#), [13:1-3](#), [15:10](#), [Matthew 25:14-30](#), [Romans 12](#), [Ephesians 4](#), [1 Peter 4](#)



Liturgy: "We offer unto You Your gifts from what is Yours..."
[Liturgy of St. Basil](#)



Patristics: [St. Gregory of Nyssa, The Life of Moses, pg. 80](#)



Story: [Parable of the Talents](#); [Noah](#); [David](#); [St. Paul](#)



Other: [Article by HG Bishop Youssef on Talents and Gifts](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

**N.B: The lessons in this building block can easily overlap. It is recommended to skim through each lesson to ensure to minimize repetition and deliver the given objectives of each. This particular lesson will mainly drive the differentiation between talents and gifts as well as the importance of their use for His glory.*

+ Source of gifts and talents

- God grants both talents and spiritual gifts. (See article by HG Bishop Youssef)
- It is not for anyone to know how the gifts are distributed, nor is it for anyone to decide upon the number of gifts God is to bestow on each member in the body of Christ.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has confirmed that in His conversation with Nicodemus who came to Him in quest for more than what he already knew in terms of the Law The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:8). That is why no one is in a position to boast once they find out about the gifts granted to them that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:29).

+ Discovering your talents

- There are many narrations in both the New and Old Testaments of how people had used their talents.
 - God, having given Adam the linguistic talent, allowed him to enjoy using it by letting him name all the animals in the Garden.
 - Noah, under the instructions of God, put into effect the architectural talent in building the Ark.
 - David the psalmist used his musical talent and sang the psalms that he had composed and that were inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - St. Paul, in the New Testament, was skilled in weaving tents. He used his talent to provide for himself and those who were with him by selling the tents that he used to weave.
- Talents can be understood as natural abilities that are essential for mankind in order to enrich and diversify his life. They are innate, natural, and can be influenced by our environment. They are meant to be used for the benefit and enjoyment of mankind.
- Typically, someone's talents are usually found in the things we enjoy. If you can't think what your talents are, ask yourself what you find the most joy in? What would your dream day consist of? The things you would do are likely the things you're talented in. Talents typically guide you to making a career choice, but that is not always the case.
- Everyone should strive to improve their talents and gain new ones for the purpose of using them for the edification of others and the church.
- There are many examples of people both in the Bible and in Church history who used their talents to glorify God and for the edification of the church. Noah used his architectural talents to build the ark, King David used his musical talents to praise God through composing hymns and

psalms. St. Paul used his talent of weaving to make tents, which allowed him to fund his own ministry without taking donations from the churches he served. St. Phoebe the Deaconess used her social and interpersonal skills to be a missionary and spread the Gospel, and Priscilla and Aquila used their business skills to house the saints and turn their home into a church (Romans 16:1-5) Even St. Macrina used her love of philosophy and learning to educate her younger brothers, St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa.

- St. Gregory of Nyssa explains this in his work on the Life of Moses: "This is exactly what Moses then commanded the people to do.... It commands those participating through virtue in the free life also to equip themselves with the wealth of pagan learning by which foreigners to the faith beautify themselves. Our guide in virtue commands someone who "borrows" from wealthy Egyptians to receive such things as moral and natural philosophy, geometry, astronomy, dialectic, and whatever else is sought by those outside the church, since these things will be useful when in time the divine sanctuary of mystery must be beautified with the riches of reason. It is possible to see this happening even now. For many bring to the church of God their profane learning as a kind of gift: Such a man was the great Basil, who acquired the Egyptian wealth in every respect during his youth and dedicated this wealth to God for the adornment of the church, the true tabernacle."

+ Gifts: Now that we have an understanding of what talents are, let us get a better understanding of what spiritual gifts are.

- Spiritual gifts differ from talents in that they are spiritual in nature, and they are bestowed on us by the Holy Spirit as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11). They are given by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the church, not for personal gain. (1 Corinthians 12:7)
- Remember that these gifts that someone receives actually belong to God, and should be offered back to Him for His glory. This is shown in the liturgy of St. Basil when the priest says "We offer unto You Your gifts from what is Yours..."
- A summary of the gifts can be found in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4
- Everyone can receive gifts from the Holy Spirit, but unlike talents, they do have conditions. "The basic condition is to be born in the body of Christ through Baptism, confirmation, learning and practicing of the teachings of the church, diligent study of the Word of God and partaking of the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist." (HG Bishop Youssef).
- Everyone can discern what their gifts are through prayer, our Father of Confession, and by being an active member of the body of Christ through partaking of the Holy Mysteries

+ Can Spiritual Gifts be Abused?

Consider discussing whether Godly spiritual gifts can be abused. Given that they are godly and from God, would that prevent an individual from using them wrongfully, since they are from God?

- The gifts of the Holy Spirit need, as a prerequisite, wisdom and faithfulness. The parable of the three servants with different numbers of talents clearly depicts these prerequisites (Matthew 25:14-30).
- Abusing the gifts of the Holy Spirit, occurs when believers draw cold in their love for God or one another, become hard of hearing, sluggish; the end result of which will be withdrawal and grieving of the Holy Spirit, and consequently withering of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is one with nine manifestations (Galatians 5:22,23). It is mainly Love and its end product. Without love none of the products is existent.
- The gifts of the Holy Spirit are freely given to those who earnestly seek them. They cannot be taken for granted, nor is there a life long guarantee on them. It is only through active internal work in our hearts to keep ourselves in a state of perpetual repentance and sanctification that we become worthy of those gifts.

Theme: Service

Lesson 4.3: Our Responsibility Toward Each Other

Building Block 4:
Mission Prep: Serving
God and His People



Objective

Understand that as members of the body of Christ, we have a responsibility to love and serve our neighbors. By serving others, we are serving Christ Himself.

Application

Find ways that we can use our gifts and talents to serve others. Seek to bear the burdens of someone else knowing that we are serving Christ Himself. This may be a sibling, parent, friend, or even random person who needs a hand. Remember the services of the church in our prayers knowing that our prayers are an act of service and love.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Deut 9](#), [Gen 18:22-33](#), [Matt 22:39](#), [25:35-40](#), [Luke 10:25-37](#), [1 Peter 4:10](#), [Gal 6:2](#), [1 Cor 12:12](#), [James 5:16](#)



Liturgy: ["Grant Your people the oneness of heart"](#)



Patristics: [St. Anthony the Great](#); [St. Jerome Homily on Psalm 14\(15\)](#)



Story: [The Good Samaritan \(Luke 10\)](#), [Ruth](#), [St. Bishoy, The Three Harvesters - #416](#)



Other: [If You Love Me by Fr. Matthew the Poor](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

**N.B: The lessons in this building block can easily overlap. It is recommended to skim through each lesson to ensure to minimize repetition and deliver the given objectives of each. This particular lesson will mainly drive the importance of seeing our neighbor as Christ and that accordingly we are to serve all (regardless of race, gender, or faith) as Christ.*

+ The Greatest of Responsibilities: Love

- Three types of Love:
 1. The first kind is the passion of the flesh. This is called lust as it results from selfishness.
 2. The second kind is mutual love, which is superior to the first kind but it is not deep and it cannot form unity between lovers.
 3. The third kind is the spiritual love (Agape), which is the true Christian love of which the Lord Jesus gave us a model when He loved us and gave Himself for our sins to deliver us and redeem us.
 - St. John the apostle shows us the importance of this love when he says: "He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:10, 11).
- Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39) and this means that as we have a responsibility to care for our own body, we also have a responsibility to care for our neighbors.

+ My Neighbor, My Enemy?

- Who is considered a neighbor? Christ answered this question with the famous parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) in which He explains that our neighbor is everyone, including the people we may consider our enemies.
- St. Jerome while commenting on this parable says "Everyone is our neighbor, and we should not harm anyone. If, on the contrary, we understand our fellow human beings to be only our brother and relatives, is it then permissible to do evil to strangers? God forbid such a belief! We are neighbors, all people to all people, for we have one Father."

+ 3 Means of service to the neighbor

Consider discussing the difficult practicality of the statement of loving your enemies. What are the means to achieve this level? Once the discussion is complete, the discussion can shift to learning to serve gradually from those we love, to those we can love, to those we don't know, to those we struggle



with, etc... Applying this in each of the following points, through prayer, teaches us to both grow in our love for our neighbor and in turn grow in service.

1) 1 Peter 4:10 : “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

This can somewhat be used as a means to review the lesson on [Our Gifts From God](#)

- The reason we have this responsibility to serve others is because we are all members of the same body which has Christ as the head. Just as the different parts of the body serve each other (e.g. the arm brings food to the mouth), we should also serve others.
- We all have different gifts and they are meant to be used as a tool for love (both towards God and neighbor).

2) Galatians 6:2: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

- If we understand this concept of being members in the body of Christ, then we will see that in serving others, we are serving Christ Himself. (1 Corinthians 12:12)
- We bear the burdens of others because of our love for Christ, for He taught us that when you serve the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, imprisoned, or the least of society, we are serving Christ Himself (Matthew 25:35-40).
- St. Antony the Great said “Our life and our death is with our neighbour. If we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalise our brother, we have sinned against Christ.”. This may seem dramatic and maybe even overwhelming to place that much value on our relationships with others, but St. Antony, guided by the Holy Spirit truly understood that dealings with others and dealings with Christ are not separate or independent of each other.
- In the liturgy of St. Gregory, the Priest prays "Grant Your people oneness of heart", which comes from the understanding that Christ desires for us to be a unified body. A unified body works together and serves each other for the sake of one another. If we have this mentality of carrying each other's burdens, the body as a whole will be strengthened.
- By bearing each other's burdens, we will also get to experience Christ Himself like in the story of St. Bishoy when he carried Christ up the mountain.

3) James 5:16: “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

- Just as Moses interceded for the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 9) and Abraham for Sodom (Genesis 18:22-33), we should always be praying for our neighbors.
- The power of prayer is often forgotten, but we ought to remember that prayer is the most essential component to any service we perform.
- In the story of the three brethren who went out to harvest, but one fell sick, the other two made sure he received his share because they understood that they were helped by his prayers to finish the harvest. Even though he could not physically help them, they felt that his prayers were just as beneficial to their labors. ([Paradise of the Fathers, Vol. 2.416](#))

Theme: Service

Lesson 4.4: Serving the Church

Building Block 4:
Mission Prep: Serving
God and His People



Objective

To instigate a seed of desiring service within the church.

Application

Sign up for a new service. If there is a pre-servants program for a service you may be interested in, seek to enter.

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Corinthians 6](#)



Liturgy: [St. Gregory Liturgy Institution Narrative](#).



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom, HOMILIES ON THE EPISTLES OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 12.1](#); St Augustine



Story: St. Paul's journeys of service despite a thorn in the flesh and continuous struggles, St. Habib Girgis



Body Overview Bullet Points

**N.B: The lessons in this building block can easily overlap. It is recommended to skim through each lesson to ensure to minimize repetition and deliver the given objectives of each. This particular lesson will mainly drive the importance of serving with purpose for God using a bible study on 2 Corinthians 6. NOW is the time to serve. The previous lesson suggests that the love of the neighbour can be gradual from loving those whom you can love to loving your enemies. The church provides a service to those you may not know and can love.*

+ Different age, same issues

Discuss the Corinthians, who they are and the challenges they faced and complained about.

- A group of people that St. Paul visited, preached and brought to Christ. They however, diluted the teachings and lived without holding the teachings of Christ that St. Paul brought to them. They accepted his word but slothfully.
- I Corinthians is a letter written by St. Paul correcting these behaviours: Sexual Immorality, Divorces, Lawsuits, Gluttony, Problems with worships and gifts, abnormal teachings...
- "... Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no [e]divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." - I Corinthians 1:10
- During young years, temptations arise that bring one in different directions. God calls us, in our young years, to make exemplary choices.
- Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. - I Timothy 4:12

+ Who is called to Minister?

- **"We then, as workers together with Him** also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, **now is the day of salvation**. We give no offense in anything, that **our ministry** may not be blamed. But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God" 2 Corinthians 6:1-3
- "Paul exhorts his listeners not to get slothful, by the mere assumption that God searches for them and sends them as ambassadors for Himself; But on the contrary, and for this same reason, we are committed to please Him, and to reap our spiritual blessings." St. John Chrysostom
- You can analyze the etymology of the word minister. Note that the etymology refers to a servant.
- There are many different types of ministries (Eph 4:11-12) - all have a calling with God.



+ Called to minister NOW (2 Cor 6:2)

- We clearly see that we are all called to service. We, thus, learn from St. Paul that service encourages us to ensure reconciliation with God. But as much as we are all called to serve and minister, this free calling is not to be taken in vain (where we become slothful) but to be sought at the highest level. Yes, do not accept slothfully. But it is time for you to accept the calling now honestly.
- On this, St. John Chrysostom says: Let us not let the opportunity slip, but rather let us display a zeal worthy of his grace. We press on because we know that the time is both short and opportune. The acceptable time is the time of the gift, the time of grace, when it is decreed that not only will no account of our sins be demanded from us, but that we shall also enjoy abundant blessings, righteousness, sanctification and all the rest.
- We are to be a servant and minister in all things. There is no place where I am not ministering in some shape or fashion.
- “Do not be so pleased with comfort, for it may be a reason for negligence, or be dismayed by pain, for it is usually the path to perfection” - St Augustine

+ Serving the Church

- The previous lesson suggests that the love of the neighbour can be gradual from loving those whom you can love to loving your enemies. The church provides a service to those you may not know and can love.
- The gifts received from God are used to serve one another, and there is no easier place to serve one another than the church: “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace” - 1 Peter 4:10
- Often, one comes to church thinking he is there to be served. But the Lord coming to earth said: “I did not come to be served but to serve.” ~ Matthew 20:28

+ “My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast, and do not be impetuous in time of adversity.” - Sirach 2:1

- Service requires sacrifice. The great example of St. Paul's journeys of service despite a thorn in the flesh and continuous struggles and St. Habib Girgis
- Liturgy Connection: "I offer you the symbols of my freedom" - St. Gregory Liturgy Institution Narrative

+ His calling is:

- with purpose (2 Thess 1:11),
- planned for your well being (Jeremiah 29:11)
- Irrevocable (Romans 11:29)
- directing to holiness (2 Timothy 1:10)
- for heavenly transformation (1 Peter 2:9-10)
- for use, not to be buried (1 Peter 4:10-11)

Theme: Service

Lesson 4.5: Models of Service

Building Block 4:
Mission Prep: Serving
God and His People



Objective

To imitate the service and love of the saints.

Application

Try to use your talents and gifts to serve others in your community. Whether it is helping a fellow classmate with a certain subject in school or using your talents to make someone happy. (Ex. If you're a good baker or artist) and/or think outside the box and find a charity that you can involve yourself in. Even if your talents are not useful there, your time and efforts are always appreciated. You may also try to pick someone each week and help them with something. Ex. Helping a parent by doing a chore without them asking. Volunteering at your school, church or local shelter.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 5:16](#)



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



Patristics: [St. Ignatius](#)



Story: St. Maurice and St. Verena, St. Paul, Pope Kyrillos, St. Abraam Bishop of Fayoum



Other: [SUScripts Article on St. Verena](#); SUS Legacy Curriculum GII Filler3, [St. Maurice of Theba, Synaxarium, Bishop Abraam of Fayoum, Article by HG Bishop Youssef, Pope Kyrillos, St. Takla](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

**N.B: The lessons in this building block can easily overlap. It is recommended to skim through each lesson to ensure to minimize repetition and deliver the given objectives of each. This particular lesson will mainly show different ways some saints have expressed their service for God - elements of previous lessons are encouraged to be used.*

+ Serving through Prayer

- Summarize the life and work of Pope Kyrillos and his impact coming mainly through prayer & the altar.
- Father Mina's, his name at the time, love for God was so great that he desired a life of solitude. Only thirty years old at the time, the monks refused his request saying, "You are only thirty years old and your monastic life is only five years. Do you want to pursue the life of solitude in the desert whereas many others before you have struggled for the same goal for thirty or forty years and failed?" The assembly of monks did not change Father Mina's decision and he lived in a cave near the monastery.
- It is said that Pope Kyrillos VI prayed more than 12,000 masses during his lifetime. He would start the day spiritually at 3:00 or 4:00 am with the Holy Psalmody and finish the liturgy early so that many of his children can go to school and work. This continued for thirty five years ever since the pope was a hermit. The liturgy was the source of his strength and greatness. Didn't the Lord say: "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." (Proverbs 8:17 - KJV). The Psalmist also said: "I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word. My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word." (Psalms 119:147-148 - NKJV).
- The late Bishop Mina El-Samueli spent a few years of his monastic life with Father Mina. He recalled this story. He said, "Father Mina the Hermit used to wake up at 2:00 am, start the midnight Agpeya prayers, bake the 'korban', raise incense then serve the holy mass which would end around 8:00 am. This meant spending six continuous hours in prayer. Afterwards, he would meet with those who were hungry and thirsty for God's mercy. Here is a sick person looking for a cure which he attains through the prayers of Father Mina. There is another facing a major decision in need of God's guidance and obtains it through Father Mina's advice. A third is tormented by a demon and is healed when Father Mina prays for him... Whoever sat with Father Mina obtained a definite relief, a heavenly relief. So one would leave knowing that his ship had found a true haven and his soul was filled with peace."

+ Serving the Needy

- Summarize the life and impact of [St. Abraam of Fayoum](#)
- Anba Abraam was a saintly monk of the twentieth century. As it is said, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48) so did St. Abraam live his holy life.



- When Anba Abraam was appointed a deputy bishop in the City of Minya, he converted the bishopric into a shelter for the homeless, orphans, poor and the strangers. Some years later he moved and became head of El-Moharak Monastery and opened the doors of the monastery to the needy, poor and the widows. Satan moved against some of the monks residing in the monastery and he was accused of wasting the resources of the monastery upon the poor. They persisted until Anba Abraam was dismissed as head of the monastery and they turned out the poor whom he cared for. After spending time in the monastery of El-Baramous, he was ordained Bishop of Fayoum, where he excelled in doing mercy to the extent that he gave everything he owned.
- One day a penniless man came to ask him for money to spend on his wife who gave birth to a baby. The Bishop gave him one pound, all he had at that moment. When the poor man went out, a deputy of the Bishop who knew that he had received a pound met him. The deputy took the pound from him and replaced it by a fourth of a pound. The poor man returned to the Bishop and told him what had happened. The Bishop called his deputy, rebuked him for his hard heart, and lack of his faith and asked him to return the pound to the poor man, not to take back the fourth of the pound and to give him also a quilt because it was winter. When the deputy protested the Bishop said, "The Lord will provide." After the poor man left, the Bishop received from one of the believers a money order for ten pounds and an invoice for receiving ten units of wheat.
- These are but a few of the examples of Anba Abraam's generous giving. This saint always gave with the Spirit of Love. Love in every matter, in every virtue, and in every practice is like the soul to the body. If the soul left the body it would immediately die and not exist.
- Likewise, God rejects any virtue without the Spirit of Love. Christianity lifts up our compassion and we sense the feelings of others, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). Our teacher, St Paul says, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3).

+ Using our talents/gifts/education to serve with love

- Recite the story of St. Verena and St. Maurice.
- St. Verena was born into a Christian family in the Theban region (Luxor). She later joined the Theban legion in its mission to Switzerland. She tended to the wounded soldiers and took care of their wounds. When St. Maurice and members of the legion were martyred, St. Verena led a lonely and hermit's life. She was fond of serving the poor, often by feeding them. She especially tended to those suffering from leprosy. She lovingly treated their wounds and was fearless of contracting their contagious disease. This shows her true love of service and serving others with the talents and gifts she has been given.
- St. Verena's life was one of service and sacrifice, as the two are often inseparable. She traveled to a foreign country in uncertain circumstances in order to serve others. She used skills from her training (medical and hygiene) to serve God. As a nurse, not only did she take great care in fearlessly treating the physical diseases of the people, she also tended to their spiritual needs and would teach them about Christianity and the love of our Jesus Christ and His teachings. She taught the people hygiene, taught them cleanliness and how to have physical fitness. That is why we see her holding a comb and a pitcher of water.
- She was simply working as a nurse and teaching hygiene to those around her, yet her faith is what she is remembered for. Serving others should be done with your whole heart and not expecting anything in return.
- St. Verena's life pushes us to go out into the world and to use what God has given us to serve others and bring glory to His name.

+ Let your Light Shine

- Just as St. Matthew said "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven." Your service to others, especially when surmounting your own personal hurdles, never goes unnoticed and it is showing the works of Jesus Christ.
- It remains for us not to be ungrateful, nor unworthy of so great a kindness, but, to the best of our ability, to narrate the marvellous works of God, to celebrate by deed the kindness which we have experienced, and not return thanks by word only. We ought to become in very deed what I, grounding my belief on the miracles wrought in you, am persuaded that you now are. We exhort you still more to serve God, ever increasing your fear more and more, and advancing on to perfection, that we may be made wise stewards of our life, for which the goodness of God has reserved us.
- Liturgy Connection: The Commemoration of the Saints
- "Father; teach us to give and not to count the cost." St. Ignatius

Theme: Service

Building Block 4:
Mission Prep: Serving
God and His People



Lesson 4.6: Making a Difference - Individually and Collectively

Objective

To understand the importance of being true to yourself and realizing that new ideas bring forth fruits.

Application

Have a group discussion of ideas of service that can be added to the church and what service you all can participate in collectively.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 25:40](#)



Liturgy: [Litanies](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: King Josiah, Ibrahim El-Gohari



Other: [Make A Difference In Your Nation, Fr. Abraham Fam](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

**N.B: The lessons in this building block can easily overlap. It is recommended to skim through each lesson to ensure to minimize repetition and deliver the given objectives of each. This particular lesson will mainly be geared towards reviewing all the elements of previous lessons.*

+ Re-Emphasize the importance of service by reviewing some elements of previous lessons.

- Seek to inspire a spirit where the youth desire to make a difference. A difference in their church, a difference in their communities and a difference in their day to day surroundings.
 1. Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. - 1 Timothy 4:12
 2. Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins. - James 5:20
 3. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. - Gal 6:1
 4. And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' - Matthew 25:40-41
 5. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. - Hebrews 13:16
 6. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. - Galatians 6:2
 7. Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. - Isaiah 41:10
- There are different paths to making a difference. One is from an individual standpoint, the second is from a communal standpoint.
- Service is something we are all called to do for Christ, but each one of us has their own personality and method of serving.

+ From the individual standpoint.

- Some churches, there may be only a few services that do not really interest the wants of a zealous congregation. For example, if in a church the only real service available is Sunday school, organ, and hymns, but a person is interested in helping out the homeless, the sick, or the imprisoned, more externally, we should encourage them to talk to a pastor to start a service or even start on their own with the help of the church and/or a spiritual guide/mentor.
- Services in churches do not start on their own, it is based on the talents that God gives to be used in our service. For example, if they are musically talented, it would be a waste to keep them in the dark, we should encourage each other to help younger kids to play instruments and praise God.
- New services are brought up by anyone who has a zeal for service and wants to make a difference whether it be within the church or out in the

community.

- There is always opportunity for growth. As an individual, I must always seek that which needs help and seek to fill it. Whether it be materials needed (list examples), or services that can be added (attempting to initiate and maintain with spiritual guidance), or anyone that has any need. Seek to fill and serve. To the very least, join with your heart in liturgical prayers for the world during the litanies whether it be for the church, clergy, the services, the people, the seasons...
- King Josiah: Josiah was the son of king Amon and the grandson of King Manasseh, both of them wicked kings of Judah. Yet Josiah was a godly king and known as one of the world's youngest kings; he began his reign at age 8 after his father was assassinated. 2 Kings 22:2 introduces Josiah by saying, "And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left." In the eighteenth year of his reign, he raised money to repair the temple, and during the repairs the high priest Hilkiah found the Book of the Law. When Hilkiah read it to Josiah, the king tore his clothes, a sign of mourning and repentance (verse 11). King Josiah called for a time of national repentance. The Law was read to the people of the land, and a covenant made between the people and the Lord. Many reforms followed.
- And the example of Ibrahim El-Gohari who was known for his love for building new churches and monasteries, and for repairing those that had fell into ruin.

+ From the Communal standpoint

- Services may be done individually and initiated as an individual, but serving in fellowship is essential. It is like a small fire of an individual, who among many other small flames, make a communal pillar of fire that is inspiring to all.
- It is encouraged to attempt as a class, in response to this lesson, to attempt to participate in a service all together. Even better would be if this service becomes a regular one that is maintained until the end of the year. Instilling this spirit will greatly help instill a desire of service in the youth after their graduation.
- "They are your brethren, and how dost thou call them least. Why, for this reason they are brethren, because they are poor, because they are outcast. For such does He most invite to brotherhood, the unknown, the contemptible, not meaning by these the monks only, and them that have occupied the mountains, but every believer; though he be a secular person, yet if he be hungry, and famishing, and naked, and a stranger, His will is he should have the benefit of all this care. For baptism renders a man a brother, and the partaking of the divine liturgies." -St. John Chrysostom



Building Block 5: Refining Oneself: A Lenten Journey

Theme: Service

Lesson 5.1: Refining Oneself

Building Block 5: A
Lenten Journey



Objective

Seeing the elements of the Great fast as a potential tool to refine oneself.

Application

In order to benefit from the Great Fast, let us use this period as a time to intensify our pursuit of virtue through communion with God. The first thing we should do is sit with our Father of Confession and develop a plan for the Fast. Through his guidance, you can seek ways that you can increase your service, intensify your prayer life, grow in your understanding of the Bible, and practice acts of self-denial. As much as we focus on removing vices, let us equally focus on developing virtue as the psalmist says: "Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it." Psalm 34:14

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 4:2](#), [Zechariah 7](#), [Isaiah 58](#), [Psalm 34:14](#)



Liturgy: [Great Lent Doxology](#), [Communion Melody](#)



Patristics: [St. Athanasius](#), [First Festal Letter](#)



Other: [The Purpose of the Great Fast](#), [The Meaning of Great Lent](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Starting Over

- The Great Fast is the gift that the church gives us to "start over" and become figurative catechumens by rekindling our love for God.
- The church grants us this period to renew our mindset, and practice true repentance in preparation for the Holy Pascha of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Liturgically, the church guides us through Great Lent with the 7 Sundays approaching Palm Sunday, and their appropriate Gospels. ([You may remind the class what the 7 Sundays are](#))

+ It's not a Vegan Diet; it's an opportunity.

- Great Lent is the holiest fast since it is one that replicates the fast of our Lord Jesus Christ on the mount for 40 days and 40 nights (Matt 4:2)
- In order for us to receive the full blessing of Great Lent, our mindset towards fasting must change. If we think of Lent simply as a time for us to reluctantly switch to vegan diets, then we will not benefit from this period, nor will we do anything pleasing to our God.
- The objective of fasting (or any ascetic practice) is to practice self-denial due to our great love for God.
- When we fast, it is us placing our desire for a relationship with God over our desire to satisfy ourselves.
- Read Daniel 1:5-19 and note that fasting is a path for purity and spiritual strength that endows one with spiritual gifts (that may in turn be used in service).
- We are committing to abstaining from the things that are either sinful (vices, bad habits etc.), or non-beneficial (food, news, entertainment etc.) for the sake of being filled with the love of Christ.

+ Fasting, yet not fasting

- We see this in Zechariah 7. The Lord tells Zechariah that despite the Israelites thinking they have been fasting for the past 70 years, they truly have not fasted. (Zechariah 7:5) What the Lord desires was for them to show justice, show mercy and compassion to the least of society, and have pure thoughts towards their neighbor. It wasn't that their change of diet was wrong, it's that they thought that that was the objective of fasting.
- We also see in Isaiah 58 the Lord says a similar thing. The Israelites are saying "Why have we fasted, but You did not see it?" The Lord responds to them saying "Because in the days of your fasts, you seek your wills... I did not choose this fast... rather, loose every bond of wrongdoing; untie the knots of violent dealings... break your bread for the hungry, and bring the homeless into your house... Then your



light shall break forth as the morning, and your healing shall spring forth quickly. Your righteousness shall go before you, and the glory of God shall cover you. Then you shall cry out and God will hear you." (v. 3-9)

- Here the Lord beautifully explains what He desires from our fasts, and what the result will be. When we turn from evil doing towards performing acts of mercy and love, the Lord promises to be with us and hear our cries. This is what fasting is all about.
- Great Lent should be a time for not only refraining from evil, but for the pursuit of virtue.
- The church directs our focus to this during the melodies and doxologies of Great Lent. We repeatedly hear the phrase "Blessed are those who have mercy, who give to the poor..."

+ Metonia: Geared in a new Direction

- Metonia: change in one's way of life resulting from penitence or spiritual conversion.
- God never desired for fasting to be a change in diet or a superficial form of repentance. What He desires from fasting is genuine repentance.
- The church ensures we are focused on repentance throughout this season by it's somber hymns with its emphasis on the mercy of God and the many examples of repentance.
- Repentance is purely a change of state/mind. God desires us to change our state from desiring sin, to desiring Him.
- St. Athanasius teaches that fasting is about the soul desiring to eat from virtue rather than vice. (First Festal Letter)
- "Behold, my brethren, how much a fast can do, and in what manner the law commands us to fast. It is required that not only with the body should we fast, but with the soul. Now the soul is humbled when it does not follow wicked opinions, but feeds on becoming virtues. For virtues and vices are the food of the soul and it can eat either of these two meats, and incline to either of the two, according to its own will." - St. Athanasius

Theme: Service

Building Block 5: A Lenten Journey



Lesson 5.2: Overcoming the Passions

Objective

Understand what passions are, why we struggle with them.

Understand how we can channel passions to be a positive force in our spiritual life, our service to God and to others (i.e., replace our passions with virtues).

Application

Offering practical spiritual and mental exercises to identify our passions before they take a wrong turn and develop to negative behaviors. We must act, as soon as we realize the escalation of our emotions and ask the Holy Spirit to work in us to replace our automatic negative response with a holy positive one.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Romans 7:18-23](#), [Gal 5:24](#), [Col 3: 5-10](#)



Liturgy: [The morning prayer of the Agpeya, in the second litany](#)



Patristics: [St. Macarius](#), [St. John Chrysostom Homilies on Ephesians](#), [Justin Martyr on Passions](#)



Story: Jezebel (wife of King Ahab) and greed/ abuse of power. The prodigal son, the temptations on the mountain, David and Bathsheba (or Joseph escaping from sin and attaining virtues)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Illness of the soul

- The passions can be seen as the unnatural tendencies of man. They were never part of the original image of God that was placed inside of humanity.
- St. John Chrysostom writes “Do you see that we have from our nature seeds which tend to virtue; whereas those of vice are contrary to nature?”
- Just as someone suffering from a bodily illness must determine the nature of the illness and its cause, likewise someone suffering from the passions must do the same; for the passions are illnesses of the soul.
- Virtue is what is natural, and the unnatural is seeing passions develop inside the human being to weaknesses, brokenness. Passions are not the “normal”, as the world sees them.
- It is not natural, nor normal, for us to give in to the passions. It is when humanity fell and distanced itself from God and from His goodness that passions came to be.
- Saint Macarius the Great says the following: “Through the first man’s (Adam) disobedience, we received in ourselves an element alien (foreign) to our nature: the malice of the passions, which having passed into habit and inveterate (deeply ingrained) disposition has become our nature.” What he is saying is that through the introduction of sin, passions came, and suddenly our nature changed. Unfortunately, what was once unnatural has become something we are nowadays used to.

+ At the heart of the Fast

- At the heart of the fasting effort is the struggle against the passions. The passions are spiritual or physical inclinations or instincts which, when uncontrolled, are destructive to both soul and body.
- During the Great Fast, we are called to take extra strides against this warfare on passions. As St. Paul says, “For the good that I will do, I do not do; but the evil I will not do, that I practice” (Rom 7:19).
- Passions shape into desires and emotions that go extreme and control us, and are effectively improper uses of our free will. They cannot be easily satisfied and often snowball to another series of sins. It is sometimes hard to overcome our own desires. Instead of seeking our joy from our union with God, we try to find it through seeking pleasures from sensual things of this world.
- The positive counterpart of passions are virtues. Likewise, through the Great Fast, one is to attempt to attain these virtues.
- Rather than using these faculties, such as the senses, our intellect, reason, emotion, creativity, compassion, etc., to make our way to God and



to grow in the likeness of His Son, the passions will disorient us and lead us further away from God. The opposite is true.

- "To yield and give way to our passions is the lowest slavery, even as to rule over them is the only liberty" - Justin Martyr
- What are the passions? They are:
 - Gluttony (*craving for foods*), Lust (*selfish sexual pleasure*), Greed (*love of money- Seeking material things*), Despair (*Sorrow-self-pity*), Anger (*Cannot have your way*), Spiritual sloth or apathy- (*Seeing prayer, reading Bible, attending Church is not important*), Pride & Vainglory (*Confidence in self-will instead of God's. I know best*)

+ What for?

- Sloth, laziness, pushes man down rather than up. It attacks the hope and will for change, and from some perspectives can be considered the root of all sins because it poisons all spiritual inclinations.
- As long as we are slothful, we will not begin the repentance required in the Great Fast. There will not be proper honest fasting, extra liturgies, increased dedicated time to God, increased giving, spiritual energy gifted to others or even any prayer.
- Passions will then enslave us, we will lose our God-given freedom.
- "Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls" (Prov 25:28).

+ Treating the malady of the soul

The following may be considered as steps on how to overcome passions.

- Uprooting sinful habits and replace the vacuum with the virtues:
 - For example: replace gluttony with fasting, greed with giving/tithing.
 - A spiritual father may give special guidance and spiritual exercises to help overcome certain passions.
- Proper preparation for coming back to God/ Build yourself a Discipline
 - "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal 5:24)
 - The Lord Jesus Christ shows us an example of proper repentance in the parable of the Prodigal Son, who decided to return to his father's home in repentance. Heartfelt repentance is the first step of the return of a sinner—a prodigal son—to the Father's house.
 - Consistency
 - Pray, just like detailed in the morning litanies: "As the daylight shines upon us, O Christ our God, the true Light, let the luminous senses and the bright thoughts shine within us, and do not let the darkness of sinful passions hover over us, that we may mindfully praise you"
 - Create your own spiritual routine: daily prayer, monthly meeting with Father of confession, bible reading, weekly liturgy...etc.
 - Focusing and asking God for purification of mind, senses and having a will to detach from passions and sins
- Guard your heart
- We cannot wait till the feelings develop to behaviors:
 - "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14:38)
 - Take action to stop as soon as you notice (catch your brain) that you are receiving a "stimulus" that will evoke a wrong emotion/passion and ultimately a wrong reaction from you.
 - Emotional regulations: pause, take a deep breath before you take an action. Say a quick prayer such as "Lord help me" "Lord have mercy on me", "Our Father", delay your response until the passion calms down.
 - Occupy yourself with another positive thought until the intensity of the moment passes.
 - Reprogram your brain: Shift your focus on the presence of God (you are not alone), and that He is near to help you and take control over your passion. He will work in you "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil 2:13)
- Put others first (a fundamental principle of service)
 - This allows us to forget about ourselves and shift focus away from our Ego
 - It develops in us humility
 - We can see God's love and share His love with others.

Theme: Service

Lesson 5.3: Fighting Addictions

Building Block 5: A
Lenten Journey



Objective

Understand the cause of our addictions and how we should struggle to overcome them. Additionally, understand that the struggle against addictions itself is what is virtuous and good before God.

Application

Self-reflect and identify what are the root causes of my addictions as well as the severity of the addictions and take required steps to their roots (whether it be Social media, TV, group of friends etc.) Try to replace a bad habit you have with something beneficial and good that can fill your void. Additionally, seek out a servant or trusted friend who you can expose your struggle to so that they may provide consistent and regular support. If an addiction is causing psychological or physical harm, consider reaching out to a psychologist or counselor to receive professional support.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Song of Songs 2:15](#), [Matthew 12:25](#), [John 8:32](#), [2 Peter 2:18,19](#), [John 8:32-36](#), [John 5:6 \(The Paralyzed Man\)](#), [Romans 8:10](#), [Ephesians 5:18](#), [Colossians 3:16](#), [Revelations 3:21](#), [Micah 7:8](#)



Liturgy: [Litany of the sick](#)



Patristics: [Origen Comm. on Cant. 3: 15.](#), [St. John Chrysostom On Repentance and Almsgiving, Hom. 8](#)



Story: [The Brother Addicted to Fornication - #575](#)



Other: [John Hopkins Medicine: Will Vaping Lead Teens to Smoking Cigarettes?](#), [The Way of a Pilgrim Ch.2](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ From passion to addiction

- Addictions can be defined as a psychological and physical inability to stop consuming a chemical, drug, activity, or substance, even though it is causing psychological and physical harm.
- It is a form of bondage a person may experience, where they wish to stop something, but they are unable to.
- Oftentimes, addictions are formed when we have a void in our life that we aim to fill using something easily accessible that offers short term gratification.
- The issue with this is that it never provides long term sustenance, so we are left feeling the void even more, which leads to repeated and increased usage of this temporary fix.
- It is like someone who chews gum when they are hungry; the gum provides flavor and can even satisfy their appetite to the point that they no longer feel hungry, but they receive no nutrients and haven't actually fed themselves.
- Addictions can also be developed from small and non harmful practices that are left unchecked. An addiction to something harmful may have developed from a perfectly normal practice. For example, someone who is prescribed pain medications by their doctor may abuse this resource and become addicted to a particular drug, even to the point that it becomes toxic.
- It is for this reason that the church teaches us to beware of the "little foxes, that spoil the vines." (Song of Songs 2:15)
- The Scholar Origen comments on this verse and says "These little foxes are the evil powers of Satan which destroy the flowers of virtues and ruin the fruits of faith through evil thoughts and misconceptions."
- These little foxes provide the sensation of fulfillment and satisfaction, when in reality all they have done is increase the void and left us feeling emptier.

+ The service of Fighting the Void

- As created beings, we are limited and imperfect/incomplete, which is why we feel these voids in our life that cause loneliness and pain when they are not properly filled.
- There are many instances in scripture where the idea of being filled is discussed, oftentimes with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) or having Christ dwell in us as St. Paul says (Romans 8:10), or with the word of God (Colossians 3:16). If these addictions are filling the voids that were meant to be filled with the perfect and eternal things, then we should struggle to remove these addictions from our life.



- Addictions can also be a hindrance to spiritual growth and lead to spiritual apathy.
- As members of the body of Christ, we have a responsibility to stay spiritually healthy on behalf of the rest of the body. When one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. Likewise, when one part of the body struggles and is made well, the whole body is made well.
- Our struggle against sin is an act of service to the body of Christ.
- Our struggle and repeated repentance is an act of courage as St. John Chrysostom says: "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."
- Our Lord Jesus was incarnate and performed all of His salvific works in order to free us from the bondage of sin which had held us in bondage. We should show our thankfulness for this through striving against sin.
- The discourse of Jesus in John 8:32-36 helps illustrate this bondage to sin and our freedom found in Christ.
- We can often feel discouraged after fighting with an addiction for a long period of time and feel the desire to give up. We should remember that our Lord is very aware of our struggle and there is righteousness simply in the struggle.
- In Revelations 3:21 it says "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." The original word for "overcomes" is νικῶν (nikon) actually refers to a ongoing process. It is not something that has been completed, but rather something that is currently happening. On the other hand, the original word for "overcame" (in reference to Christ) is ἐνίκησα (eniksa) is in past tense, since Christ has already overcome the world.
- This shows us that the reward Christ gives us to sit on His throne is for our struggle, not for our "success" over the sin since that can come from Him alone.
- The Great Fast provides us with a blessed opportunity to struggle against addictions through the grace of God.

+ "Do you want to be made well?"

- The Lord asks us as He asked the paralyzed man (whose Gospel we read on the 5th Sunday of the Great Fast): "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6) We should self-reflect and see what our response is to this offer from our Lord.
- If you have a dirty cup, the only way to clean it is to fill it with water which is a pure substance/ By continual filling of the cup, the stains are naturally removed and dissolved by the water leaving the cup clean.
- Addictions have both spiritual and psychological needs to be countered. Professional help and counseling should be considered with regards to the psychological needs of addiction.
- Spiritually, if we want to cleanse ourselves from sin, we should fill ourselves with things that are pure and good which will naturally remove the uncleanness. The Lord will be a light to me." (Micah 7:8)
- There is a story in the book "The Way of a Pilgrim" where an alcoholic was told by his spiritual father to read a chapter from the Gospel each time he had the desire to drink, and if necessary to read another chapter until the desire went away. This act of replacing alcohol which was filling a void in this person's life with the word of God allowed him to stay sober.
- We can apply this same principle in our own lives by filling ourselves with good practices such as attending the church services, spiritual reading, exercise, spending time with friends who are a positive influence on us etc.
- By filling our void with goodness, we no longer have a place for our addictions and we will lose the desire.
- The most important part is strengthening our union with Christ through the sacraments, prayer, and fasting.
- Important to note that these spiritual acts are not simply items on our checklist, but rather they are sources of goodness that fill us with Him who is Good.
- We must also realize in our struggle against addiction that it will only come through the grace of God.
- We can learn a lot about this through the Litany of the Sick where the church teaches us to pray that the Lord may free all those who are in bondage, "for You are He who loosens the bound and uplifts the fallen."
- We should learn to throw ourselves at the mercy of God whenever we are faced with the temptation to continue our addiction, for when we flirt with sin, we are bound to lose. (The story of the brother addicted to the sin of fornication)
- We must also struggle with perseverance, never losing hope. Also, from the Litany of the Departed, the Priest prays that God is "the hope of those who have no hope and the helper of those who have no helper."
- Remember what the Prophet Micah says: "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise; When I sit in darkness, Approach your Father of Confession and make him known of your struggles so he may give you guidance and pray on your behalf.
- It is also helpful to have a servant or trusted friend who can encourage you daily or weekly to provide encouragement and be a source of accountability.

Theme: Service

Building Block 5: A Lenten Journey



Lesson 5.4: Life of Prayer: How Can I Learn How to Pray?

Objective

Prayer is a sincere and real conversation between the soul and God. It is a communion with God, in which God grants us power to overcome our weaknesses, and to grow spiritually.

Application

Find a corner in your room that is dedicated and consecrated to God. A place where there will be no phones, no food, no distractions. Only time with God.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 18:10-14](#), [2 Kin. 4:35](#), [1 Kin. 17:22](#), [Gen 19:29](#), [James 1:6](#)



Liturgy: [The Aqpeya](#)



Patristics: [St. Macarius, Homily 40](#)



Story: [Elisha the prophet and the Shunammite woman](#), [Elijah and the widow of Zarephath](#)



Other: [How to Pray? According to Saint Basil the Great by Fr. Tadros Malaty](#), [The Exercise of the Arrow Prayer, LAcopts](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Called for a relationship

- Fundamentally, all christians are called to pursue a genuine relationship with God. Thus, prayer is not some mechanical repetition or a random ritual, but rather a means to union with God and a source to Christian virtues.
- “But the chief [beginning] of all good endeavors and the guiding force of right actions is in perseverance of prayer ... for the person who daily forces himself to persevere in prayer is inflamed with divine passion and fiery desire from a spiritual love toward God...” - [St. Macarius, Homily 40](#)
- Prayer is not meant to be complicated. King David reminds us, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17) Note that this is not meant to diminish rituals and sacrifices of the Old Testament, as he then mentions that sacrifices, and whole burnt sacrifices will be brought to Him. Rather, it reminds us of the root of prayers and offerings, our genuine hearts.
- As such, our hearts may be offered to him in all places and in all circumstances. Prayer may begin in our rooms, church and prayer areas, but it is called to carry on with us wherever we are. As St. Paul tells us: “Pray without ceasing” - 1 Thess 5:17

+ “Why do I need to endure these ‘long’ prayers and the quantity of fasting given?”

- Through prayer, we discover who we really are, as it allows us to examine ourselves in the presence of God. Prayer invites God to work on our flaws and weaknesses, until we completely become according to His image.
- Through prayer, we discover what God is truly like. Meeting Him everyday in prayer increases our relationship with Him and deepens our knowledge of Him. He draws near to us.
- Prayer is meant to express our love to God and it changes us to conform to God’s will, and also to participate in His will and decisions. (Example: Abraham's prayers regarding Lot Genesis 19:29; Jonah's prayers for Nineveh; Simon the shoemaker and all the Christians in the Mokattam miracle).
- Prayer brings forth a spirit of humility (the tax collector and the Pharisee- Luke 18:10-14).
- Saint John Chrysostom says: “Prayer is a mighty weapon, an unfailing treasure, a wealth which is never expended, a harbor that is always calm, a foundation for tranquility. Prayer is the root and source and mother of ten thousand blessings. It is more powerful than the empire itself.”



+ Is there life before death?

Consider discussing what in their life is non negotiable day to day items that are set apart in their schedules. For instance, washing their faces, brushing their teeth, setting time to get properly dressed. Whichever, often requires its dedicated time and setting.

- “Remember God more often than you breathe” - St. Gregory the Theologian
- Prayer is that which makes us human and gives us life. Without prayer, I am walking without my sustenance, without my spiritual oxygen. Too often we ask whether there is life after death. Clearly our church believes in life after death. The question is are you willing to benefit of Life? Life being God Himself.
- Time with God needs to be set apart. A space for God likewise needs to be set apart. This is to become consecrate time, consecrate prayer area. A type of heavenly life.

+ Prayer toolbox

- We know it is important to connect with God but too often we do not know how. The following are a few tools that we all have that are meant to help us grow in prayer, when approached properly.
- The Liturgical Prayer Life: “When the Holy Spirit saw that humans are not inclined to virtue, and that we do not turn to a pious life due to our inclination to pleasure, what did he do? He combined His teachings with the chanting of hymns, so that we might receive, through the beauty and sweetness of the voice, what is useful in speaking without realizing it, just as the wise doctors do, when they give bitter medicine to a patient in a cup, and cover the rim with honey.” - St. Basil
- Simple Prayer: “When you sit down to eat, pray. When you eat bread, do so thanking Him for being so generous to you. If you drink wine, be mindful of Him who has given it to you for your pleasure and as a relief in sickness. 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]
- The Agpeya: “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”- Matthew 12:34 Biblically guided prayers that shape our heart to the heart of God, using His words. Out of His words we speak, thus shaping our hearts to speak out of the abundance of His heart.
- Jesus Prayer: On this St. Macarius says: “There is no need at all to make long discourses; it is enough to stretch out one’s hands and say, ‘Lord, as you will, and as you know, have mercy.’ And if the conflict grows fiercer say, ‘Lord, help!’ He knows very well what we need and He shows us His mercy.”
- Silence & Stillness: I Kings 19 - After Elijah seeks God’s voice, he seeks him in dramatic ways yet only finds him speaking in a small still voice. God does not come down with lightning bolts or parade Himself and force our attention. He comes to us in a still small voice. You cannot hear a whisper without proper focus. You will not decipher any of the words if you are distracted or multi-tasking. To hear God and speak to Him, we need to extinguish all noises but external and internal. Learning to pray in silence and silence is also key to properly enjoying all the other prayers listed (liturgical prayers, agpeya, Jesus Prayer, Simple Prayer).

+ How to pray?

- Realize whom we are speaking to; a friend, a heavenly and loving Father, the Almighty.
- Ask God to speak to us, and reveal His will to us, have an open dialogue with God. Begin with thanksgiving and praise.
- Bring every thought captive to the presence of God: shift our focus from earth to heaven and train our minds not to be preoccupied with what bothered us during the day. Focus attention on Him and not on our sins and weaknesses.
- Set specific time for prayer daily, Agpeya prayers are helpful to stay focused.
- Have faith during the prayer that God has your best interest at heart: “But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” James 1:6.
- St. Macarius the Great: “We ought to pray neither according to any bodily habit nor with a habit of loud noise nor out of a custom of silence or on bended knees, but we ought to soberly have an attentive mind, waiting expectantly on God until he comes and visits the soul by means of all of its openings and its paths and senses.”

Theme: Service

Building Block 5: A
Lenten Journey



Lesson 5.5: Glory through suffering: The Holy Week Journey I

Objective

Understand Holy Week as a journey with our Savior, the true Bridegroom. By meditating on key events and messages each day, we can strengthen our relationship with Christ. Additionally, through the Holy pascha we may strengthen our personal intimacy with Christ by joining Him in all His life-giving sufferings.

Application

Each day go through the readings and meditate on the events. Be present with the Lord by attending the services and fasting. Use short arrow prayers to guide your thoughts throughout the day. Consider asking your spiritual guide on ascetical practices you can practice to guide you throughout the week.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 12:12-19](#), [John 6:15](#), [Matthew 21:12-13](#), [Mark 11:16](#), [John 2:14-16](#), [Genesis 3:7](#), [Matthew 24:3-25](#), [Matthew 26:15](#), [Mark 14:3-11](#), [John 13:1-17](#), [Matthew 26:20-29](#) and [John 18:28-40](#)



Liturgy: [Holy Pascha: Avechinon, Pekethronos, Fai Etaf Ent](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom Paschal Sermon](#), [St. Gregory the Theologian Paschal Sermon](#)



Other: [Meditations on Holy Week by HG Bishop Basil](#), [Holy Week Contemplations: HH Pope Shenouda III](#), [Thine is the Power: HH Pope Shenouda](#), [Glory through Suffering](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ “Glory Through Suffering”

- The Lord Jesus Christ spoke about His suffering to come as "an hour of glory." Immediately before the Lord Jesus Christ's suffering, He said, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified" (John 12:23).
- The Lord Jesus Christ did not mean the glory found within the Resurrection, but the actual suffering as "an hour of glory". The next verse in the Holy Gospel of St. John chapter 12 tells us, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24).
- The Lord following His glorious Resurrection spoke of His glory of Crucifixion to the Disciples on the road to Emmaus. "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26). How did the Lord achieve His glory? Clearly, glory was achieved through His suffering.
- St. Paul said "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10)

+ The Suffering

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Our Lord enters into Jerusalem triumphantly declaring Himself as King of Kings in all humility, riding on the colt of a donkey.	Christ cleanses the temple and curses the fig tree with leaves but no fruit. This symbolizes when sin is covered with fake righteousness and not treated.	Christ is my beloved bridegroom Who seeks to unite with me intimately; enticing me to prepare for our heavenly wedding with talk of His Second Coming.	Judas Iscariot plans to betray our Lord Christ, seeking money in exchange for His Teacher and Savior. (Matthew 26:15)	Our Lord shows us what a true teacher and leader looks like; He washes the feet of the disciples in an indescribable act of humility. (John 13:1-17)	Christ culminates His love for us at Golgotha where He assumes His royal throne: the cross. In singing the hymn "Pekethronos", the church declares that Christ is truly God and King (John 18:28-40), and His throne is the cross.
Do we accept our Lord into our lives as our King?	The fig tree reminds us of Adam and Eve who tried to cover themselves with leaves of a fig tree after they fell into	He once again rebukes spiritual prostitution and desires for me to consecrate myself to Him alone.	The church sings the hymn "Avechinon". This hymn speaks about the betrayal of Judas which he committed	The goal of the Teacher is this: He wants to make His disciples like Himself. He desires to clean us and wash us of our	"This is He who offered Himself up, as an acceptable sacrifice, on the Cross for the salvation of our race" is sung in the 6th



	sin. (Genesis 3:7)		with smooth words. This is a time to reflect on my own sins; what ways have I spoken to the Lord with words of praise, yet betrayed Him before men?	sins.	and 9th hours as a confession that the Lord was offered as the true sacrifice on behalf of all humanity.
Our Lord refused to be made king of an earthly kingdom (John 6:15), but he will gladly become King of our lives.	Am I living a double life, presenting myself as righteous and ignoring my sin?	He also speaks of the second coming as a warning for me to always be ready for the day of the Lord. (Matthew 24:3-25)	The sinful woman cares only for our Lord, using the costly spikenard oil to anoint His feet, not caring for what those around think of her. (Mark 14:3-11)	He then institutes the sacrament of the Eucharist so that we may have union with Him. (Matthew 26:20-29)	The church teaches us that in the crucifixion, true love is shown in the Him who is Truth and Love.
Instead of spreading our garments on the road, spread our hearts before Him.	Am I a fruitless tree while presenting the image of virtue?	"Lord, guide me to detach myself from all the worldly pleasures and consecrate my life to you."	She takes her most honorable member of her body (her hair) and uses it to wash His feet. We can learn so much from this act of repentance and humility.	Will I accept the Lord to wash my feet and follow His example of humility with those that I serve?	No "poor Jesus" talk: Christ has shown us through weakness what true strength is.
"Come Lord and reign. Here I am, I am Yours."	"Cleanse me from within, my Lord. Let your grace produce fruit in my life."		The actions of betrayal and greed of Judas are contrasted with the act of repentance and humility by the sinful woman. Who do I choose to follow?	Christ has shown us the true model of service. "Please let me be like You Lord. As You have loved me and humbled Yourself, let me be like You. Wash all of me."	Will I confess my sins with the thief and accept His love for me, crying out "Remember me O Lord, when You come into Your Kingdom?" and saying, "Reign in me as King o Lord"

+ Preparing for the Suffering

- In the first hour of the Monday of the Holy Pascha, we read St. Shenouda's homily, which warns us: "Brethren if we want to escape God's punishment and find mercy in His eyes, let us sit every evening alone by ourselves and search our souls..."
- St. Athanasius even declared that this period of Holy Week should be received with "longer prayers, fasts, and vigils so that we may be able to anoint our lintels with precious blood and escape the destroyer." "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not cry for Me, but cry for yourselves and your children." (Luke 23:28). "Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly." (Joel 1:14)
- "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not cry for Me, but cry for yourselves and your children." (Luke 23:28).

+ Partaking of Suffering

- This week presents us with the opportunity to join our Lord in His journey to Golgotha so that we may be raised with Him.
- The goal is to be able to say with St. Gregory the Theologian, "Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him; yesterday I died with Him; today I am quickened with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him; today I rise with Him." (Homily on Pascha)
- Our Mother the Church presents us with this opportunity to step out of time and join our Lord in all His sufferings.
- St. Paul said to the Romans, "if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17)
- "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him but to suffer for His sake" (Phil. 1:29).
- Can we say with St. Paul "With Christ I have been crucified; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20)
- The more we put into this week, the more we will benefit. Rather than just going through the motions this Week, let us treat this as an opportunity to meditate on our Savior and experience His love for us so we may in turn strengthen our love for Him.

Theme: Service

Building Block 5: A Lenten Journey



Lesson 5.6: From Darkness to Light: Bright Saturday

Objective

Bright Saturday as a transition from death to life.

Application

Attending this night (without napping) - in spite of staying awake and tired- brings a joyous, peaceful, and very personal experience with the Lord who gave us salvation. Let's try to make it a practice to spend some nights throughout the year, praising God for His salvation (for example: Saturday Tasbeha and vespers).

Bright Sunday should be a constant reminder to us and others that eternal life awaits us at the end of our earthly life. This should be a true consolation, when we face the death of someone we love. We shift our thoughts from sorrow and pain to the realization that our loved ones indeed transitioned from death to eternal life.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Rev. 3:21,22](#), [1Pet 2:24](#), [Gal 3:13-14](#), [Rom 5:10](#)



Liturgy: [Litany for the Departed](#)



Patristics: [Bright Saturday "The Silence of the Earth" by St. Epiphanius of Cyprus](#)



Story: [The story of St. Susanna](#)



Other: Mikhail, Deacon Albair Gamal, The Essentials in the Deacon's Service, "[Night of the Apocalypse](#)", [HG Bishop Youssef](#), [Legacy Curriculum GII Fast W6](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Conflict

- Bright (Joyous) Saturday is the night between Good Friday and the Sunday of Resurrection. The night of the great Friday is called Apocalypse, meaning Revelation in Greek, where the Book of Revelation is read. The church celebrates God restoring all those who died in the hope of the resurrection to Paradise. This the time when the Lord descended to Hades and released the righteous and faithful captives that died in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. Salvation was accomplished and the Divine Liturgy can then be celebrated.
- Romans were in the habit of leaving the bodies of those crucified on the crosses, to be eaten by vultures, wild animals or to decompose. The Jews, however, have a stern command that the body shall not hang overnight on the wood (Deut 21:23) but must be brought down and buried the same day of crucifixion.
- The curtains are changed from black to white as the church spends the night with Christ in the tomb with a combination of midnight praises, prophecies, and reading the book of Revelations.
- Joyous Saturday is the only Saturday of the year on which the Church observes fasting. We are in a state of mourning, because Christ is still in the tomb. But we are also rejoicing at the salvation from death, the resurrection of the Lord, and giving us eternal life with Him.
- This is why the hymns during this night are chanted in both the mournful and annual tunes. The church mourns the passions of the Lord Jesus who died for our sins and was buried in the tomb. Meanwhile, the congregation rejoices at our salvation from death. We find, therefore, that the hymns on this night are chanted in the mournful and annual tunes.
- The Night of Apocalypse is divided into eight major parts: Midnight Praises, Prayer of Prime Hour, Morning Raising of Incense, Prayers of the Third and Sixth Hours, Revelation, Prayers of the Ninth Hour, the Divine Liturgy, and the Prayers of the Eleventh Hour.

+ From Darkness to Light

- The death on the cross reconciles us with God His Father, releases us from the curse of the Law (Col 1:19-20, Eph 2:14-17, Rom 5:10) and the death penalty after we (Adam) breached and disobeyed God's law (Gal 3:10-14). Likewise, we die to our sins by His death, and live through His life (1 Peter 2:24).
- This brings us joy, yet the expense being His death pains us. Nonetheless, we are thankful for the grace by which we are transformed.
- In this night, there are three processions which are symbolic of: (1) the joy and happiness of entering Paradise, (2) Preaching to the world that the gates of Paradise have been opened, and (3) Saints departing from Hades and entering Paradise.
- Over the course of the night, 7 candles and 7 oil lamps are lit during Revelations. A Cross is placed in its midst resembling Christ who walks



among the seven lampstands (Revelations 1).

- At the end of Revelation the deacons chant “Lord have mercy” in the great tune while the priest anoints the congregation with oil of the Apocalypse.
- This same oil is used during the Rite of Baptism and is used for exorcizing any demons that may be in the catechumen, since they are going from darkness to light.

+ A Night of Praise & Preparation:

- The Midnight Praises on the Night of Apocalypse are expanded to include all the praises of the prophets of the Old Testament. These praises are significant in that they speak of one specific topic: the salvation of the Lord.
 1. We pray Psalm 151: just as David saved his people from mighty Goliath, God came to save us from Satan and his dark powers.
 2. The first praise of the Israelites, when they crossed the Red Sea and were free from the Egyptian slavery to remind us that we now have freedom from the slavery of sin. (Exodus 15)
 3. The prayer of Jonah (Jonah 2:2-10): just like Jesus stayed in the tomb for three days, He will rise and lift us up from our old ways of life.
 4. We read the account of Susanna who experienced unfairness but was saved. Just like God restores our life and saves us from the snares of the devil. In the story, two elders, who wanted to commit sin with her, of adultery, wrongfully accuse Susannah. The people then believing the words of the elders sought to kill her. Daniel, being moved by the Spirit of God, speaks with the elders separately and reveals to the people who would condemn Susannah that the elders bear false witness against her and Daniel then reveals the truth.
 5. This story is symbolic of the death of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by false witnesses and how He rose from the dead after that, much like Susannah was to face death from the false witness of the elders but she was brought back to life. In this way, Susannah is symbolic of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Also as Daniel saved Susannah from death, so also the Lord Jesus Christ saved us from the sentence of death.
 6. Hannah’s prayer (1 Sam 2:1-11), who was barren but God gave her a son (Samuel). God is able to turn barren souls to be fruitful in his service.
 7. Habakkuk praising God on raising him up (Habakkuk 3:2-19)
 8. The praise of the three young men in the pit of fire, reminding us that the fire of tribulations on earth cannot deter us from praising and worshiping Him. Our faith, hope, and daily dependence are only in Him, our Savior and Salvation.
 9. The Virgin Mary’s Song of Praise is read, the Praise of Zechariah the Priest, and the Prayer of Simeon the Elderly: all to point out the joy of God’s salvation to us.
- The reading of these praises is also symbolic of the fact that the prophecies regarding salvation have now been fulfilled. During these praises, there are deacons who chant from within the altar and there are other deacons who chant from outside of the altar. The deacons chanting from within are symbolic of the Saints who entered Paradise and those who stand outside represent the congregation, the people in the church participating with the Saints in praising God.
- The Book of Revelation is also read: the victorious who shall inherit the Kingdom sing the song of the Lamb. They were “standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Rev. 15:2,3). It sets our eyes on the heavenly Jerusalem, our life in heaven. God accepted the shame and agony of the death on the Cross to take His people from pain and death to everlasting joy and eternal life with Him.
- The night ends with the liturgy, “the Supper of the Wedding of the Lamb- Revelations 19:9), the Prayer of Reconciliation, where we receive communion: being united with God and having His Spirit working in us.

+ Why do we have a Liturgy early Saturday morning on Bright Saturday if Jesus did not resurrect before Sunday morning?

If Jesus is still in the tomb, how can we take communion? What is the reason for this specific Liturgy on Saturday?

- The Church dims all the lights as of the sixth hour when the Lord was nailed to the cross on Great Friday. However, in commemoration of the Lord’s death at the ninth hour, the lights go back on as it is written in the accounts of the Holy Gospel that the sun was darkened from the sixth to the ninth hour. This is because salvation was accomplished by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ at the ninth hour.
- After the prophecies of the twelfth hour, i.e., Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet, the veil of the sanctuary is opened revealing the triumphant Church, symbolizing those in paradise as in the inner sanctuary while the struggling Church responds with the doxology outside of the sanctuary.



- This is the time when the Lord descended to Hades and released the righteous and faithful captives that died in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. Salvation was accomplished and the Divine Liturgy can then be celebrated.
- The Liturgy is called the "Supper of the Wedding of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). This Divine Liturgy is unique in that we do not pray the "Prayer of Reconciliation" because the Lord Jesus Christ must trample death by His death (1 Corinthians 15) and death was not yet abolished at this point. Although we do not pray the Commemoration of the Saints on Covenant Thursday, we do pray the Commemoration of the Saints on Bright Saturday because Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has opened the gates of Paradise.
- Thus, Bright Saturday is a transition from death to life and the Divine Liturgy and partaking of Holy Communion are a proclamation and confession of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Theme: Service

Building Block 5: A Lenten Journey



Lesson 5.7: Transformed through the Resurrection

Objective

Effects of believing and surrendering to the power of the Resurrection

Application

Pray and focus during the joyous 50 days of that the light of Resurrection comes to transform Covetousness/Materialism, Deviousness/Lack of Boundaries, Selfishness & Carelessness.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 6:51](#), [Genesis 3:24](#), [Matthew 4:11](#), [1 Corinthians 15:5-8](#), [Rev. 21:22-27](#), [Matthew 27:52-53](#), [Ezekiel 32:8](#), [Colossians 1:13](#), [Matthew 28:2](#), [Matt 17:22-23](#), [Mk 9:30-32](#)



Liturgy: [The Resurrection Enactment](#)



Patristics: [Paschal Sermon of St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: The disciples question the Resurrection



Other: [Spiritual Meaning of the Resurrection](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#), [SUS Legacy Curriculum](#) [G11](#), [G12](#), [Mighty Champions Article on the Resurrection](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Resurrection Enactment

- When the Resurrection enactment became part of the Divine Liturgy of the Resurrection feast, is not known.
- The priest or the bishop stands inside the sanctuary symbolically guarding the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, (John 6:51) just as the Cherubim stood in the Garden of Eden guarding the tree of life, (Genesis 3:24). Two deacons stand outside the sanctuary with the resurrection icon. This signifies the angels that accompanied the Lord Jesus Christ during His life on earth ministering to and serving Him (Matthew 4:11).
- After this dialogue, the doors of the sanctuary open just as the doors of the Paradise were opened; and the lights are turned on symbolizing the light of the Resurrection that has enlightened the whole cosmos.
- After that, the procession goes three times around the nave of the Church symbolizing the apparitions of the Lord Jesus Christ after His holy resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5-8) and the apparition of some of the saints after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and their entry to the Holy City (Matthew 27:52-53).
- At the end, the procession goes again inside the sanctuary for one more time around the altar signifying the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Heavens forty days after His holy resurrection, the resurrection of all the believers and their entry to the Kingdom of Heavens on the last day.
- This wonderful rite has its deep spiritual meaning too. The sanctuary represents the believer "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). When a believer shuts his doors before the Lord, he will live in spiritual darkness (Ezekiel 32:8) but when he accepts the Lord Jesus Christ, Who rose from the dead, this person will be transferred by Him from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13).

+ "Slain from the foundation of the world" - Rev 13:8

- God's plan for salvation was institution prior to creation, and was put into effect from the moment His only Son was incarnate. He became flesh in order to bless our nature and renew our being by His life and holiness. He intended to suffer death on our behalf and ascended, for He is the Lord of life. Through His resurrection, we have been granted resurrection.
- Through the Resurrection, God seeks to shake the heart in order to roll away the evil hurdles and tribulations that suffocate it. In Matthew 28:2, a great earthquake occurred at dawn on the day of His resurrection. This announces the wonderful power contained in the resurrection of our Lord. This earthquake shook the gates and stronghold of the tomb. Every repentant feels the power of the resurrected Christ shake his

being and uproot evil as he offers repentance. This power produces a new living person who shakes off the pangs of death (death due to sin).

- He will reach all willing hearts. There is no insurmountable obstacle. Christ, our Lord, arose and the sealing stone remained on the tomb. He entered into the disciples meeting place though the doors were locked. He is the God of Glory who challenges all earthly powers, obstacles, and chains. In spite of the plots of the Jews and the seals of the Romans, Christ rose. In the same way He resurrects His children from death caused by their own sins and their apathy. He strengthens them to oppose the strong evil currents and deceptive temptations. Through such power, St. Athanasius challenged the heretics of the world around him vis-à-vis his steadfastness concerning true evangelical faith, which teaches the glory and deity of Christ the Son of God.
- Experiencing the effects of the resurrection in one's life, is reassuring of the hope in the resurrection of the dead and the eternal life to come. The Lord arose in His glorified body. This is not fictitious; He said: —Feel Me, yet it was an extraordinary glorious resurrection (for He entered while the doors were closed). This is not only a clear indication of Christ's divinity but it is a definite guarantee of the glory of His kingdom and a true proof of the reality of eternal life which the Lord promised to His children — Where I am, there will you be also.

+ Powerful Effects

- A New Life: The resurrection of the Lord from the dead brought joy and happiness back to the believers after the Lord abolished the sting of death, bruised the devil and granted the church the grace of salvation. His crucifixion and resurrection has given us faith and hope in the Son of God as stated in Galatians 2: 20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me".
- Confidence against Death: "Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness. Let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shown forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free" - St. John Chrysostom
- Eternal Glory: When Christ appears in glory, we will appear with Him in glory too. What a wonderful thing to look for. (Rev 21:22-27)
- Restored Image of God: The time came for the Lord Jesus Christ to give His Spirit, the devil came near Him trying to get hold of His Spirit, but Jesus tied him and brought him down to Hades. Then Jesus brought the souls of those who died in faith (1 Corinthians 2:15, Philipians 3:7, Psalm 47:11, Psalm 68:1-3, Revelation 5:12). By this resurrection, the Lord Jesus abolished the sting of death, which is sin. Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and because of this sin, death spread to all men. Because of one man's trespass death reigned over man, but with the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His resurrection death was abolished and the Image of God was restored. The Resurrection of Our Lord has enabled us to "Put on a new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him (Colossians 3:10). Thus, the Resurrection restores to us the Image of God that we lost due to sin

+ "I Wouldn't believe in Christ if His tomb wasn't empty"

- Too often, the general perception of Christianity goes along those lines: "I don't know if I really believe God exists. I mean, I've just believed what you and the servants and the priests have been telling me. But I'm not sure of it myself."
- Christ revived Lazarus, proclaimed that He will destroy and rebuild the temple in 3 days, that He was the manna in the wilderness that gave life and sustenance, that He is life itself, and even proclaims His own Resurrection (Matt 17:22-23, Mk 9:30-32). Christ rose from the dead, proving that He was God, and everything that He said about himself was true. All these, yet people still doubt Him.
- Christ had more followers than just the Twelve, but eventually most left, especially when He started saying that people have to feed on Him and eat His body and blood to live forever. "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?'" - 1 John 6:66-67
- Some stayed, saw His life, witnessed the miracles and transformations and became convinced as St. Peter proclaimed: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Yet, despite this conviction, once Christ was arrested, doubt was revived. How can He be arrested, look weak, be condemned? All was lost. Fear reigned: "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the disciples had gathered together and locked the doors of the place because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders." - John 20:19
- How did the disciples suddenly change? These disciples proved to us to be normal in their logic, and normal in their response. They saw the person they thought was God arrested and killed. And like any normal person, when they heard the news that He resurrected, it was not sufficient for them to just believe the news told them by Mary Magdalene. Peter and John ran to the tomb to verify it for themselves!
- They "both ran together, and the other disciple [John] outran Peter and came to the tomb first."9 And after seeing the empty tomb, against all odds, they "saw and believed."



Building Block 6: Evangelism Prep

Theme: Service

Lesson 6.1: What is Christian Apologetics?

Building Block 6:
Evangelizing with
Apologetics



Objective

To understand the significance of Christian apologetics and the value of our role. To give guidance on how to articulate reasons for our Christian hope.

Application

Did Jesus use Apologetics in His ministry? Find examples in the Bible

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Peter 3:15](#); [Acts 18:27-28, 22:1, 25:16](#); [1 Corinthians 9:3](#); [2 Corinthians 7:11](#); [2 Timothy 4:16](#); [Philippians 1:7, 16-17](#)



Liturgy: [Anaphora](#)



Patristics: [Tertullian](#), [Origen](#), [Justin Martyr](#)



Story: C.S. Lewis, St. Augustine, or, Anba Pakhomius



Other: [Timeless Truth in Truthless Times - George Bassilios](#),
Videos of George Bassilios on Apologetics: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [How to?](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is Apologetics?

- The word for apologetics comes from the Greek word apologia, which is used in 1 Peter 3:15, and refers to giving a reason or reply for our faith. "It does not mean apologizing for one's faith."
- In Greek, it means a defense, as in a court of law. Christian apologetics, therefore, involves making a case (or defense) for the truth of the Christian faith.
- Christian apologetics has taken many forms over the centuries, starting with Paul the Apostle in the early church and Patristics writers such as Origen, St. Augustine of Hippo, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian.
- It is defined as "the branch of theology that is concerned with defending or proving the truth of Christian doctrines". Apologetics is a subdivision of Christian theology.

+ Why Defend Our Faith?

- In every generation, people face the challenges, questions, and concerns of the gospel message of the Christian faith. Christians are commanded to defend their faith, 1 Peter 3:15.
- If someone asks you why you are Christian and you based your answer on your own experience and faith only without offering true evidence and facts, your answer will not satisfy that person. Evidence is essential in defending our faith.
- Apologetics helps others develop an intellectual and reasonable examination of the Christian message. It helps discern truth from error, 1 John 4:6, and good from evil, Hebrews 5:14 which in turn strengthens the faith of Christians and attracts others to the gospel.
- Strengthening our own faith, our faith is founded on facts and truth. Many Christians are comfortable in their faith and do not feel a need to support and confirm it with evidence. However, many do desire the affirmation of apologetics to strengthen their faith. Jesus still provided Thomas with the evidence he desired (John 20:24-27), although, He commends those who believe without 'seeing' (John 20:29)
- Obedience: Defending our faith is out of obedience to God's will. Refusal to give a reason for faith is disobedience to God (1 Peter 3:15). By defending the truths of God, Christians defend His honor and name, thereby bringing God glory.
- Helping: People deserve to hear and understand the case for Christianity. When those who do not believe raise intellectual objections against our faith, we ought to offer them concrete, verifiable answers that support the authenticity of Christianity. Christian apologetics aims to address the arguments and intellectual barriers that people may have when it comes to considering the truth of Christianity.
- Correct: Today, under the pretext of gnosis, the heretics set themselves up against the holy Church of Christ, and multiply the volumes of their commentaries in which they pretend to interpret the evangelical and apostolic writings. If we ourselves keep silence, if we do not



oppose them with true and sound doctrines, they will attract famished souls who, in the absence of healthy nourishment, will seize upon these forbidden foods which are indeed impure and abominable... In your own case, it was because you could not find masters capable of teaching you a higher doctrine, and because your love for Jesus could not abide an unreasoned and common faith, hence you formerly gave yourself up to those doctrines which subsequently you condemned and rejected, as was right. (Origen to Ambrose. Cited by Coptic Orthodox Church Network. 1998-2014. "Origen's Writings." Web. Retrieved May 15, 2017 from <http://www.copticchurch.net/topics/patrology/schoolofalex2/chapter02.html>); "There are, and therefore there were, many who come forward in the name of Jesus and teach both to speak and act impious and blasphemous things. And we name these people after the men from whom each doctrine and opinion had its origin ... We have nothing in common [with these men] since we know them to be atheists, ungodly, unrighteous, and sinful; confessors of Jesus in name only rather than worshipers of him." Justin Martyr ([Dialogue with Trypho 35](#)); "We ... are not permitted to cherish any doctrine after our own will, nor to choose that which another person has introduced from their own private fancy. In the Lord's apostles we possess our authority. Even they did not choose to introduce anything from themselves, but faithfully delivered to the nations the discipline which they had received from Christ. If, therefore, even an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel, he would be called accursed by us." Tertullian ([Prescription Against Heretics 6](#))

- We pray the Anaphora in the liturgy saying, "O You, The Being, master, Lord, God of Truth, being before the ages and reigning forever; who dwells in the highest and looks upon the lowly; who has created the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is therein; the Father of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ,"
- Give an example of a convert, perhaps C.S. Lewis or St. Augustine who were non-believers and attacking Christianity and then became very strong believers.

+ Apologetics vs Evangelism

- Evangelism implies proclamation of the gospel message throughout the world. It is telling others the good news of the Gospel, the plan of salvation, the kingdom of God, and it is also to invite the nonbelievers to be members of the Body of Christ. The focus is the good news of the Gospel.
- Evangelism involves also caring for the poor and needy, praying for healing and other needs, deeds of kindness Evangelism is speaking and living the gospel message.
- Apologetics is quite literally a defense of the faith. In every generation, people face the challenges, questions, and concerns of the gospel message of the Christian faith. Christians are commanded to defend their faith, 1 Peter 3:15
- Apologetics helps others develop an intellectual and reasonable examination of the Christian message.
- Apologetics addresses everything from the existence of God to the reliability of the Old and New Testaments
- In addition, apologetics can involve logical arguments, historical debates, philosophical discussions, explanatory differences.
- However, whether in time of the apostles or in culture of now, defense of the gospel and the gospel message itself share at the core the grace and truth of Jesus Christ.
- It is not so much how the two differ but rather how they are alike in the goal of bringing people to know the Lord.

+ Using Apologetics

- The word appears eight times in the New Testament. Sometimes it is used generally, (Acts 22:1, 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11; 2 Timothy 4:16). Other times it is explicitly connected to a defense of the Gospel (Philippians 1:7, 16-17; 1 Peter 3:15)
- The book of Acts gives us a closer look at Christian apologetics in action within the early church, Acts 17:2-4
- An example found in the early church is Stephen's defense of the Gospel in Acts chapter 7. Stephen uses people's presuppositions to introduce Christ. He reasons from Scripture to confront his audience's false beliefs about obtaining the right standing before God. Like many in our culture, Stephen's audience had preconceived ideas about the Bible, holding them back from faith in Christ. This example serves to show us that Scripture was used to clarify people's theological confusion in the early church.
- Peter's speech at Pentecost is like Stephen's defense, but distinct in that Peter uses Biblical prophecy to validate Christ. During the first century, many Jews had messianic expectations that did not fit with Christ's death. Speaking to the crowd in Jerusalem, Peter cites the books of Joel and Psalms to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah they were waiting for. Here we find yet another form of rational argument that was used to authenticate Jesus' ministry.
- 1 Corinthians provides another example of Paul giving evidence for belief in Christ. False teaching seemed to follow Paul wherever he went. After Paul left Corinth, people in the church began to deny the resurrection. Addressing this issue, Paul presents three arguments defending its reality.
- Philippians 1:7, St. Paul speaks of his mission as "defense and confirming the gospel." He adds in verse 17, "knowing that I am appointed for



the defense of the gospel."

- St. Paul makes Apologetics a requirement for church leaders. "holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict" Titus 1:9
- "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth," 2 Timothy 2:24-25
- New Testament authors also teach that we should use rational arguments to defend our faith. An example is in 2 Corinthians 5:11, Paul says, "knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." In the larger context of the passage, Paul is talking about being an ambassador for Christ in this world. What Paul is trying to communicate is that a good ambassador must be persuasive.
- Scripture is filled with examples to learn how to defend our faith using rational arguments.

+ How do we defend our faith? Art of Apologetics

- The great Christian writer Augustine of Hippo was a professor of rhetoric and a master of the spoken word. He argued that rhetoric, the discipline of persuasive verbal communication, could be used with the wrong motives and toward wrong ends. "The rules of eloquence," he wrote, "can be used in connection with true principles as well as with false, they are not themselves culpable, but the perversity of ill-using them is culpable." Augustine argued that Christians need to be guided by the Bible's ethical standards to make sure that persuasion has the right motives and objectives.
- As in all things, the greatest way to share God's message is to address our neighbors as God does. Just as Christ used parables to give His message a touching presence and simplicity, the apologist must communicate in a way that speaks to the "whole man," both head and heart.
- When Peter wrote 1 Peter to the church, he didn't write to an individual, and he wasn't writing to just a very narrow geographical region. He wrote 1 Peter 1:1-2 to the church that was being scattered as a result of persecution. He's addressing two universal commands in this verse.
- First, "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts " If you are a Christian, you must live in obedience to that command.
- And number two, "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;"
- If you read 1 Peter 3:8 and then all the way through down to the end of that section, you'll see that that section is basically talking about holiness. It is talking about lifestyle.
- Know your role: We need to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. We should be ready to give an answer when people ask us - (what do we do when people aren't asking?) The assumption seems to be that your life, the quality of your life, is prompting questions. We have all these commands about how we should live. The question is, are we living that life? What does my life actually look like? Do people look at my life and say, "There is something very different here. What is it?" So, the overall context is a command to the church, the specific context is one teaching holiness, how we live.
- Know your faith, "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," Apologetics is not an intellectual exercise only. It is a spiritual discipline. 2 Corinthians 10:3-4, says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds,". What is being assumed here in Peter, and what is clearly being taught in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, is that the spiritual battle involves the mind. Are we prepared for it? Are we ready? Can we engage at that level? Now just because it involves the mind, it's no less spiritual. This is why if we turn apologetics into pure philosophy, we've lost it even before we've started.
- How do we do Apologetics? With "meekness and gentleness" 1 Peter 3:15, season the message with love. Our lives serve as a powerful apologetic to the truth of Christianity. We have probably heard the expression, "You may be the only Bible that someone ever reads ". Live your apologetics. Apologetics enhances the testimony of our lives, which is most likely what non-Christians will see first.

Theme: Service

Building Block 6: Evangelizing with Apologetics



Lesson 6.2: Despite the Evidence, Why do some Reject God?

Objective

To understand the reasons people reject the belief in God and how these issues may be addressed.

Application

Be honest with yourself; if you have doubts, address them through prayer and diligently seek the truth. Approach a Priest or servant if you are struggling in your faith as they can guide you. Lastly, ensure that we are not the stumbling blocks that push people away from the church, and ultimately God. Reach out to someone you have not seen in a while and offer them true Christ-like love.

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Corinthians 4:3-4](#), [Romans 12:2](#), [John 15:19](#)



Liturgy: [Litany of the Catechumens](#)



Patristics: [The Confessions of Augustine, 5.24](#), [Ward, Benedicta](#), trans. [The Sayings of the Desert Fathers](#)



Story: [St. Antony Questioning God](#)



Other: [Timeless Truth in Truthless Times - George Bassilios](#); [HG Bishop Youssef on Challenges to our Faith](#); [Coptic Orthodox Answers: Response to Jordan Peterson and the Moral Weight of Belief in God](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Reasons for Rejecting God

- There are many reasons why we may struggle with our faith/belief in God, and for some people these ultimately push them away and they reject belief in God or are never able to overcome these obstacles. These struggles can be broken into three categories; intellectual, emotional/psychological, and willful reasons.

+ Intellectual reasons:

- Existential Challenges
 1. People often have existential questions that they feel do not get answered. Some of the questions include:
 2. Why is there pain and suffering in the world? Why is there evil or injustice? What is the meaning of life? Do we have free-will?
 3. These questions are important, and we should not feel guilty for having them. Many of the saints before us have struggled with these same points and they found answers through seeking the truth and trust in God. Answers are given gradually but it will always begin with coming to know who you are trusting.
 4. For example, St. Antony asked questions like how is it that some die when they are young, while others drag on to extreme old age? Why are there those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are they just in need? The Lord answered him and said 'Antony, keep your attention on yourself; these things are according to the judgment of God, and it is not to your advantage to know anything about them.'
- Dogmatic/Doctrinal Challenges
 1. Some may struggle with some of the concepts in Christian theology or different doctrines/beliefs that the church holds. Yet, God promises "Seek and you shall find, ask and it will be given to you" It only requires someone to genuinely seek and ask questions to the right individuals.
 2. Take for example St. Augustine who battled with doubts for many years before his conversion. He spent 10 years as a Manichean before his conversion to Christianity at the age of 31. It took him many years of struggling with various doctrines but he was continually seeking for the truth. He was receiving counsel from St. Ambrose and learned from his explanations on scripture.
 3. St. Augustine says about listening to St. Ambrose preach "these things (Christian doctrines) also had begun to appear to me to be defensible; and the Catholic faith, for which I had fancied nothing could be said against the attacks of the Manichaeans, I now conceived might be maintained without presumption; especially after I had heard one or two parts of the Old Testament



explained." (The Confessions of Augustine, 5.24)

- Legislative/Political Challenges

1. It can often be difficult to believe in the teachings of the church when they can sometimes be so counter-cultural. Laws get passed that go completely against the Christian faith leading many to believe that the Christian worldview and belief in God is outdated.
2. We should remember that the Church is not of the world (John 15:19) and we are not called to conform to different movements of the world, "but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2)
3. Even if the world calls Christian beliefs and values things like backwards or old fashioned, remember that St. Antony once said "A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, they will attack him saying, 'You are mad, you are not like us'"

- Secularization Challenges

1. Nowadays our world is becoming more and more secular, and people feel that God has no place in our society.
2. Claims that God is no longer needed and that religion is just some old fashioned method of making us feel better are everywhere.
3. With the rise of Humanism and Postmodernism, people claim that God is no longer needed.
4. These issues will be discussed further later in the building block, but it should be noted that these secularized theories are inconsistent.
5. If society wants to remove the idea of God, then it should be ready to also do away with all the moral rules that have come as a product of humanity's belief in God.

+ Emotional / Psychological reasons

- Trauma

1. One of the most common reasons people reject belief in God is due to personal experiences.
2. They may have experienced trauma from someone in their church or they may have never felt welcomed in the community.
3. These are real issues and they are perhaps the most tragic reason for someone to not enter/desire a relationship with God.
4. We must always remember that "the church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints". This is not to brush aside the sufferings someone may have experienced, but it is important to remember that the actions of the members of the body of Christ do not always align with the person of Christ. Christ is precisely there for the forgotten, broken & forsaken.

- Materialism

1. Sometimes we get so caught up in the things of this world that we lose the desire for the creator.
2. We live in a society that teaches that material things are the source of happiness, and this removes the desire for the knowledge of God.
3. Material goods often distract us from the important questions in life that need to be answered. We are driven towards apathy and do not even engage in a search for God.

+ Willful reasons

4. Lastly, some people may reject God because they feel as though it is too great of a burden.
5. Belief in God, especially in the God of Christianity can seem extremely daunting. People fear that belief in this God will mean that their life must change drastically and that the moral weight of belief will be too much to bear.
6. For example, [Dr. Jordan Peterson](#) in his struggle to commit to belief in God says that he is almost terrified that God may exist; a belief that is shared by many.
7. This apparent moral weight is daunting enough of a reason to make people choose to not believe in God.
8. We must understand that the God of Christianity does not expect perfection from us in order to enter into a relationship with us. He desires to perfect us in Him, through our relationship with Him.
9. At the end of the day, grace is required from the Lord for us to develop faith in Him, and this grace comes through prayer. Our church teaches this in the Litany of the Catechumens. The priest prays, "Grant them that they may know the certainty of the words with which they have been instructed."

Theme: Service

Lesson 6.3: Morality & Tolerance

Building Block 6:
Evangelizing with
Apologetics



Objective

To understand that there is a moral absolute that points us to God. Moral relativism is not logically sustainable.

Application

Elaborate on the below logical inconsistencies, a. Relativists can't blame others for doing anything wrong, b. Relativists can't address the problem of evil, c. Relativists can't complain of unfairness

References and Resources



Scripture: [Isaiah 5:20, Judges 17:6](#)



Liturgy: [Litany of the Assemblies](#)



Patristics: [St. Ephraim the Syrian](#)



Story: The greatest example is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, The Nazis



Other: [Timeless Truth in Truthless Times - George Bassilios](#)
[Morality Morality and Tolerance Part 1](#), [Part 2 Postmodernism](#), [Part 3](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Moral Relativism

The following are some statements of postmodernism thoughts. Consider showing the statement and polling the level of agreement of each student to the statement.

- “No one has the right to tell me what is right and what’s wrong.”; “I cannot tell you what is right and what is wrong. You must decide that for yourself.”; “It is wrong to try to impose your morals on someone else.”; “I have the right to do whatever I want as long as I am not hurting anyone else.”; “That is your opinion, who is to say who’s to judge another statement. You should not judge them.”; “There is no absolute truth. What is true for you is not true for me.”

Note at the end that most of these statements have logical inconsistencies and are self-refuting: You cannot know the truth unless you actually know that no one can know the truth. “You can not judge” statement is a judgment. St. Paul speaks in second Timothy chapter 4: 3-4 about false doctrine: For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears they will head up for themselves teachers and they will turn their ears away from the truth. We must discern false teachings and ask questions. We can not accept theories and take them for granted, but rather: we must expose false assumptions by asking questions.

- Moral relativism advocates that every moral value is based on the individual and it is relative to the individual. This means that moral relativism makes it impossible to criticize the behavior of others, because relativism ultimately denies such a thing as wrongdoing.
- Relativism renders the notion of praise or blame as meaningless: there is nothing good and nothing bad because everything is relative.
- Moral relativism presents several options of relative Truth
 1. People think all truth is relative to the individual
 2. Moral absolutes: God is absolute and unchanging by nature
 3. Moral relativism: Can relativism be true? Measurement is impossible without absolutes
 4. Morality and culture: Is morality a cultural construct?
 5. Morality and evolution; can you explain morality by a biological process (evolution)?
 6. Logical inconsistencies (presented as an application)
- If fairness or justice is only my values or your values, then it has no universal authority over both of us. It could not be enforced nor implemented. So if relativists or those who advocate moral relativism were serious about cultural morality, they would applaud for example the Nazis for asserting their own culture values and not judging the Nazis actions based on other cultures. But that's not the case we know that the Nazis and what they've done were wrong.



+ Relativity demands Tolerance

- Tolerance: The definition of tolerance is recognizing and respecting the options, practices, or behavior of others.
- This implies that:
 1. tolerance demands recognition, and
 2. it calls for respect.
- Tolerance has now become our society's moral standards. If there is anything that is absolute in society, it is that we ought to be tolerant to everything, every religion, every ideal, and every behavior. This claim leads to the conclusion that there is no such a thing as wrong, and it is very intolerant to label action, ideas as wrong.
- The problem with this logic is: if you are intolerant of someone who is intolerant, you violated your own principle. That is precisely the reason why the notion of tolerance does not stand the test of logic. If you are intolerant of my intolerance, then you have not practiced tolerance.
- The logical flaw in this concept/the logical fallacy here is: if you tolerate those who are intolerant, you keep your principle of “tolerance” but sacrifice your responsibility to that principle.
- Tolerance implies that we need to put up with something that is not liked. If I agree with you, I do not have to tolerate you. Because if I like everything you say and do, then there's not really tolerance – because there is agreement.
- This means that the notion of tolerance implies a pre-existing notion of disagreement. However, If you disagree, then you violate the whole principle of tolerance because tolerance says everything is right because it's all relative to the individual.
- So tolerance in a way implies that I am disagreeing, but I am going to tolerate you, nonetheless. But why do you disagree if everything is right. This is logically unworkable and unlivable.

+ Christianity and the definition of tolerance

Consider debating: What should we tolerate and what should we not tolerate as Christians?

- The Lord Jesus Christ was the most tolerant of all. He accepted sinners, adulterers, everyone, all races, all colors, all ethnicity, and all backgrounds he accepted.
- We need to have a distinction between people versus actions. We are called to tolerate people, but we are also called not to tolerate all actions. We love, tolerate, and accept everyone because everyone is created in the image of Christ. However we ought not to love to tolerate, accept and agree with all actions and ideals. I love you but I may, but I may not necessarily agree with what you do.
- GK Chesterton, a Christian philosopher, said tolerance is the virtue of the man without convictions.
- St. Ephraim says: “Love for neighbor without love for God is like a plant without roots.”
- We are called to “tremble at the Commandment of God” - Ezra 10:3

+ “Tremble at the Commandment of God” - Ezra 10:3

- For example, society maintains that we are to be tolerant of homosexuality, and that it is healthy for society, and those opposing it are demonizing these individuals.
- Satan is crafty. He uses “devices,” “wiles,” and “snares” (2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:26) to distort people’s thinking. He is a clever director, advancing his agenda by disguising the immoral with a righteous illusion. For which we pray: “Satan and all his evil powers, trample and humiliate them under our feet speedily... show them their weakness speedily”
- The premise of accepting diversity is based on a claim that everyone should be compassionate, tolerant, and accepting of diversity. As homosexuality is one form of diversity, then accordingly, homosexuality should be accepted/approved; to fail to do so is intolerant and divisive. The Bible clearly teaches that God loves every person, and He requires Christians to do the same.
- However, such statements, out of contexts can then be extended to be applied to murder, stealing, drug dealing, and every other illegal action. Does that make the laws of the land intolerant and divisive?
- Opposing homosexuality, abortion, and a host of other social and moral evils is not incompatible with compassion and tolerance. One can oppose and punish murder while still maintaining compassion for the murderer. Can I really deem myself more compassionate than God? .
- “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48)



Theme: Service

Lesson 6.4: Does God Exist?

Building Block 6:
Evangelizing with
Apologetics



Objective

To understand the existence of God is a question that can be approached through logical arguments and evidence. Ultimately we must come to know God ourselves and by seeking truth, not our own truth.

Application

What arguments are there against God's existence? Try to refute them using the arguments learned in the lesson. If you don't understand a claim or argument, ask questions and do proper research to find the Truth.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Romans 1:20](#); [1 Corinthians 8:6](#); [Hebrews 11:6](#); [Jeremiah 29:13](#) [Acts 14:17](#), [Genesis 1:31](#), [1 Timothy 2:4](#), [Jeremiah 29:13](#)



Liturgy: [Prayer of Reconciliation, the Orthodox Creed](#), the Second Hoos



Patristics: St. Basil the Great, [Conversations on the Psalms](#), 29; [St Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lecture \(5.10\)](#), [St. Augustine](#)



Story: The American astronaut James Benson Irwin



Other: [Does God exist](#), [Pascal's Wager](#), [Who is God to you?](#), [Timeless Truth in Truthless Times - George Bassilios](#); [Article: Does God Exist?](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Why investigate the existence of God?

- The existence or non-existence of God is the most important question we humans are ever asked to answer. If God does exist, a significant set of consequences follow, which should affect every day and every moment of our earthly existence.
- In an increasingly atheistic world, every Christian must be ready to discuss the question of God's existence -- especially if he/she is in a leadership position. This can make all the difference to the young people who are still open to see both sides of the question.
- Science is becoming our greatest endeavor to discover truth. People tend to equate science with truth and other kinds of knowledge with imagination. Atheists have used this mindset to their advantage by claiming that science has disproved God.

+ Can We Prove God's Existence?

- The existence of God can be proven using logical principles. Not empirical methods. In other words, we cannot set up an experiment in a laboratory where God will appear for us in a test tube or under the conditions of some other controlled environment.
- But we must understand that the scientific method, while extremely valuable, is only one of the many vehicles that we have for learning about truth and reality.
- Nowhere in the Bible are there arguments seeking to prove God's existence. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). His existence is assumed throughout the rest of Scripture and proclaims that it is evident to everyone: "because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" - Romans 1:19-20
- Invisible things are seen in a special and appropriate way. When they are seen they are much more certain than the objects of the bodily sense, but they are said to be invisible because they cannot be seen by mortal eyes. - St. Augustine.
- "I felt an overwhelming sense of the presence of God on the moon. I cannot imagine a holier place." James Irwin.
- James Benson Irwin (March 17, 1930 – August 8, 1991) was an American astronaut, aeronautical engineer, test pilot, and a United States Air Force pilot. He served as Apollo Lunar Module pilot for Apollo 15, the fourth human lunar landing. He was the eight person to walk on the



Moon.

- The prophets also said: "The heavens declare the glory of God." Will the heathen say at the judgment that they were ignorant of God? Did they not hear heaven sending forth a voice while the well ordered harmony of all things spoke out more clearly than a trumpet? Did you not see the hours of night and day remaining constantly unmoved, the good order of winter, spring and the other seasons remaining both fixed and unmoved? ... Yet God did not set so great a system of teaching before the heathen in order to deprive them of any excuse but so that they might come to know him. It was by their failure to recognize him that they deprived themselves of every excuse. - St. John Chrysostome

+ The Limits of Science

- The aim of science is to study matter and energy. For example, love is a fact of life, but since it is neither matter nor energy it cannot be investigated by science. There is no gadget to measure the mass, length, breadth, or temperature of love.
- The aim of science is not to investigate all reality, but rather to investigate those realities that are seen in the form of matter and energy.
- God is neither matter nor energy. Therefore, the methods of experimental sciences cannot be applied to disprove His existence.
- It is true that we can't prove God by the empirical method of verification. But there are many things we can't prove in this way.
- For example, we can't use the scientific method to prove the existence of Abraham Lincoln. History, by its very nature, is unrepeatable. We can't rerun the 1994 Super Bowl game, yet no one denies that these events took place.

+ Different Instruments for Each Science

- In the search for truth, one uses different instruments of investigation. Every department of Science has its own specific instruments for investigating truth.
- Same with God, since He is neither matter nor energy and cannot be dissected with a scalpel or placed in a test tube, we use other instruments to investigate His truth. i.e. Prayer, Repentance, Purity of Heart, His Word (Holy Bible), His Body (Church). We simply use spiritual tools to discover spiritual truths.
- Faith in God is not against reason, it is beyond reason. If we could analyze God in a test tube and understand Him logically, He would not be God. We would be God.
- "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony." - Hebrews 11:1

+ Arguments for the Existence of God

- The Law of Cause and Effect
 - It has always been a fundamental first principle of philosophy and science that "from nothing, nothing comes".
 - Every effect has a cause. That cause in turn has another cause behind it. This cause in turn must have another cause behind it. Everything in this Universe has a cause except the First Cause. This first cause gave rise to everything else: God.
 - There are 4 possible explanations for the existence of the universe. It is either:
 - 1. An illusion 2. Self-created 3. Eternal 4. Created
- The Argument From Design
 - An intricately crafted universe points to an intelligent Designer. Could time plus chance result in such an intricate design of our universe? Would that not be the greatest leap of faith?
 - Consider this: What are the chances of a tornado blowing through a junkyard containing all the parts of a 747, accidentally assembling them into a plane, and leaving it ready for take-off?
 - The church confesses God as Creator many times in Her prayers (Prayer of Reconciliation, the Orthodox Creed, the Second Hoos etc.)
- A Planet Perfect for Life
 - Our atmosphere contains a mixture of gasses in perfect proportions to sustain life. Oxygen makes up 21% of our air. If the proportion of oxygen in the air increased by only 2%, objects around us could literally burst into flame.
 - The earth travels through space at 66,600 miles an hour as it orbits the sun. That speed perfectly offsets the sun's gravitational pull and keeps earth's orbit the proper distance from the sun. If earth's speed were less, it would be gradually pulled toward the sun, eventually scorching and extinguishing life. Mercury, the planet closest to the sun, has a daytime temperature of about 600 degrees. Astronomers estimate that, if the distance from earth to the sun changed by as little as 2 percent, all life would be extinguished as water either froze or evaporated.
 - No wonder the Genesis creation account concludes with this summary of God's handiwork: "Then God saw everything that



He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

- The Argument from Conscience (Moral Values)

- Our sense of moral responsibility cannot be explained except by the existence of a Superior Lawgiver whom we are bound to obey. C.S. Lewis said "When I was an atheist my argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line."
- The existence of a standard of morality requires the existence of a moral God. What else could set the standard? Unless there is a God, there is absolutely no objective basis for morality.
- A moral constitution and moral law imply a creator, law-giver, and judge. This creator, this law-giver and judge, is God.

- Relational Verification of God

- In our everyday life we all experience love, peace, anger. All these feelings are "real", but there is no scientific method to detect them, verify them, or to measure them.
- God can be known in a personal way, and when people know God it reflects in their lives. There are so many changed lives around that no one can refute this as mere propaganda.
- The God of Christianity is unique in that we are called to know Him on a personal level and experience Him for ourselves.
- This is the most important piece in our journey to discover whether God exists and is highlighted by what St. Basil says "As it is impossible to verbally describe the sweetness of honey to one who has never tasted honey, so the goodness of God cannot be clearly communicated by way of teaching if we ourselves are not able to penetrate into the goodness of the Lord by our own experience. (St. Basil the Great, Conversations on the Psalms, 29)

+ Distinguished through a genuine desire to see

- Blaise Pascal the French philosopher and mathematician said: "God has given us evidence sufficiently clear to convince those with an open heart and mind. Yet evidence is sufficiently vague so as not to compel those whose hearts and minds are closed."
- God wants all His creation not only to know Him but to get into a deep relationship with Him. He desires all to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). But we have to be ready to search for this truth with all our heart. "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).
- We may be presented with all the evidence in the world, yet if we are not seeking the truth, we will choose to reject whatever proof comes our way. Even the Pharisees who saw our Lord for three years chose not to believe because it threatened their perspective—they were not seeking the truth, but rather trying to validate their truth.
- Ultimately, we must seek the faith that comes as a gift from our Lord as St. Cyril of Jerusalem says "...there is one kind of faith, the dogmatic, involving an assent of the soul on some particular point...But there is a second kind of faith which is bestowed by Christ as a gift of grace...The faith then which is given of grace from the Spirit is not merely doctrinal, but also works things above man's power." (Catechetical Lectures, 5.10)

Theme: Service

Lesson 6.5: Who Created God?

Building Block 6:
Evangelizing with
Apologetics



Objective

To understand that only things that had a beginning need a maker and that our finite minds cannot fathom how God has always existed.

Application

When are some of the times you would want to know that God is with you?

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 1:1-2](#); [Isaiah 43:10](#); [Revelation 1:8](#),
[Hebrews 11:1-3](#), [2 Peter 3:8](#), [Isaiah 57:15](#), [Ps 93:2](#)



Liturgy: [The Prayer of Reconciliation](#), “God, the Great and the Eternal, Who formed man in incorruption.”



Patristics: [Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity, Book II c14-16](#)



Story: The Creation: What does The Creation reveal about its Creator?



Other: [Timeless Truth in Truthless Times - George Bassilios](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The law of causality

Discussion: Was the universe created? If so, how was the universe created?

- Within the principle of creation, the law of causality would stipulate that: “Everything *which has a beginning* has a cause”
- Without time, there would be no law of causality, no cause and effect. Since God created time, then the law of causality cannot be applied to Him.
- The concept that the law of causality is on the principle of something which has a beginning is critical. For example, the laws of thermodynamics, which states that the total amount of mass-energy is constant in the universe and that the amount of entropy is increasing/the amount of energy available for work is decreasing. Conceptually combined, whereby the mass-energy is limited yet has constantly been decreasing, proves that the universe has a beginning and as such needs a cause.
- Thus, the universe (including time itself) can be shown to have had a beginning. It is unreasonable to believe something could begin to exist without a cause.
- What was God doing before He created the Universe? God transcends the dimension of time.” But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” 2 Peter 3:8
- Christ Himself stipulate His ever-eternal constant existence: “Before Abraham was, I AM” - John 8:58
- Self-refuting question: Who created God? A category fallacy.

+ The cosmological argument: God exists Necessarily

Discussion: What do you think is the strongest evidence for God’s existence? Against His existence?

- All things have reason for existence outside of themselves. There must be something uncaused in which all things are dependent.
- Suppose there is no uncaused being, then how can anything exist? Everything that exists stands in need of being caused to exist.
- World must have a beginning, therefore the world must have been created and constructed by someone who must not have a beginning.
- So, everything that has a beginning must be made.
- “For thus says the High and Lofty One, Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy” - Isaiah 57:15
- “Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting.” Ps 93:2
- God does not have a beginning; therefore, God could not be made. St. John refers to His eternal uncreated existence in John 1:1 calling Him

Logos, the Word of God. “For the Word was, what it is, and is not bounded by any time, nor commenced therein, seeing It was not made in the beginning, but was. From the beginning He is With God: and though independent of time, is not independent of an Author...Hear then the nature and name of the Word; and the Word was God. No more then of the sound of the voice, of the expression of the thought. The Word here is a Substance, not a sound; a Nature, not an expression; God, not a nonentity.” - Hilary of Poitiers

- God, because he does not have a beginning, could not have been made.
- “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 martyrem Julittam. A different translation is quoted in the Prolegomena in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series II Volume 8.
- Read from Genesis the story of creation. What does The Creation reveal about its Creator?
- We pray in the liturgy, “God, the Great and the Eternal, Who formed man in incorruption.”
- Four step argument
 1. The world is not an illusion.
 2. The world is not the world's; not self-created.
 3. The world is not eternal.
 4. The world must be created.

+ A more philosophical argument (the ontological argument); also known as the argument from necessity.

1. Argues that if there was ever a time when absolutely nothing existed, then there would be nothing now.
2. If something does exist, then something must have existed forever.
3. Everything that exists, can be classified as either matter or mind; material or immaterial. Therefore, the mind is eternal. Either matter or mind have always existed. However, we know that matter is not eternal. Evidence (the second law of thermodynamics) argues that it is the mind that must be eternal. Mind must have always existed and eternal, and that mind is God. As a matter of fact: one of the translations is one of the meanings of the word logos.
4. There are two types of objects in the universe: contingent beings, and necessary means. Contingent beings basically mean: These beings depend on their existence (depend on something outside of themselves), which means their existence is contingent upon something else. Necessary beings mean that their existence does not depend or is not contingent upon anything else. So, if something exists, it is either contingent or necessary. For example: the computer is a contingent object; in other words, it is dependent upon someone that caused this computer to exist. It could not have just made itself into existence, and it is not necessary for it to exist.
5. God is a self-existent, necessary being that must exist that caused all these chains of existence in everything in the world, who made it come to come to exist.

+ The argument from Religious Experience

Discussion: Whether you believe in God or not, do your beliefs about Him have any practical effect on your day-to-day behavior? Explain.

- “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” Hebrews 11:1-3
- O what an expression has he used, in saying, an evidence of things not seen. For [we say] there is evidence, in the case of things that are very plain. Faith then is the seeing things not plain (he means), and brings what are not seen to the same full assurance with what are seen. So then neither is it possible to disbelieve in things which are seen, nor, on the other hand can there be faith unless a man be more fully assured with respect to things invisible, than he is with respect to things that are most clearly seen...But I will make the matter more plain by an example. Christ said, that Jerusalem should be taken, and should be so taken as no city ever was before, and that it should never be raised up: and in fact this prediction came to pass. He said, that there should be great tribulation Matthew 24:21, and it came to pass. He said that a grain of mustard seed is sown, so should the preaching [of the Gospel] be extended: and every day we see this running over the world. He said, that they who left father or mother, or brethren, or sisters, should have both fathers and mothers; And this we see fulfilled by facts. He said, in the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world John 16:33, that is, no man shall get the better of you. And this we see by the events has come to pass. - St. John Chrysostom
- Faith is the realization and actualization, or a hope or of something unseen. One can have faith in the power of love because they have



experienced its power and strength. Yet, there is no empirical evidence, nor scientific proof of such a concept. But Faith itself is the actualization thereof through a witnessing of events and experience. Likewise, with the existence of God. Once one experiences His presence, and witnesses it, faith becomes uncontested personal evidence.

Theme: Service

Lesson 6.6: How Can a Loving God Send People to hell?

Building Block 6:
Evangelizing with
Apologetics



Objective

To understand that God's judgment is nothing other than what we have prepared for ourselves, when we separate ourselves from God, we are in essence living in hell. God does not send anyone to hell, we send ourselves by our continued rejection of His love.

Application

Life without God is hell; find arguments to explain this statement. Prepare ourselves here on earth to be in the presence of God; to taste heaven.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Tim 2:3-4](#), [Ezekiel 18:23](#), [Genesis 2:27](#), [3:22](#), [John 14:6](#), [1 John 4](#), [1 Thess 5:23](#), [John 1:12](#), [Revelation 3:20](#), [Luke 13:32](#), [Matthew 13:49-50](#)



Liturgy: [The prayer of reconciliation](#)



Patristics: - St Isaac the Syrian, Saint Basil; St. John Chrysostom; [Patristics on hell](#)



Story: [The Prodigal Son](#), [The parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus](#)



Other: [Timeless Truth in Truthless Times - George Bassilios](#), [Flood, plagues, wars, and a loving God? Fr. Gabriel Wissa](#); [The Great Divorce](#), [Eschatology SUScripts](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Reintroducing the Meaning of heaven: Presence of Christ

- Heaven is spending eternity with God. In fact, this is why God created mankind in the first place. God is Love (1 John 4:8), and God is Life (John 14:6), and God created mankind so that He could share His Love and Life with mankind. God was not lonely because He is self-sufficient, but He created us to have an eternal Love Relationship with Him. God desires that each of us enter into this personal relationship; but He doesn't force us to. Since true love is only possible when we are free to choose, He allows us to decide whether we want to establish this relationship with Him.
- God created mankind with a body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess 5:23). Our body is the physical form and our soul is our inward attitude (a mind to know Him, emotions to love Him, and a will to choose Him). The human spirit is that part of man that enables him to relate to and know God. It was created to be dependent upon and united with God's Spirit, and was the means through which he enjoyed perfect fellowship with God.
- Eternal Life exists in the person of Jesus Christ Himself Who is living on the inside of us. "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Cor 13:5).
- You don't start your eternal life when you die. Eternal life starts the moment that an individual gets baptized and receives the Holy Spirit because it is at that time that Christ begins to live in him (John 1:12, Revelation 3:20).
- The only way to heaven is to love God above all other things. To believe in God is to believe that infinite goodness is possible. Believing in God is the ultimate form of humble love; a calm and selfless love. Thus to enter Heaven is to love God completely, which in practice means letting go of the earthly things (such as love of money, sexual immorality, and even selfish love/clinging to other human beings). All earthly things should be resituated within the context of a universal love for God, who is the true source of pleasure.
- As St. John Chrysostom says, *"You see, true kingship is this, being in a position to win the Lord's benevolence and clemency through the excellence of one's lifestyle. After all, the reason we ought to be in fear and dread of hell is not the undying fire, the terrible punishments, the unremitting retribution, but rather offending such a good Lord and finding ourselves outside his benevolence."*

+ Our free choice: Heaven is freely chosen and therefore can be freely rejected

- What is the orthodox meaning of punishment? It is meant to lead us to repentance.



- A way for God to put an end to evil. (Genesis 3:22) Adam and Eve example: When Adam & Eve fell, two things had happened:
 1. Their relationship with God needed reconciliation.
 2. The image of God in which they were created has been distorted.
- Man, with his own free will, chose to disobey God, to eat from the forbidden fruit, to sin and subsequently to die. Note that God had warned that this would be the consequence of their choice - “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you[a] shall surely die.” - Genesis 2:17. God did not intend for us to suffer; it is this sin that brought pain and suffering to the world. If man had not eaten from the forbidden fruit, he would not have been sent out of the Garden of Eden. Man chose death for himself.
- When we partake of His sacrament, we are healed from breaking the commandments.
- As we pray in the liturgy in the reconciliation prayer. Reconciliation prayer refers to our reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ and our reconciliation with one another. The priest prays, “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.”
- God carried our punishment on the Cross (Isaiah 53:4). He was crushed for our iniquities. We are more loved and accepted than we ever hope.
- Leaving God’s presence and going away from Him is a choice that leads to negative consequences. See the Prodigal Son example: We regain our relationship with God through repentance, which is returning to the presence of God. God restores His image in us and returns us to our proper state.
- God does not want us to perish; in fact He wants us to be with him (Luke 13:32). He is the good shepherd who wants His little flock with Him. God is all loving, all caring.
- *St. Isaac the Syrian says, “Sin, Gehenna, and death do not exist at all with God, for they are effects, not substances. Sin is the fruit of free will. There was a time when sin did not exist, and there will be a time when it will not exist. I also maintain that those who are punished in Gehenna are scourged by the scourge of love. ... For the sorrow caused in the heart by sin against love is more poignant than any torment. It would be improper for a man to think that sinners in Gehenna are deprived of the love of God. ... Thus I say that this is the torment of Gehenna: bitter regret.”*

+ The reason for hell & What is hell?

- Is it a real fire? We don’t know for sure, but what we do know is that there is true suffering there and that Christ Himself said: “The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” - Matthew 13:49-50
- Jesus gave us the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 where we read about the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man ended up in hell after he died, we read, *“he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’”*
- The suffering stems from the fact that there is a lack of communion with God, who is Light.
- Hell is variously seen as a fiery pit of misery and punishment of wrong-doings, a psychological state for those individuals who hate the presence of God.
- Some also have shown it in a different example. They say if we have, by God’s grace, restored this image in us, we have become like gold. And that gold we find in fire is a good thing. However, if we distort God’s image, we have become like wood. And wood and fire together is a bad thing because fire consumes wood. In either case, what is definitely false is that it’s an angry God that has put someone in hell out of vengeance for eternity.
- “For estrangement and turning away from God are more unbearable than the punishments expected in hell, and more oppressive to the one suffering than the deprivation of light is to the eye, even if no pain is added to it, or than the deprivation of life is to a living creature.” (St. Basil the Great)

+ God's justice: Many believe that a loving God cannot be a judging God.

- God does not send us to hell. People send themselves to hell. Just like in the garden, hell and death is a choice of man. They choose to be away from God. Hell is a consequence of their own free choice. It is the individual’s choice in determining his or her fate.
- Truly, God is forgiving and long-suffering towards those who fall into sin in this life, for the time of our correction is now, in this present life, and the acquisition of His forgiveness depends on our own repentance. Moreover, God’s attributes should not be separated from each other; His Goodness and Mercy should not be separated from His Justice, Impartiality, and Righteousness. If God were to forgive all the sins of men without justice or fairness, what would be the point of alarming us with the terror of the eternal torments if, in fact, they did not exist? How is



it possible for God to tell us lies instead of the truth?

+ Is Eternity in hell fair?

- Heaven and hell begin here on earth.
- Sinners foolishly deny themselves true, eternal happiness in Heaven by declining to sacrifice their selfish love for other things and people.
- Since the judgment will be according to one's deeds (Mt 16:27; Rom 2:6; 2 Cor 5:10) and since the peoples' deeds are not the same, therefore, there will be different levels of reward and punishment. A sin that is committed willingly is going to be punished more than the one committed unwillingly, also sins that are committed knowingly will have a more severe punishment than those committed unknowingly.
- H.H. Pope Shenouda III uses the analogy of different jars, which are different in size but all are full to the maximum. They share the fact that they are filled to the maximum (being in heaven or hell) but differ in the volume. This analogy explains the parable of the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16) where those who worked for one hour were equated to those who worked the whole day. The denarius that each worker received represents the entrance to the kingdom, however within the kingdom there will be different orders.

Theme: Service

Lesson 6.7: Did Jesus Really Rise from the Dead?

Building Block 6:
Evangelizing with
Apologetics



Objective

To understand that there are facts around the resurrection of Christ and these facts are indisputable. Students will understand that the presence of faith is essential in confessing that Jesus has been raised from the dead. However, this does not mean that believing that Jesus was bodily raised from the dead is unbelievable and indefensible.

Application

If Christ truly rose, and this is a pivotal truth in your life, how would this impact your life with respect to Him? Seek to serve Him and discover His glory. Discuss with your father of confession what one thing you can do this week to serve Him

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 22:23-33](#), [Matthew 27.50](#), [John 19.33-34](#), [Matthew 27.64](#), [Mark 16.1](#), [Mark 16.6-7](#), [John 20.14-17](#), [Luke 24.34](#), [John 20.19-20](#), [1 Corinthians 15.6](#), [1 Cor 15:14](#), [1 Corinthians 15:12-18](#), [John 8:32](#), [Mark 9:32](#), [Mark 9:9](#) [Luke 24:37](#), [Luke 24:39-43](#), [John 20:26-27](#), [1 Cor 15:6](#), [John 20:20](#), [Matthew 28:17](#), [Luke 24: 41](#), [Luke 24:16](#), [John 20:14](#), [Matthew 24:6](#)



Liturgy: [The Feast of Resurrection's hymns](#)



Patristics: [St. Ephrem the Syrian](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#); [St. John of Damascus](#)



Story: [The Two Disciples of Emmaus](#)



Other: [SUScripts Q&A](#), [Timeless Truth in Truthless Times - George Bassilios](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Resurrection: Pivotal and Unique to Christianity

- Sadducees question the Resurrection (Matthew 22:23-33) - Normal to question, but what is my intent?
- Before starting defending the resurrection, it is important that our students understand what the resurrection actually is: Jesus' body was physically dead (Matthew 27.50).
- Not mostly dead; all dead (John 19.33-34). His dead body was placed in a heavily guarded tomb (Matthew 27.64) where it began to decay.
- On the Sunday after the crucifixion, a group of women came to anoint His body with spices (Mark 16.1) and found the tomb empty (Mark 16.6-7).
- He then appeared physically to Mary (John 20.14-17), Peter (Luke 24.34), the rest of the disciples (John 20.19-20), and then hundreds of others (1 Corinthians 15.6).
- As a result of these appearances, the previously discouraged disciples returned to Jerusalem and began preaching that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. With this truth of a resurrected Jesus at the core of their message (Acts 4.2), the church grew (Acts 5.14).
- "O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." St. John Chrysostom

+ The importance of resurrection in christianity: 1 Cor 15:14

- "Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have [a]fallen asleep in Christ have perished." 1 Corinthians 15:12-18



- The world cannot offer any cure for suffering. There is no cure or point to suffering separated from Jesus Christ. In Christ, our suffering has worth. Apart from Christ, suffering is pointless. What is illogical is to think that the God of life would not want us to live eternally.
- The truth is that, because of what happened in that Upper Room, on that cross, and in that tomb 2000 years ago, we know God the Father intimately, we walk with Christ daily, and we are guided by the Holy Spirit eternally. That's the truth, and what a beautiful truth it is. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)
- Therefore, the Resurrection Feast is the greatest and earliest festival of the church, at which Christians celebrate the anniversary of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His victory over death. During the 50 days after the feast until the Pentecost Feast, a beautiful moving feature of the church liturgy service is the enactment of the Resurrection. The clergy and deacons go in procession three times around the altar, carrying the icon of the Resurrection, banners, crosses, candles, and censers, and then, coming out, they go thrice around the church singing in Coptic and English the Resurrection Parallax.

+ The indisputable facts around the resurrection

- Empty tomb; There was an empty Tomb with a Roman seal and Roman guards. They placed a huge stone in front of it.
- The broken Roman Seal: This meant an investigation, an apprehension and automatic death for whoever did it...so obviously the Roman soldiers didn't break it. The disciples? Well, they were in hiding, and there is no way they were able to overpower a group of soldiers.
- The eyewitnesses (1 Cor 15:6): The resurrected Jesus stayed in town for 40 days. He appeared to more than 500 people in all kinds of different places, times and circumstances.
- "Now all things have been filled with light, both heaven and earth and those beneath the earth; so let all creation sing Christ's rising, by which it is established." - John of Damascus
- The Appearances of the Risen Lord. The appearances of the Risen Christ provide the needed interpretation to the empty tomb. The tomb is indeed empty because Jesus has been raised from the dead as the angel proclaimed! This is the dawn of the "new creation" and the "death of death."
- Each Gospel ends with at least one chapter (there are two in Saint John) narrating one or more appearances of the Risen Lord to His female and male disciples. These appearances initially overwhelmed the disciples, and we hear of different reactions—"gladness" (John 20:20), "worship" and even "doubt" (Matthew 28:17). In a marvelous expression in Saint Luke's Gospel, we even hear that the disciples "disbelieved for joy!" (Luke 24:41). There is also an initial non-recognition in some accounts (Luke 24:16; John 20:14).
- Emergence of the church: The disciples before and after the resurrection. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying (Matthew 24:6). That statement and corresponding evidence changed a frightened and hiding group of people into fearless witnesses who ended up dying for their belief in a risen Christ.
- The cause behind the emergence of the Church and the Christian Faith was not a crucified, dead and buried Jesus. Rather, that very crucified, dead and buried Jesus was revealed to be both Lord and Christ following His Resurrection "on the third day."
- No more sacrifices offering: Jews were always taught that they needed to offer an animal sacrifice once a year, to atone for their sins. After the Resurrection, the Jewish converts of the time, multitudes of them, stopped offering animal sacrifices to God.
- Jesus' Uniqueness: No other religious leader of any consequence ever actually claimed to be God, except Jesus. No other religious leader ever did the things Christ did. No other religious leader ever backed up their "religious voice" with Resurrection.
- A true believer does not need all the facts to believe in the Resurrection, because the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to us, intimately and powerfully. St. Paul talks about this in 2 Corinthians 4. Blind and hardened hearts will never see God.
- If the Resurrection were a lie it would have died off centuries ago. The Christian Church is the largest institution of any kind in the history of humanity. This Church began with the apostles following Pentecost, the year Christ rose. It has conquered empires, withstood attacks (inside and out) and grown in spite of the sinfulness of its members, because it was founded by Christ, Himself, and is guided and protected by the Holy Spirit. "If He was not flesh, who wept at Lazarus' grave? And if He was not God, who by His command brought out one four days dead?" St. Ephrem the Syrian

+ Disputable Theories

- The women went to the wrong tomb theory: Some people think that the women who discovered the empty tomb accidentally visited the wrong tomb. Finding it empty, they (or perhaps others) invented the resurrection to explain the disappearance of the body. This theory is hard to back up. There's no real reason to think they wouldn't remember where Jesus was buried because the Gospels tell us the tomb was owned by Joseph of Arimathea, a well-known public figure. Surely he would know where his tomb was, and would be able to check whether the body was still there or not? It's even harder to believe that no-one located the right tomb when the disciples started teaching that Jesus had risen from the dead. Especially because this began in Jerusalem – the very place where Jesus had just been executed and buried. If the tomb

wasn't really empty, people would have been able to show this, and the claim would have quickly been proven false.

- Conspiracy Theory: Would people leave their businesses, homes and families, go to the ends of the earth, die horribly horrific and painful deaths and forsake their previous religious beliefs about salvation all to protect a lie? Not one of them, while being beheaded, fed to lions, boiled in oil, crucified upside down or burned alive changed their story. Instead, they sang hymns of trust and praise, knowing that the Lord who defeated death would raise them up, too. All accepting to protect a supposed lie with none of them giving in? The same ones who didn't show up to the Cross out of fear?
- Hallucinating Disciples theory: Some people suggest that the disciples, stricken with grief at the loss of their friend, imagined or hallucinated the appearances of Jesus. There are lots of reasons to doubt this explanation.
- For one thing, as we read Mark's Gospel we see that the disciples were repeatedly confused by Jesus when he said he would rise from the dead. We read that they 'did not understand what he meant' (Mark 9:32) and 'they kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" might mean' (Mark 9:9). The reason for this is that at the time, the Jewish belief was that 'rising from the dead' meant the rising of all the righteous at the end of time. The idea of one individual being resurrected in the course of human history wasn't part of their thinking. It would be very unlikely that they later hallucinated something they couldn't imagine happening.
- The accounts of the resurrection appearances report that the disciples were initially skeptical. In one case they assumed they were seeing a ghost (Luke 24:37), and so they took steps to confirm that Jesus was really, physically present in front of them. They not only saw Jesus, they touched him and gave him food to eat in front of them to confirm what they were seeing (Luke 24:39-43; John 20:26-27).
- St. Luke's account of the appearance of Jesus to two disciples on the road to Emmaus after his resurrection is another example.
- The hallucination theory can't account for the physical nature of these experiences, nor for the fact they occurred in many different places at different times, with different people present. This theory also doesn't account for the absence of the body in the tomb. If the appearances were simply the imagined product of grief-stricken or hysterical minds, what happened to the body?

Theme: Service

Lesson 6.8: If Christ is the Only Way, What Will Happen to Those Who Have Never Heard of Him?

Building Block 6:
Evangelizing with
Apologetics



Objective

This question is either asked out of curiosity or compassion. If curiosity, the lesson will answer this question. But if out of compassion, do we have more compassion than God Himself? And if truly compassion, then what are we doing to help this?

Application

What are we doing to help those who have never heard of Christ?

Each of us can be witnesses to Christ in our day to day actions. Look at our own homes and friend groups and see how we can be a witness to Christ whether through actions, and if possible through words with the guidance of a spiritual guide. If you feel the desire to go on a mission trip, bring up the idea with your spiritual father to see if it is right for you.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 14:6](#), [John 3:5](#), [John 6:53](#), [John 12:48](#), [Revelations 20:11-15](#), [Romans 3:23,24](#), [Acts 14:17](#), [Psalm 19:1,2](#), [Romans 1:20](#), [Ezekiel 18:23](#), [Isaiah 30:18](#), [1 Corinthians 4:5](#), [Romans 10:14](#), and [Matthew 5:14-16](#)



Liturgy: [Anaphora of St. Basil](#), [The Greek Psalmi Watos for the Three Saintly Children](#), and [The Creed](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom on Virtue](#), [St. Gregory the Theologian: Five Theological Orations 1,3](#)



Story: [St. Antony Questions God](#); [Cornelius](#)



Other: [Timeless Truth in Truthless Times - George Bassilios](#), [H.G Bishop Youssef on Stillborn Babies](#), [H.G Bishop Youssef on Those Who Haven't Heard of Christ](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + The Problem: What happens to those who have never heard of Christ or did not have the opportunity to accept Him and participate in the sacraments? (e.g. stillborn babies)
 - We can often be confronted with questions such as these where there is no black or white answer.
 - When dealing with questions such as these, our response should contain three components:
 - What do we know?
 - What do we not know/has not been revealed to us?
 - What can we do about the problem?
- + What do we know?
 - The Bible and the Church are very clear that Christ is the only way to salvation (John 14:6)
 - Christ was also clear that we must be born again through Baptism in order to enter in the Kingdom of God (John 3:5) and that unless we eat His body and drink His blood (the Eucharist) we have no life in us (John 6:53).
 - As we say in the Orthodox Creed and also the Priest prays in the Anaphora of St. Basil, we also know that there will be a Day of Judgment where God will judge each person (John 12:48). We also believe in hell and that there is eternal suffering for those who reject the love of Christ. (Revelations 20:11-15)
 - We know as humans that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," but St. Paul continues with "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23,24)
 - Our hope in salvation comes not from doing good things and striving to be morally perfect, but through faith in our Savior Jesus Christ.
 - St. John Chrysostom says "Even if we have thousands of acts of great virtue to our credit, our confidence in being heard must be based on God's mercy and His love for men. Even if we stand at the very summit of virtue, it is by mercy that we shall be saved."
 - We also know that God reveals Himself to all. In the book of Acts (Acts 14:17), St. Paul and Barnabas respond to the people in Iconium who



believed that they were gods saying that they were men just like them. They took the opportunity to evangelize and say that God has given creation as a witness to Him since the beginning of time.

- Likewise, the Psalmist says that "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1,2)
- The church takes this teaching and we sing it each day in the Greek Psali Watos for the Three Saintly Children of the Midnight Praises: "The heavens declare the glory, of God until this day, O you angels whom He has made, Praise Him and exalt Him above all."
- St. Paul again reinforces this idea in his epistle to the Romans: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20)
- We know that God desires the salvation of all. "Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord God" (Ezekiel 18:23)
- We know that our God is infinitely merciful and just (Isaiah 30:18)
- 2 Peter 3:9 reads, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

+ What do we not know/ has not been revealed to us?

- We do not know how God will judge in the end. How He chooses to judge is known to Him alone and for this reason we do not place judgements ourselves. Saint James says: "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?: James 4:11-12
- St. Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts." (1 Corinthians 4:5)
- God desires that everyone come to Him through Christ, but not all will. We, however, do not have access to a list of who will respond to God and who will not. As such, biblical Christianity places a great deal of emphasis on missionary efforts.

+ What should we do?

- As curious as we may be, we should understand our limited nature in trying to know the mysteries of God.
- We can learn from God's response to St. Antony when he asked Him concerning His judgment: When Abba Anthony thought about the depths of the judgments of God, he asked, 'Lord, how is it that some die when they are young, while others drag on to extreme old age? Why are there those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are the just in need?' He heard a voice answering him, 'Antony, keep your attention on yourself; these things are according to the judgment of God, and it is not to your advantage to know anything about them.'
- The Bible records a story about a man named Cornelius. This man knew about God, but not about Christ. Because of his sincere desire to know God, Cornelius came in direct contact with the Apostle Peter who told Cornelius about Jesus (read Acts 10 for the entire story).
- St. Gregory the Theologian says "What aspects of theology should be investigated, and to what limit? Only aspects within our grasp, and only to the limit of the experience and capacity of our audience." (Five Theological Orations 1.3)
- If we ask this question about what happens to those who have never heard of Christ out of concern, but yet we do nothing to be witnesses to Christ, we speak with hypocrisy.
- "How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" (Romans 10:14)
- We are called to be lights to the world and should glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16)
- This does not mean we must flee to some remote country and evangelize (although this may be a calling for some), for evangelizing can happen in our homes, schools, and workplaces.
- This is what a life of service looks like: being so inflamed with love for Christ that this love radiates and shines on everyone we meet so that no one goes without encountering Christ.
- Romans 10:13-15 emphasizes the significance of Christian evangelism when it comes to reaching those who have never heard: "For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.' How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!'"

Theme: Service

Building Block 6:
Evangelizing with
Apologetics



Lesson 6.9: Has Science Disproved the Bible and Christianity?

Objective

To understand the purpose of science and that there is no real conflict between science and the Bible. Science answers the how and what, while the Bible deals with the who and why.

Application

Be investigative and use your science to strengthen your relationship with God. Research previous scientists who were Christians and practiced science as a form of service.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 24:36-44](#), [Romans 1:20](#), [Psalms 19:1](#)



Liturgy: [Conclusion of the Acts reading](#)



Patristics: [St. Gregory of Nyssa, On the Making of Man](#), [St. Gregory of Nyssa, The Life of Moses](#); [St. Irenaeus](#), [St. Augustine Letter 82](#)



Story: Galileo Galilei



Other: [Apologetics and Scripture](#); [Part 2, God vs. Science, The Holy Bible: Inspiration & Inerrancy](#), [HG Bishop Youssef, SUScopts Article on the Reliability of the Bible](#), [SUScopts Article on the Infallibility of the Bible](#), [Christianity and Science by George Bassilios](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Consider discussing this verse and whether the fact that the bible is inspired by God means it is inerrant.

- Following the discussion, use the following early church fathers to show how our forefathers saw the bible as not only inspired by God but inerrant.
- St. Clement of Rome (30-100) describes “the Sacred Scriptures” as “the true utterance of the Holy Spirit” and that “in them there has not been written anything that is unrighteous or counterfeit.”
- According to St. Irenaeus, the biblical writers “were filled with perfect knowledge on every subject,” and “incapable of a false statement.”
- St. Augustine (354-430) explained in a letter to Jerome, “I have learnt to ascribe to those Books which are of the Canonical rank, and only to them, such reverence and honor, that I firmly believe that no single error due to the author is found in any of them.” Jerome (393 - c.457) declared the Scriptures to be “the most pure fount. . . written and edited through the Holy Spirit.”
- Religion can have a positive impact on science, such as in the development of modern medical ethics. Many early scientific leaders were devout Christians, as are some scientific leaders today. Science can also enhance the spiritual life of believers. Christians rejoice in scientific discoveries that reveal the glory of God the creator.
- Galileo Galilei, was famous for his scientific achievements in astronomy, mathematics, and physics, and was in fact, a devout Christian. He said, “God is known by nature in His works, and by doctrine in His revealed word.”

- + The logical deduction of inerrancy

- To be considered to have come from an all-powerful and all-knowledgeable God, a book must meet certain requirements. First, it must be transmitted to us accurately from the time it was originally written so that we may have an exact representation of what God said and did. Second, it must be correct when it deals with historical events. Finally, it must be without any scientific absurdities, which would betray that it came by human authorship.
- Definition of Inspiration: God’s superintending of human authors so that using their individual personalities and their writing styles they composed and recorded without error his revelation to man in the word of the original script.



- Thus, the Bible has a Divine Origin, a human Agent and a written text which is inspired yet not dictated which is delivered in specific language. Since it is inspired then is it inerrant, since it is inspired and is inerrant then it has authority.
- For more details and examples on divine inspiration and inerrancy, please refer to the [sermon by HG Bishop Youssef](#).

+ Does Science defy religion, or religion science?

Consider the following exercise. Have the students draw 3 circles, 1 for science, 1 for religion and 1 for the earth. Have them attempt to see how those 3 circles interact. Are they within each other? Separate circles? You can alternatively add a circle for the Holy Bible.

- Science deals and studies matter. It deals with its properties and qualities. It is concerned solely with the physical and natural world. Science, typically, is asking “how this works” or “what that is”, or “what happened here” (materially).
- Stephen Hawking said “The one question in need of an answer is the question of God. Science, with all its strident gains, must still remain contented to describe the what of human observations. Only God can answer the why.”
- Religion is primarily focused on the who and why. It asks questions about the meaning of certain things or why things are the way they are. It deals with questions on morality. It focuses on meta-physics-- that which is immaterial.
- "As for the question of precisely how any single thing came into existence, we must banish it altogether from our discussion. Even in the case of things which are quite within the grasp of our understanding and of which we have sensible perception, it would be impossible for the speculative reason to grasp the “how” of the production of the phenomenon, so much so that even inspired and saintly men have deemed such questions insoluble. For instance, the apostle says, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen are not made of things which do appear.”... Let us, following the example of the apostle, leave the question of the “how” in each created thing without meddling with it at all but merely observing incidentally that the movement of God’s will becomes at any moment that he pleases a fact, and the intention becomes at once realized in nature." (St. Gregory of Nyssa, On the Soul and the Resurrection)
- The Bible does not attempt to be a scientific textbook and is not used as a source for scientific proofs. The Bible is the story of the relationship between mankind and our God. However, the Holy Bible is inspired by God and is consistent with scientific facts. In all cases when diligent research was conducted, biblical facts were confirmed and corroborated by science. Similarly, scripture is not written as a historical book, but it is nonetheless historically accurate. Our Lord Jesus Christ looks back at Jonah and says: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be ...” Matthew 12:40 Christ in this instance uses the events as a historical fact. Similarly in Matthew 24:36-44, Christ speaks of Noah and the flood as historical facts, though in modern days these events are doubted by many as historical facts.

+ How can science and religion work together?

- The goal is to use science to appreciate our God, and use our relationship with God to give meaning to my science.
- Those of us who are interested in science, continue to be curious and investigative in your studies so that you can use your knowledge as a service.
- "Those who are led by their guide to virtue should, I believe, not lack the riches of Egypt or lack the treasures of the foreigners, but having obtained all the possessions of their foes, should keep it for their own ends." (St. Gregory of Nyssa, On The Life of Moses)
- When St. Gregory speaks of Egypt here, he speaks of earthly things. We can take scientific knowledge and use it for our own benefit and strengthen our love for God.
- Do not be afraid of science. The natural world is a testament to the glory of God as St. Paul says. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20)
- "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)
- "A man seeks the truth by the effort of reason and is disappointed. It is offered to him by faith, and he accepts, and, having accepted, he finds that it satisfies his reason." - Justin Martyr
- The conclusion of the Acts reading says, “The Word of the Lord shall grow, multiply, be mighty, and be confirmed in the holy Church of God. Amen.”



Building Block 7: Orthodoxy in a Block

Theme: Service

Lesson 7.1: Review of Sacraments

Building Block 7: Orthodoxy in a Block



Objective

Confirming the foundation and validity of the sacraments

Application

Participate in the Sacraments regularly. Do a deep dive on one of the mysteries and research some Church Father writings on the Sacrament to understand how the Church has understood it.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Exodus 14](#), [Romans 6:4](#), [Matthew 28:18,19](#), [Mark 16:16](#), [John 14:16-17](#), [Acts 1:4-5](#), [Acts 19:5-6](#), [Matthew 26:26-28](#), [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#), [Matthew 18:18](#), [John 20:22-23](#), [Matthew 19:4-6](#), [John 2](#), [Luke 6:13](#), [Matthew 28:19](#), [Hebrew 5:4](#), [1 Timothy 5:17](#), [James 5:14-16](#), [Matthew 10:8](#), [Luke 10:8-9](#), and [Matthew 6:13](#)



Liturgy: [The Sacramental Prayers and the Confession](#)



Patristics: [St. Cyril of Jerusalem](#), [Catechal Lectures and Sayings of the Fathers on the Eucharist](#)



Story: [St. Sara and her two sons](#)



Other: [Doctrine and Theology Series](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is a sacrament?

- Above all it is a mystery, which is what it's meaning in Greek is.
- An invisible grace imparted through a physical act. A necessary component of the life of an Orthodox Christian. Three things are necessary for a Sacrament:
 1. Instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ
 2. An outward sign performed by a Priest
 3. The power of conferring the grace purchased for us by the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord.
- Our Lord uses human nature (priests) and material things (water, bread and wine, oil) as instruments for the communication of the same divine life (grace). The Orthodox Church has 7 main Sacraments and they can be split into essential salvific (all must partake of for salvation) and additional salvific sacraments (not necessary for everyone to partake of, but part of salvific plan).
- The servant may get the students to split into groups with different Sacraments and identify the physical act, the invisible grace, and the reference to its institution by Christ from Scripture.

+ Essential Sacraments: Baptism

- Considered the door to the rest of the Sacraments
- Many symbols in the Old Testament such as the Exodus of the Israelites through the Red Sea (Exodus 14)
- Physical Act: Immersion into water three times in the name of the Holy Trinity
- Invisible Grace: Through the mystery of Baptism the believer dies with Christ (Romans 6:4) and rises with Him a new creation.
- Institution by Christ: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:18-19), and "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).
- It is indeed one baptism: share the story of St. Sara and her two sons. https://www.copticchurch.net/synaxarium/8_25.html?lang=en#l



+ Essential Sacraments: Chrismation

- Physical Act: The anointing of the baptized believer with holy oil (Myron) 36 times on their joints and senses.
- Invisible Grace: The believer is consecrated and their body is dedicated as a vessel of the Holy Spirit. Through this Chrismation, the believer may receive the Holy Spirit.
- Institution by Christ: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever –the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17), "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" (Acts 1:4-5), "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them." (Acts 19:5-6)

+ Essential Sacraments: Eucharist

- Physical Act: The bread and wine (and water) are offered by the congregation.
- Invisible Grace: The bread and wine become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus in truth. They are given for the "remission of sins and eternal life to those who partake of them." (The Confession Prayer by the Priest). Contrary to other denominations, the Orthodox Church has maintained the understanding that the offerings truly become the body and blood of our Lord and are not symbolic.
- A particularly important witness to the early Christian understanding of this Sacrament is provided by the 'Catechetical lectures' of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. This series of 24 lectures of instruction on the beliefs and practices of the Christian Church, given at some point around 350 AD to those preparing for baptism, are an important witness to the ideas that prevailed in the Jerusalem Church around this point. It is clear that St. Cyril regarded the bread and wine as becoming the real body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ:
- "[Jesus Christ], by his own will, once changed water into wine at Cana of Galilee. So why should we not believe that he can change wine into blood? ... We should therefore have full assurance that we are sharing in the body and blood of Christ. For in the type of bread, his body is given to you, and in the type of wine, his blood is given to you, so that by partaking of the body and blood of Christ you may become of one body and one blood with Him." (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)
- See this article for numerous other references to the early Church Fathers testifying of the true nature of the Eucharist - <http://www.suscopts.org/messages/lectures/sacrament13.pdf>
- Another key component of the Eucharist is joining the body of Christ together with all the faithful, not just those who are present in liturgy with us, but with the whole choir of saints.
- Institution by Christ: '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'" (Mt 26:26-28) St. Paul said, "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 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 Cor 11:23-26)

+ Essential Sacraments: Repentance & Confession

- Physical Act: The believers profess their sins in the presence of the Priest and the prayer of the Absolution is said.
- Invisible Grace: The true forgiveness of sins by our Lord Jesus through in the presence of the Priest.
- Institution by Christ: Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted this Sacrament when He said to His disciples: "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Mt 18:18) and "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (Jn 20:22-23)

+ Additional Salvific Sacraments: Matrimony

- Physical Act: A man and woman come before the Altar together and through the prayers and the anointing of Holy Oil become husband and wife.
- Invisible Grace: Marriage, as a Sacrament, belongs to an entirely different order than the mere union of man and woman through civil contract. It basically regards a husband and wife as symbols of another marriage; namely, the marriage of Lord Jesus and the Church. The husband and wife become one flesh and live a life of service to one another uplifting each other to heaven.
- Institution by Christ: "And He [Jesus] answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who [a]made them at the beginning 'made



them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19: 4-6) and our Lord's presence at the Wedding of Cana (John 2)

+ Additional Salvific Sacraments: Priesthood

- Physical Act: The laying of hand by a Bishop
- Invisible Grace: The Holy Spirit to descend on this person to grant him one of the priestly ranks. As a result, the ordained person is granted the authority to perform the ministry of the Church, whether the Holy Sacraments, teaching or others. This process is called "Laying of hands" or "Ordination."
- Institution by Christ: Lord Jesus Christ instituted this Sacrament when He chose the twelve of His followers and consecrated them for ministry, "He called His disciples to Him, and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles" (Lk 6:13). He gave them the authority of absolution and binding, "He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:22-23). Notice that this took place before the Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit here is the gift of ordination. Only to them He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19) and only to them He delivered the mystery of His Body and Blood (The Eucharist). St. Paul also speaks of the Priesthood when he says "No man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God" (Heb 5:4) and "Let the elders [priests] who rule well be counted worthy of double honor" (1 Tim 5:17)

+ Additional Salvific Sacraments: Unction of the Sick

- Physical Act: The sick believer is anointed with Holy Oil and prayers are said.
- Invisible Grace: "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders (priests) of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." (James 5:14-16)
- Institution by Christ: We do not know the exact time or occasion when our Lord instituted this Sacrament, which is no surprise for there are many things that the Lord did that were not written one by one (Jn 21:25), but we know that the Lord said:
- "Heal the sick, cleanse the leper." (Mt 10:8)
- "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you ... heal the sick who are there." (Lk 10:8-9)
- We also know that the disciples: "Anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them." (Mk 6:13)

+ How can we live 'Sacramentally'?

- Although the Orthodox Church has 7 main Sacraments, there are numerous other mysteries that we can participate in as Orthodox Christians, some even daily.
- For example, the acts of signing ourselves the the sign of the Cross is a physical act that with faith is a source of strength and power.
- Participate in the mysteries of the Church to be connected to Christ. There are other mysteries that the Church performs, such as the washing of feet on Epiphany, Holy Thursday, and the Apostles Feast.
- Do not get caught up in the physical act so much that we miss the grace. For example, the liturgy is not a performance that must be recited perfectly in order for the bread and wine to be transformed. This happens by God's grace despite our depravity as humans.

Theme: Service

Building Block 7: Orthodoxy in a Block



Lesson 7.2: Salvation in the Orthodox Perspective

Objective

To understand what it means to have salvation and how to obtain it.

Application

There are certain things we must do and partake of in order to obtain eternal Salvation (Baptism, Communion, Living a Good and Faithful life)

We must examine ourselves each day and reflect on our actions, thoughts, feelings and see if they are in alignment with what the Bible tells us and the example that Jesus Christ Himself set for us.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Hebrews 9:22](#), [2 Samuel 12:13](#), [1 Corinthians 1:18](#), [Mark 16:16](#), [Acts 2:38](#), [1 John 1:18](#), [John 6:54](#), [Revelation 3:20](#), [Matthew 26:28](#)



Liturgy: [The Confession](#)



Patristics: H.H. Pope Shenouda III, [St. John Chrysostom](#) [[Sermon on Acts 9](#)]



Story: The Crucifixion



Other: [Salvation in the Orthodox Perspective](#), [SUS Soteriology Lecture](#), [The Heresy of Salvation in a Moment by H.H. Pope Shenouda III](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Salvation is only available through the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Discuss cautiously: What defines if someone enters heaven?

- The sins of the people in the Old Testament were not forgiven until the day of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. All the sins of the Old Testament were merely “put away” as Nathan the Prophet said to King David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die” (2 Samuel 12:13). He didn’t say ‘has forgiven your sin’ because “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” (Hebrews 9:22).
- The term “put away” means that the sin is transferred from one’s account to the account of the Savior.
- Salvation has 2 important aspects: 1. salvation from the penalty or punishment of sin and 2. salvation from sin itself, the desire to commit sin.
- We can only obtain it through the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)

+ Conditions for Salvation:

1. Faith: One must believe in Jesus Christ in order to obtain salvation
 2. Saving Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Repentance & Confession & Eucharist)
 3. Good Works/Deeds
- The story of salvation starts by faith, repentance and baptism, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16)
 - “Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). This remission includes the original sin as well as all actual sins committed before baptism.
 - Unfortunately, we still sin after being baptized and confirmed, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:18). Even though our nature was renewed, we did not become infallible. Therefore, repentance and confession are essential for salvation.
 - Additionally, we obtain salvation when we partake of the Holy Eucharist, as the priest says in the Divine Liturgy, “... given for us salvation, remission of sins and eternal life to those who partake of it”, “whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life” (John 6:54)



- + Salvation is the story of the whole life that we live here on Earth.
 - St. Paul said: “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).
 - Since the spiritual struggle and warfare takes up our whole life, therefore salvation is indeed the story of the whole life." H.H. Pope Shenouda III
 - Salvation in the Orthodox concept is seen as comprehending all of life; it is not a historical event that took place during a moment in the past.
 - As the subject of salvation is addressed in Holy Scripture, the Orthodox Christian would see it in at least three aspects:
 - a) I believe that **I have been saved**, having put on our Lord Jesus Christ in baptism.
 - b) I believe that **I am being saved**, growing in our Lord Jesus Christ through the sacramental life of the Church.
 - c) I believe that **I will be saved**, by God’s mercy in the Last Day of Judgment.
- + Both God’s grace and our free will (enacted in faith and in action) must be aligned for us to be saved.
 - This is made clear in the saying of the Lord in the book of Revelation. He tells all of humanity: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. “ (Revelation 3:20)
 - God is always the initiator, he stands at our door and he approaches us where we are. It is up to us however to react to his knocking on our door, not only by hearing the knock, but by also opening the door!
 - The hearing in this case refers to our knowledge of faith, and the opening of the door is the work we must do. Both are essential, if I did not hear His knock, I will never get up to answer – and hearing the knock without opening the door serves me no purpose.
 - "God never draws anyone to Himself by force and violence. He wishes all men to be saved, but forces no one" St. John Chrysostom [Sermon on Acts 9]
 - In conclusion, while God has granted us Salvation through His son, who stands at our door and knocks, we are called to work in Synergy and Cooperation with God. We need to hear His knock, to accept and preserve His grace, and to open to Him that we may be saved in and through Him.

Theme: Service

Building Block 7: Orthodoxy in a Block



Lesson 7.3: Trinity in the Orthodox Perspective

Objective

The dogma of the Holy Trinity -though difficult for the limited human mind to fully comprehend- is essential to our understanding of the redemption and salvation.

Application

How are we maintaining a close relationship with Him? Where exactly is our heart? Let us always ask God to dwell in us and allow His Holy Spirit to work in us. We should not quench His Spirit in us by living away from Him with an unrepentant heart.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 1:26](#); [Genesis 3:22](#); [Genesis 11:6-7](#); [Genesis 18:1-3](#); [Matt. 28:19](#); [2 Cor. 13:14](#); [1 John 5:7](#)



Liturgy: [The Creed](#)



Patristics: [St. Athanasius on Luke 10:22.6](#), [St. Augustine Sermon 2:1-2](#)



Story: The Epiphany



Other: [An Introduction to the Orthodox Conception of the Holy Trinity | Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Los Angeles \(lacopts.org\)](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Differentiating Nature (or essence), and Person:

- Essence: Essence/Nature (Grk. ousia), i.e essential common characteristics that are possessed by a whole group, which sets that group off from all other groups (for example distinguishes humans from animals). Humans have a particular type of hands, feet, eyes, arms, and legs, all arranged in a consistently predictable fashion. Each one also has a soul, that is, a mind, a will, emotions, etc.
- Non-Essential Characteristic: Humans come with a certain set of essential characteristics, but there is the potential for an almost infinite variety of sizes, shapes, colors, and capacities—that is, non-essential characteristics.
- Person (Grk. hypostasis)
- Not only do all of us have our own packages of non-essential characteristics of human nature, but each of us also has his own unique God-made, God-given person.
 - Both person and nature, although distinct, are never separate except as abstract concepts. The two are necessary to form one complete, whole human being.
 - For humanity, the Person is God-made and God-given for each of us directly. Nature we inherit from God through our parents. Your person is the unique creation of God for you only. There are never two the same in person.
 - It is your person that allows you to be a free, responsible, moral being. Nature by itself would be subject to determinism. People are not.
 - We cannot define the full content of a person. There is an element of mystery about each person.
- St. Dionysius of Alexandria explains “Our thought utters from itself the word according to what the Prophet has said: ‘My heart hath poured forth a good word’ (Ps. 45:1). Thought and word are separate one from the other, and each occupies its special and separate place: while thought remains and moves the heart, the word is on the tongue and the lips. However, they are inseparable, and not for one moment are they deprived of each other. Thought does not exist without word, nor word without thought, having received its existence in thought. Thought is, as it were, a word hidden within, and word is thought which has come without. Thought is transformed into word, and word transmits thought to the hearers. In this way, thought, with the help of the word, is instilled in the souls of the listeners, entering them together with the word. Thought, coming from itself, is as it were the father of the word: and the word is, as it were, the son of the thought. Before the thought the word was impossible, and the word does not come from anywhere outside, but rather from the thought itself. Thus also, the Father, the greatest and all-embracing Thought, has a Son, the Word, His first Interpreter and Herald.”



+ The Holy Trinity: Three Persons in one Essence

- The Holy Trinity is a mystery first and foremost. It has been debated and has been the cause of heresies in the history of Christianity but there is still a right way and a wrong way to understand it. The Trinity, for example, is Monotheistic, not Polytheistic.
- God is one in essence, yet three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in persons. There is eternally in God true unity, combined with genuinely personal differentiation: the term 'essence', 'substance', 'being', or 'nature' indicates the unity, and the term person indicates the differentiation.
- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one in essence, not merely in the sense that all three are examples of the same group or general class (as with human beings), but in the sense that they form a single, unique, specific reality.
- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have only ONE will and not three, only ONE energy and not three. None of the three ever acts separately, apart from the other two. They are not three Gods, but one God.
- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not just "modes" or "moods" of the Divinity, not just masks God assumes for a time in His dealings with creation and then lays aside. They are on the contrary coequal and coeternal persons. In fact, this is a heresy (Modalism) of the 3rd Century that came in many forms: Sabellianism & Patripassianism.
- The Trinity, praised, revered and adored, is one and indivisible and without degrees. It is united without confusion, just as the One God is also distinguished without separation. For the fact of those venerable living creatures (Isa/ 6; Rev 4:8) offering their praises three times, saying 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' proves that the Three Persons are perfect, just as in saying 'Lord,' they declare the One Essence" - St. Athanasius
- St. Irenaeus speaks of the Son and the Spirit as the 'two hands' of God the Father; and in every creative and sanctifying act the Father is using both these hands at once.

+ To Each His own

- We do not deal with the persons of the Trinity as a monotheistic god. Each Person of the Trinity has a name and a role in our life
- You cannot refer to somebody named Andrew as Peter because they're both males. "Our Father..." is a prayer to God the Father for example
- "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" - John 5:22
- And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. - Acts 1:7
- There is a reason we call the Baptism of Christ, the Epiphany. Epiphany means "a moment of sudden revelation or insight". The Father spoke, the Son was Baptized in the flesh, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. All 3 persons of the Trinity were revealed together.
- "Here then we have the Trinity presented in a clear way: the Father in the voice, the Son in the man, the Holy Spirit in the dove. This only needs to be barely mentioned, for it is so obvious for anyone to see. Here the recognition of the Trinity is conveyed to us so plainly that it hardly leaves any room for doubt or hesitation" - St. Augustine of Hippo
- Personal Attributes of the Divine Persons: God is one in essence and yet three persons. Although the three persons of the Trinity are in the same divine essence and are united in that one essence, they are also unique in their personhood: the father is the unbegotten, the son is the begotten, and the Spirit is he who proceeds. They are united and are one, and all three are diverse without ever being divided.

+ History and Heresies Repeat

- Be aware of heresies that are not rooted in our Orthodox dogma, for example:
- Arius (4th century) who attacked the faith with the false belief that the Son of God is not truly God; just the highest of created beings".
- This is a very similar misconception to Jehovah's witness beliefs in our modern times.
- The church fought those false beliefs, for example during the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325 (St. Athanasius) to correct the belief about the Divinity of Christ (the council included more than 300 bishops and hundreds from priest and deacons from all over the Roman Empire)
- Review the Creed with the students.

Theme: Service

Lesson 7.4: Holy Tradition

Building Block 7:
Orthodoxy in a Block



Objective

Differentiating between Tradition of men and the value of Holy Tradition.

Application

Find practices in the Church that were passed on through tradition. (some examples were given in the body overview)

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 24:27](#), [Acts 1:3](#), [Matthew 15:2-3](#), [Mark 7:8,13](#), [Col 2:8](#), [2 Thess 2:25](#), [2 Thess 3:6](#), [John 21:25](#), [1 Cor 11:23](#), [Eph 2:20](#), [John 21:25](#), [2 John 12](#), [2 Thessalonians 2:15](#), [2 Thessalonians 3:6](#), [Gen 4:4](#), [8:20](#), [12:7](#), [Gen 14:20](#), [John 21:25](#), [1 Corinthians 11:1-2](#)



Liturgy: [“As it was” response](#)



Patristics: [St. Basil, Concerning Baptism](#)



Story: The tradition of men: the scribes and Pharisees



Other: [FrTM - Tradition and Orthodoxy.pdf](#), [HHPS3 - Comparative Theology.pdf](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Holy Bible vs. Tradition?

- Tradition is older than the Holy Bible and Taken from the teaching of the Apostles. A Long time elapsed before there was any written Gospel or Epistle (~20 years)
- Paradosis (Greek); It is the continuation of the spiritual life experienced and shared among God's people
- There are, even in Scripture, many references to things that were passed on verbally by Christ but not written down (which can also be referenced in Pope Shenouda's book “Comparative Theology, linked above) : “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.” - John 21:25
- With this verse in mind, it is apparent that the Bible only gives us a small fraction of all the teachings which the Lord passed down to us. Thus, through tradition we can begin to discover and
- “Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.” - 1 Corinthians 11:1-2
- Through this, we can recognize that it is our responsibility to hold reverence towards the traditions of our church, because that is what the Lord instructs us to do in the scripture.

+ Necessity of Tradition in Orthodoxy

- Orthodox means conforming to what is generally or traditionally accepted as right or true; established and approved (Dictionary definition)
- But how does this apply to our church? In the interest of remaining as close as we can to Christ, we try and keep every aspect of our church the same generationally.
- Practicing the same services, prayers, traditions does not mean that the church is unwilling to adapt to certain circumstances, or problems. It just means that we try to stay true to the original church.
- The response signifies to us that we, the Orthodox people, are seeking Christ. Previously, Currently, and Into the next generation. As we say in the liturgy, “As it was and is, it will be - to generations of generations and to all the ages of ages. Amen.”
- Tradition preserved for us the sound doctrines that were handed from one generation to the next. Tradition is every teaching, other than the Holy Bible, that reached us through the entrustment of the Apostles and the Fathers. St. Mark brought this tradition to Egypt and taught us

about the Liturgy, worship, and other unwritten things... If the interpretation of the Bible was left to the comprehension of each individual, we would have various denominations not sharing the same faith.

- After the Resurrection, the Lord met the two disciples of Emmaus, and “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” - Luke 24:27
- There is more than what's written in the Bible: Christ expounded the teachings after His resurrection to the disciples as explained in scripture (Luke 24:27, Acts 1:3), even St. John says not everything can be written down, some have to be face to face (2 John 12, 3 John 13,14), similarly with St. Paul (1 Cor 11:34, 2 Timothy 2:2)
- We cannot believe that His teachings were lost since they are so important. The only way for these teachings to have reached us was through Tradition. Thus, it is through means of Tradition that the Church heritage, rituals, and disciplines have reached us. Tradition includes the Church canons and regulations, the writings of the Church Fathers, the decisions of the holy councils, beside the rituals and oral tradition.
- Now evaluate the reason we do everything in our spiritual lives. Why do we pray? Why do we read the bible? Why do we attend liturgy? Why do we go to Sunday School? The list goes on. One of the activities which should be included in this list is seeking to study, learn, and understand traditions, because this is part of the message which Christ has left for us on this earth and will, just like all the other activities, bring us closer to God.
- There are 2 types of traditions: The Holy Tradition and the tradition of men (Mat 15:1-9/Col 2:8)

+ The tradition of men (Mat 15:1-9/Col 2:8)

Consider discussing: What characterizes itself as tradition of men and what incorrect traditions do we, as individuals in the world, tend to follow now? Rephrased, how does the world seduce us into habits that are of no value in its core? [the need for constant sexual gratification, defining relaxation as parties/substance consumption, etc...]. Would these be considered modern era's tradition of men?

- The tradition of men is condemned to be followed.
- “Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? - Matthew 15:2-3
- It is important to remember that it is our responsibility to follow the traditions which the Lord sets for us, but not to confuse them with traditions of men. Similar to the lesson about the scribes and Pharisees, our actions must be aligned with our faith. Thus, the commandment of God remains as the guide for our traditions and should be our priority.
- The Pharisees were a select denomination which had emerged in the first century before Christ. The title “Pharisee” literally meant “the separated ones.” They did this by holding fast to all of the Jewish traditions.
- In an effort to protect and sanctify the law, they had built a great hedge of rules and interpretations around the law. For example, Jewish tradition calls for a ceremonial cleansing to take place before eating yet no verse in Scripture teaches anything about washing hands before eating. The Jews took their tradition as being of an equal authority to the written law. Jesus taught them to distinguish between the commandments of God versus the doctrines of men
- “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” - Mark 7:8,13. This verse reiterates the message delivered in the first verse.
- “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” - Col 2:8
- The traditions which we are to follow are not meant to be traditions of the world, they are meant to be traditions which Christ has set in place. Thus, be careful not to think that all traditions should be followed, rather the traditions according to Christ’s word and traditions that are aligned with the scripture.
- Ecclesiastical Traditions: 2 Thess 2:25, 2 Thess 3:6, John 21:25, 1 Cor 11:23, Eph 2:20, John 21:25, 2 John 12

+ The Holy Tradition (2 Thess 2:15/2 Thess 3:6)

- Is commanded and necessary to be preserved by the Church. We can see it lived out in Scripture (1 Cor 11:2)
- The Old Testaments attest to the validity of tradition preceding scripture, as the moral law (conscience) preceded and governed for years prior to the written Law (the commandments). For example, the order of sacrifices was officially written in the time of Moses, but we see the Sacrifice of Abel (Gen 4:4), the Sacrifice of Melchizedek, or that of Isaac prior to the written Law. Similarly, the priesthood of Melchizedek preceded that of the institution of the Levitical priesthood. Other examples on tithing (Gen 14:20/Gen 28:22), altars (Gen 8:20; 12:7) can also be found.
- St Basil the great says concerning 2 Thessalonians 3:6: “[Paul] says, “Knowing this, that our old nature is crucified with him, that the body of



sin may be destroyed to the end that we may serve sin no longer.” By these words we are taught that he who is baptized in Christ is baptized in his death, and is not only buried with Christ and planted together with him but is first of all crucified with him. Thus we are instructed that as he who is crucified is separated from the living, so also he who has been crucified with Christ in the likeness of his death is completely set apart from those who live according to the old nature. Hence the Lord commanded us to beware of false prophets, and the apostle says, “And we command you, brothers, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the tradition which they have received of us.” The “old nature” mentioned by the apostle signifies all sin and defilement, taken individually and together, as if they represented his own members.”

- In the old testament, laws on sacrifices were only written after the exodus from Egypt, but it is important to note that the idea of sacrifices, the tradition thereof, began very early without any mention of where they were taught such things (Gen 4:4, 8:20, 12:7) or even on the priesthood (Gen 14:20)
- The church is structured in a way that the people are exposed to both the new and old testaments, and we closely follow the life of Christ throughout the year specifically for this reason.
- Apostles recorded things that they received though Tradition: Jude 14-15 [this story of enoch is not found in scripture and can only be based on oral tradition]. Even St. Paul knows the names of Jannes and Jambres, two sorcerers who resisted Moses in Exodus, but their names were not mentioned. This must have been known through tradition.
- Christ never gave the command to write the Bible. The Bible is encapsulated within the Holy Tradition, but there is much more that was handed down (John 20:30,31; 21:25).
- "In answer to the objection that the doxology in the form “with the Spirit” has no written authority, we maintain that if there is no other instance of that which is unwritten, then this must not be received. But if the greater number of our mysteries are admitted into our constitution without written authority, then, in company with the many others, let us receive this one. For I hold it apostolic to abide also by the unwritten traditions. “I praise you,” it is said, “that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you,”⁴ and “Hold fast the traditions which you have been taught whether by word or by our epistle.” - St. Basil

Theme: Service

Building Block 7:
Orthodoxy in a Block



Lesson 7.5: General Resurrection, Judgment, Heavenly Jerusalem

Objective

To Anticipate a Heavenly Life, not fearing death

Application

As you recite the Creed saying, “we look for the resurrection of the dead”, offer unto Christ the weakness you would like the power of the resurrection to conquer evoking to Him your desire to stand in His glorious presence which has no suffering nor toil.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 12:49,50; Matt 25:31-46; 16:27; 10:28, 33; 13:39-43; 13:49, 50; John 5:28, 29; Lk 16:19-31; Matt 13:24-30; 22:1-11; 10:39; Lk 16:25; Romans 6:3-4; Isaiah 65:17-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53 Rev 7:14-16; 22:1-2](#)



Liturgy: [Agpyea Ninth Hour Litany](#)



Patristics: [Tertullian](#), [Lactantius](#), [Theophilus](#)



Story: [Lazarus and the Rich](#), St. John and the Book of Revelation, [St. Paul taken up into third heaven](#) (2 Corinthians 12), [Isaiah's vision of the Lord in His Glory](#) (Isaiah 6:6)



Other: [Contemplations on the Resurrection.pdf](#) ; [Suspects Q&A on Judgment Day](#); [Overcoming the Finality of Human Death](#); [Do You Ever Wonder What Heaven is Like](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The General Resurrection: A Meeting and a Transition

- The Resurrection is a wonderful meeting. The meeting between two united friends (the body and spirit). The spirit meets the body after seeing the body change into a handful of dust. Then returns more radiant than before, without any blemish.
- The meeting of nations and races of the whole history. It will be a general resurrection since the days of Adam. All nations and races that lived through generations and centuries. Not only shall we meet with our friends, but also with all generations that passed through history.
- The meeting with the Lord will surpass any other meetings in its eminence. Our meeting will be the eternal paradise: being in His presence.
- The Resurrection is a miraculous transition. It is a transition from the limited to the unlimited, from the visible to the invisible, from the world of falsehood to the life of truth.
- In the resurrection man is brought back to his first rank. His spirit restores its dignity, and the body gets back its radiance.
- The eternity presented by the resurrection must be preceded by the final judgment.
- Judgment will not happen immediately after death, but rather it will take place after the general resurrection in the Last Day, for both the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 12:49,50); (Matthew 25: 31-46)
- The General Resurrection (the rising of the bodies from death) is the gate to eternity. Death would have been a decisive evanescence without resurrection. God did not create man for evanescence but for continuance and life. If man was exposed to death because of sin, God laid before him the way of salvation. He raised and rescued him from this death. When God created man, He gave him something eternal-the spirit. He gave His life on the cross so that we can enjoy the heavenly Jerusalem with Him for eternity.
- He who denies the possibility of the resurrection must, consequently, deny the creation from nonentity. He also denies the ability of God as well as His existence. But the believers, who have faith in God and believe in His miracles and in the process of creation and the infinite power of this great Creator, consider the resurrection a very simple matter, easy to believe in.

+ Eternal Judgment does not contradict God's eternal mercies.

Consider discussing: Is it the soul or spirit that will be judged on judgment day? You may refer to the Article by HG in the Resources

- The event of judgment was mentioned many times in the bible (Matt 25:31-46; 16:27; 10:28, 33; 13:39-41; 13:49, 50; John 5:28, 29), by His



teachings (Matt 13:40-43; 25:31-46) and through His parables (Lk 16:19-31; Matt 13:24-30; Matt 22:1-14). For example, He says, "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matt 16:27)

- It is God's mercy that justice will be fulfilled on judgment day. It is not logical that all people will be equally rewarded, whether they labored or not, or whether they were tormented or comforted in their lifetime (Matt 10:39; Lk 16:25), but rather the eternal perdition for the wicked (2Pet 3:7; Jud 1:14-16; 2Cor 5:10). If there is no perdition, we may wonder: why are we bothering ourselves to struggle through spiritual struggling to overcome evil in our life.

+ Overcoming the Finality of Human Death

- "O Death, where is your sting?, O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55)
- According to Tertullian (c.210) "...death is the debt of nature. It is the obvious separation of the body and soul."
- According to Lactantius (c.304-313) "...death is the dissolving of the nature of human beings." And like Tertullian, Lactantius concurs that death is the separation of the body and soul.
- Salvation began with death. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Holy Cross paid for sin and purchased us with His blood.
- Unless we share in the Lord Jesus Christ's death; we will have to endure the second death of torment in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:14). St. Paul teaches us, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death..." (Romans 6:3-4)
- In its simplicity, we entered into salvation through death (the Holy Sacrament of Baptism); and our bodies must continue to be dead to worldly lusts.
- The Ninth Hour Prayer in the Agpeya says: "O, Who tasted death in the flesh in the ninth hour for our sake, we the sinners, put to death our carnal lusts, O Christ, our God, and deliver us. Let my supplication draw close before You, O Lord; according to Your Word give me understanding. Let my petition come before Your presence; according to Your Word revive me."
- We do not believe in the concept of "Purgatory", where the claim is that believers are put in this place for purification by fire after death, and that the staying period is relative to the sins committed. We do not believe in the "excessive virtues of the saints" either, meaning the excessive deeds of a righteous man could be granted to others to shorten their stay in the Purgatory. The church rejects such concepts for the following reasons:
- There are only two places in the story of Lazarus and the rich; The crucified thief went immediately to Paradise with Jesus; The concept of Purgatory wrongfully implies that God's blood is not enough for our salvation; It contradicts the concept of repentance. "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3)
- A number of good deeds do not compensate nor substitute for a number of sins. Only repentance, salvation, and the blood of Jesus can redeem us.

+ Do You Ever Wonder What Heaven is Like

- Theophilus (c. 180) states, "If a vessel being molded has some flaw in it, it is re-molded or remade, so that the vessel can become new and entire. So also it happens to man by death. For somehow, or other, he is broken up, that he may rise in the resurrection whole. By this I mean, spotless, righteous, and immortal."
- "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy" (Isaiah 65:17-18).
- Heaven will be characterized by newness, something beautiful that we have never seen before nor could have imagined. We will be in a glorified state, in the presence of God, where sin and death are no more.
- St. Paul tells us that we will receive a new body with many characteristics of God in heaven (amazingly spiritual, powerful, glory, etc.) since we will be like Him and we will be exalted beyond measure, and full of victory. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).
- The Holy Book of Revelation reveals that the earth will end by physical destruction. All things will be new. His prophets and disciples were given the chance to have a glimpse of what heaven is like. (Revelation 7:14-16).
- St. John tries to provide a physical description, but it is incomprehensible. This will be the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ is the Church, in which we will dwell with God who will forever be in our midst in all His glory. What he saw was beautiful and beyond his imagination and his vocabulary. The kingdom of heaven no longer needs the sun, moon and stars to give us light but the glory of God will be our source of light. There are no more temples in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the lamb are its temple and there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles.
- "And he shows me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the lamb. In the midst of its street and on either side of the river was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The healing of the tree



were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:1-2).

- To see the presence of God, and the tree of life echoes resemblance of the garden of eden:
- In the Book of Genesis creation of heaven and earth has begun and will end in the book of revelation; life on earth.
- In the book of Genesis we see the man fell into temptation by the serpent because he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and disobeyed God and as a result was cast out of the Garden of Eden. But in the book of Revelation the man will be redeemed and invited to eat from the tree of life for healing of all nations.
- In Genesis, we meet Satan for the first time and we see his evil spreading through generation after generation and his life of deceiving human beings. But in Revelation we see a different picture of the son of God, who will cast him away and strip him from all his authority and he will never deceive any nation again.

Theme: Service

Building Block 7:
Orthodoxy in a Block



Lesson 7.6: Examples of Heroes of Faith and How They Defended the Faith

Objective

Learn and meditate on the lives of various saints who lived impactful lives. Learn how there is diversity in the body of Christ.

Application

Once again, meditate on the lives of one of these saints. Find one virtue from their lives and see who you can apply it to your service. Whatever you choose, be prayerful about it and ask God for grace to grow in this virtue through the prayers of the saint.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 10:19](#)



Liturgy: [Commemoration of the Saints](#)



Patristics: [Letters to St. Olympias](#); [Letter from St. Antony](#)



Story: [Abba Arsenius and Abba Moses](#)



Other: [Life of St. Macrina](#), [Life of Archdeacon Habib Girgis](#), [Life of St. Olympias](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + The body of Christ is made up of diverse members, each having a different role or calling, yet they all live for the body. (1 Corinthians 12)
 - We should not try and 'copy' the lives of the saints, but rather meditate and learn from their lives and apply it to our own lives.
 - Consider this story of Abba Arsenius and Abba Moses the Strong:
 - There was a certain brother who came to Scete to see Abba Arsenius, entered the church and entreated the clergy to take him to see him. The clergy said to him, "Refresh yourself a little and you will see him." The brother said to them, "I will eat nothing until I meet and see him." When the clergy heard this they sent a brother with him to show him Abba Arsenius, because his cell was some distance away. And when they had arrived there, they knocked at the door and went inside. After greeting him and praying, they sat down and held their peace. The brother who was from the church answered and said, "I will leave, pray for me." But when the other brother saw that he did not speak with the elder, he said to the brother from the church, "I also will go with you," and they departed together. Then he entreated him, saying, "Take me also to Abba Moses who was a thief." When they went to him, the elder received them with joy, and having refreshed them greatly he dismissed them in peace. The brother who had brought the visitor to Abba Moses said to him, "Behold, I brought you to a man from a foreign land and to an Egyptian, which of the two pleases you? And he answered and said to him, "The man who just received me and refreshed me." When one of the elders heard what had happened, he prayed to God and said, "O Lord, explain this thing to me, for one flees from the world for Your Name's sake and the other welcomes and kindly receives others for Your Name's sake." Behold, suddenly there appeared to him on the river two great boats: Abba Arsenius and the spirit of God were traveling in silence in one; and Abba Moses and the angels of God, feeding the monk with honey from the comb, were in the other.
 - In the liturgy the Priest says that it is the command of our Lord that we share in the commemoration of His saints.
 - Take a look at some examples of saints who served Christ and the church in their own unique way.
- + St. Macrina the Younger (4th century)
 - St. Macrina was the sister of St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa. - She served her brothers and they even saw her as their teacher.
 - She played an important role in defending the church, helping mature and raise her younger brothers. As an example, when St. Basil came home from university, puffed up with pride from his lofty graduation, St. Macrina guided him away from this prideful life and convinced him to use his talents for the service of the church and to not desire fame and attention.
 - St. Basil would go on to be a strong fighter against heresies of the church, but his sister played a large role in this.
 - St. Macrina shows us the power of serving our own household and how keeping each other accountable in love strengthens the body of Christ.



+ St. Archdeacon Habib Guirgis (20th century)

- This saint grew up in a very dark and troublesome time for our Coptic Church, yet he emerged as a light in the darkness.
- At a time when Orthodox education was almost nonexistent, and Protestant and Catholic missionaries increasing in their attempts to catechize Coptic children, Habib Girgis focused on Orthodox education and service.
- He was a very gifted preacher and was known for his creativity in establishing services to provide for the Copts who were now being provided an Orthodox education in the established seminary.
- At the young age of 24, he founded the Sunday School movement and developed it's curriculum which spread around Egypt.
- Today we reap the benefits of his hard work. The Sunday School movement provided many of the great lights in the church such as the late H.H Pope Shenouda, Fr. Matthew the Poor, and H.G Bishop Samuel.
- We can learn from this Saints great dedication and persistence in service. When he began the movement, he was the only Sunday school teacher; after 40 years the movement grew to 400 teachers across Egypt.
- He persisted in using his talents of preaching and delivering to the church throughout modern times.

+ St. Olympias the Deaconess (4th century)

- St. Olympias was a Deaconess in the church in Constantinople, and she lived a life of great service to the church.
- When Saint Olympias was still very young, her parents betrothed her to a nobleman. The marriage was supposed to take place when Saint Olympias reached the age of maturity. The bridegroom soon died, however, and Saint Olympias did not wish to enter into another marriage, preferring a life of virginity.
- After the death of her parents, she inherited a great amount of wealth but chose to distribute it to the poor, the orphaned and the widowed. She also gave generously to the churches, monasteries, hospices and shelters for the downtrodden and the homeless.
- A large part of her service as a Deaconess was serving the hierarchs who came to Constantinople. She regarded her great wealth not as her own, but as God's to be used for the church.
- St. John Chrysostom had high regard for Saint Olympias, and he showed her good will and spiritual love. When this holy hierarchy was unjustly banished, St. Olympias was deeply upset. Despite her sadness, she continued to serve. Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria (385-412), had repeatedly benefited from the generosity of St. Olympias, but turned against her for her devotion to St. John Chrysostom. She had also taken in and fed monks, arriving in Constantinople, whom Patriarch Theophilus had banished from the Egyptian desert.
- At this dark and turbulent time in the life of the Church, St. John Chrysostom praised her for her courage and faith while he was in exile: "Thus women have been crowned victors, while men have been upset; so also boys have been proclaimed conquerors, while aged men have been put to shame. It is indeed always fitting to admire those who pursue virtue, but especially when some are found to cling to it at a time when many are deserting it. Therefore, my sweet lady, you deserve superlative admiration, inasmuch as after so many men, women, and aged persons who seemed to enjoy the greatest reputation have been turned to flight,...you on the contrary after so many battles and such large muster of the enemy are so far from being unstrung, or dismayed by the number of your adversities, that you are all the more vigorous, and the increase of the contest gives you an increase of strength...Therefore I rejoice, and leap for joy; for I will not cease repeating this, and taking about with me everywhere the material of my joy...for I also who am banished to so great a distance gain no small cheerfulness from this cause – I mean your courage." (Letters to Olympias, St. John Chrysostom)
- Her life shows us the power of Christ's love and her commitment to service, even towards those who caused her great grief. She fulfilled Christ's commandment to love her enemies (Matthew 5:44) and go the extra mile in service.

+ Saint Didymus the Blind (c. 4th century)

- St. Didymus the Blind (c. 313 – 398) was a Coptic Orthodox Church theologian of Alexandria. He was known as 'the Blind Seer of Alexandria' and was regarded as the foremost Christian scholar and influential leader of the 4th century. Didymus lost his eyesight at the age of four, but due to his ardent desire for learning, he invented the method of engraved writing for reading with his fingers, fifteen centuries before Braille.
- St. Didymus did not allow his unfortunate circumstances to interrupt his passion.
- St. Anthony the Great wrote to him and said "Do not be sad that you have no eyesight with which the animals, and even the insects, share, but remember that you have divine insight with which you can see the light of divinity."
- His students included Saint Gregory of Nazianzen, Saint Jerome, Saint Palladius, and Rufinus, many of which would go on to defend the faith.
- St. Didymus himself was a strong opponent of the Arian heresy.
- St. Didymus is a strong example of how the Lord uses us despite our apparent limitations.

Theme: Service

Building Block 7:
Orthodoxy in a Block



Lesson 7.7: Eucharist – John 6, True Body & Blood

Objective

To understand that validity of the Eucharist

Application

On the evening before Holy Communion, we should not behave as if it is just another day. We should prepare ourselves for this great mystery and attendance at the evening service of vespers. It is not an appropriate time for parties, and movies and entertainments, especially if they are instead of attendance at the evening service.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 6, I Corinthians 11:27-32](#)



Liturgy: [Institution Narrative](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom, Homily 45](#); St. Athanasius; [St. Irenaeus, Against Heresies Book IV Chap 18.5](#)



Story: [Samaritan Woman](#); Nicodemus & Baptism



Other: [Bible Study by HGBY - John 6](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Defining Eucharist

- Thanksgiving, in greek : efcharistía (ef: good) (charis: grace) (gospel = good news = ef-angelion).
- God intended for food to be an intentional act. It is manual input, unlike breathing or the heart beating, because he wants to give us the good grace and eat from His hands and as a reaction = we give thanks.
- In Eden, Adam and Eve ate from someone else's hands (devil). The eucharistic relationship was broken, God wants to restore this and He will give His own body and blood. Showing God's love.

+ John 6: From Stomach to Spirit

- The chapter is written with a purpose of bringing an understanding of the Eucharist. St. John's gospel is known for its dogmatic focus and unlike the other gospels which are known as synoptic gospels.
- The Goal of chapter 6 is to transition people focused on stomach to focused on spirit. He wants them to understand that He will feed their bodies and soul = purpose of Eucharist.
- 3 Sections: Starting with the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus walks on the Sea and then the Bread from Heaven.
- Verse 4: St. John Speaks of the Passover, just prior of the miracle and discussion. Interestingly enough, no other gospel talk of the passover, yet St. John insists on reminding this point so as to show that Christ is the Passover Lamb.
- Verse 10-11: Similarly like the other gospels, St. John mentions that the Lord had given thanks before blessing and breaking, preparing the mind that this event is related to the Eucharist (ef-charis).
- Verses 14-15: The miracle led people to believe in His greatness but the Lord escaped because their understanding was based on a wrong foundation.

+ Following the Walking on Water

- Verse 22: Christ reiterates, “you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” The focus of the people is still on their stomachs, not their spirit.
- Verse 27: And as such the Lord corrects: “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” He prepares them here to present them a new type of food, one that is not simply a physically perishable nourishment. Nor is it simply symbolic as He will shortly evoke.
- Verse 29: Believing in Him is essential, the teaching He is about to provide, is no easy teaching and somewhat against the old Testament laws



who are prohibited to touch any 'dead body'.

- Verse 30: Ignoring the current miracle, they focus on the feeding of manna and how Moses sustained them in the wilderness 40 years. St. John Chrysostom: "Nothing more senseless, nothing more unreasonable, than these men! While the miracle was yet in their hands, as though none had been done, they spoke after this manner, What sign do you show? and having thus spoken, they do not even allow Him the right of choosing the sign, but think to force Him to exhibit none other than such a one as was wrought in the days of their fathers; wherefore they say, Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, thinking by this to provoke Him to work such a miracle as might supply them with carnal nourishment." - St. John Chrysostom, Homily 45
 - Jews only remembered the manna (miracle related to their stomach) and not all the other miracles (crossing the sea, etc).
 - Verse 32-33: The Lord must then transition them from "Moses gave bread" to "God gave you bread". Also, correcting "bread" is "He" not "it".
 - Like the Samaritan woman, the Lord transitioned her from the water pot, to water where she will never thirst again. Him.
- 2 transition milestones: John 6:35 and John 6:51. Putting faith as foundation, creating a gap between manna and Him being the Bread.

+ The Bread of Life - Is the Eucharist symbolic?

Consider challenging the students that the Lord meant the Bread of Life symbolically as you read verses 35 onwards.

- John 6:52: Points out that the Jews understood exactly that it was His flesh and His Blood - literally. Their question shows they understood it literally.
 - In Chapter 3, when Christ spoke of being born again with Nicodemus, Nicodemus understood it literally. Christ clarified the rebirth.
 - If Christ wanted to clarify in John 6, he would have done so just as He did with Nicodemus.
- John 6:53-57 . Five sayings to show it is not symbolic. "Most assuredly". The sayings are exclusive, meaning it is not optional.
 1. Unless you eat the flesh ...
 2. However, I eat my flesh ...
 3. For My Flesh is food indeed ...
 4. He who eats My flesh ...
 5. so he who feeds on Me ...
- John 6:58 and I Corinthians 11:27-32 : A mere remembrance wouldn't give you eternal life, guilty of the Blood of God because of a remembrance?
- John 6:60 and John 6:66: It was a hard saying, why? Many disciples walked away because of this saying. Again, why? He stood firm that it was not symbolic. He didn't correct them, disciples!, and say it is symbolic, don't go away. Instead He says, "Do you also want to go away?"
- "For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity." - St. Irenaeus.
- St. Athanasius (c. 295 - 373 A.D.) "You shall see the Levites bringing loaves and a cup of wine, and placing them on the table. So long as the prayers of supplication and entreaties have not been made, there is only bread and wine. But after the great and wonderful prayers have been completed, then the bread becomes the Body, and the wine the Blood, of our Lord Jesus Christ....Let us approach the celebration of the mysteries. This bread and this wine, so long as the prayers and supplications have not taken place, remain simply what they are. But after the great prayers and holy supplications have been sent forth, the Word comes down into the bread and wine -- and thus is His Body conformed. (Sermon to the Newly Baptized, from Eutyches)

Theme: Service

Building Block 7:
Orthodoxy in a Block



Lesson 7.8: A Royal Priesthood: The Life of Sacrifice

Objective

To understand that as Christians, we are all called to be priests, prophets, and kings and to learn how we live a life of sacrifice as members of the royal priesthood spoken of in Scripture

Application

Begin by focusing on sacrificing your will this week, especially in the small things. Whether it is deferring to your siblings on what restaurant to eat at, or using your classmates' idea for a project as opposed to yours, any denial of your own will become the foundation for you living a priestly life of sacrifice.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Peter 2:9](#), [Galatians 2:20](#), [Psalm 51:16-17](#), [Hebrews 13:15-16](#), [Psalm 4:5](#), [Ephesians 5:29](#), [Romans 12:1](#), [Ephesians 4:1](#), [Ephesians 2:19](#), [1 John 3:16](#), [Ephesians 1:22-23](#).



Liturgy: [Fraction to the Son: You are the Logos](#)



Patristics: [St. Clement of Alexandria on the Common Priesthood](#), [St. Didymus the Blind](#), [St. Severus of Antioch](#)



Story: [St. Anba Paul the first Hermit](#), [St. Longinus](#), [St. Nicholas](#), [St. Demiana](#).



Other: [HHP3 - Priesthood.pdf](#) ; [FrTM - 1 Peter.pdf](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Are we all Priests?

- A priest is someone consecrated to the service of a divinity and through whom worship, prayer, sacrifice, or other service is offered to the object of worship.
- But in what sense are we kings and priests?
- The meaning of the royal priesthood can be found in the Old Testament. The Lord promises a kingdom and a priesthood to His people: "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Ex. 19:6); "But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, They shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, And in their glory you shall boast." (Is. 61:6).
- In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter sees the Old Testament promises fulfilled in Christians: "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own" (1 Peter 2:9)
- Some denominations misinterpret this verse and make the claim that St. Peter is saying that there is no need for the office of the Priesthood. This is not the correct Orthodox understanding; the office of the priesthood is what we call the Sacramental Priesthood (i.e. ordained by the Bishop to serve in the clergy), whereas the common priesthood to all Christians is the Royal Priesthood, given to us during Chrismation.
- This is the reason that in the Fraction to the Son, the Priest prays "And out of all nations, He called to Himself a chosen race, a kingdom, a priesthood, a holy nation, and justified people." This was granted to us in the new Covenant which Christ established, as explained by St. Didymus the Blind: "Under the old dispensation, the priesthood and the kingship were two different things. No one could be both a king and a priest. But afterwards came the gospel, which united these two offices in Christ. From this it follows that the people whom he has chosen will be both royal and priestly at the same time. Some people wonder how it is possible, seeing that we are called from all the nations on earth, for us to be regarded as one holy people. The answer to this is that although we are from many different nations, the fact that we have all repented of our sins and accepted a common will and a common mind gives those who have repented one doctrine and one faith. When there is a soul and heart common to all believers, then they are called one people".
- St. Severus of Antioch also adds to this saying "As believers in Christ we have received exactly the same things as he already has. Since he is of the royal tribe and became a high priest, so too have we been enriched by these gifts. Having them, we have become a holy nation and a people for safekeeping, that is, for being kept apart from the world; for we have entered into his rest."
- Just as the role of a sacramental Priest is to offer up sacrifices on behalf of the people (the liturgical offering of bread and wine), as Christians we are still called to live a life of sacrifice in order to fulfill our role in the royal priesthood.



- St. Clement of Alexandria speaks of this: "That we are a chosen people is clear enough, but Peter said that we are a royal people because we have been called to share Christ's kingdom and we belong to him. We are a priesthood because of the offering which is made in prayers and in the teachings by which souls which are offered to God are won."
- The priesthood is the offering of sacrifices. What sacrifices can a layman offer to God?
- Discuss some of the ways we fulfill our role in the royal priesthood through spiritual sacrifices as explained by Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty

+ Sacrificing our own Ego/Will

- Sacrificing our own ego is perhaps the greatest of sacrifices we can make, and likely the most difficult.
- There is a saying that in our heart we have both Christ and our will, and there is a throne and a cross. We make the choice of who sits where. When we choose to sacrifice our will, we let Christ reign in our lives and through this we may sing with the apostle saying: "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." I have crucified the "ego," so Christ may live in me (Galatians 2:20).
- This is especially important in our life of service as it is very common for the devil to try and sow division by tempting each person to follow their own will.
- St. Anba Paul, the first hermit, gave up all his wealth and went to live in the wilderness. He did not want the earthly but the heavenly life.

+ The Sacrifice of Humility

- The sacrifice of humility is one that we perform before both God and man.
- As David, the psalmist said: "For you do not desire a sacrifice, or else I would give it.; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, these O God you will not despise." (Psalm 51: 16-17)
- This form of sacrifice arises from the practice of sacrificing our will/ego.
- St. Lucianus became a monk after his wife departed. He and his son St. Longinus, a monk, lived in the church. God revealed their virtues by performing many miracles through them. For fear of the vain glory of this world St. Longinus went to Egypt with his father's permission. He and his father lived a life of humility and service.

+ The Sacrifice of Good Deeds

- When we go out of our way to do good deeds and serve others, we are living a life of sacrifice. As St. Paul said, "Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb.13:16). David the Psalmist said, Offer the sacrifices of righteousness" (Ps. 4:5). Doing good and righteous deeds involve sacrifice and carrying the cross, and the Lord smells them as acceptable sacrifices, through His cross.
- St. Nicholas once heard of a man who lost his wealth and had three daughters who passed the age of marriage. This man was going to allow his daughters to live in sin in order to have food to live. St. Nicholas took 100 dinars of his father's money, tied it in a sack and threw it through the man's window at night. He did this deed three times to help this man marry his daughters. St. Nicholas did not hesitate and he did it in secret. He was able to save the daughters from life of sin.

+ The Sacrifice of Suffering

- When someone is in love with another, they take pride in the sufferings they are willing to go through in order to serve and be with the other.
- When we go through tribulations for Christ and for those we serve, it is a sacrifice that shows a powerful love.
- St. Demiana loved Christ with all her heart; she was willing to denounce her own father when he abandoned his faith.

+ The Sacrifice of the Flesh

- In Orthodoxy, we do not look at the body as an enemy, but rather we cherish and nourish it (Ephesians 5:29).
- When the Bible or the holy Fathers speak about the enmity of the flesh, they mean the desires of the flesh.
- Let us then control the flesh through the bonds of love and offer it on the altar. Let us hold on to the cross of the Lord offering the members of the body as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). Let us slay the members of the flesh and not present them as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present them as instruments of righteousness to God. Hence, all the desires, emotions and feelings of the members of the body are sanctified to become energy helping the spirit instead of a force fighting the spirit.

+ The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

- St. Paul commands us saying: "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving



thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15).

- The sacrifice of thanksgiving likens us to the angels, which is why the Church teaches all her children that in all prayers, vigils, services, we begin with thanksgiving.

+ Live the royal priesthood

- We have all been given this blessing of being members of the Royal Priesthood, but we must respond to our calling and live a life "worthy of the calling with which you were called." (Ephesians 4:1)
- With God's grace, we can live this life of sacrifice and through it serve all of His children.
- When we are baptized we become members of the household of God. We become a family. St. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:19 “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”
- The fulfillment of being God’s family is the church. The church is Koinonia which means fellowship with God. Jesus laid down His life for us, the family. He taught us to sacrifice and use our talents to serve others. “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” 1 John 3:16
- The church is the Body of Christ, He is the head. The church is eternal. It is never ending. It is God on earth. “He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Ephesians 1:22-23
- We are connected to the head. We participate in the life of Christ by being a member of His body.



Theme: Service

Lesson 7.9: The Best Way to Live Among our Neighbors in a Loving Way, but Still Stand by our Faith

Building Block 7:
Orthodoxy in a Block



Objective

To understand how to love our neighbors as ourselves while we still reject to walk with them in ways that do not please God

Application

Consistency in attending liturgies, Sunday school and bible study meetings creates the feeling of belonging to our church community. Let's not neglect this commitment, even if we sometimes don't feel like it. Developing such discipline will help us, when we need the courage to make tough decisions, such as walking away from ungodly environments.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Romans 12:17-19](#), [John 17](#), [Romans 12:2](#), [James 1:7](#), [Matthew 24:12-13](#), [Leviticus 19:17-18](#), [Matthew 5:13, 2](#), [Corinthians 6:14-15](#), [Romans 12:9](#), [1 Peter 5:8](#), [1 Corinthians 5:12-13](#), [Song of Solomon 2:15](#), [Ephesians 4:17](#)



Liturgy: [Thanksgiving prayer](#)



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



Story: [Daniel](#), [Esther](#), [St. Anba Abraam](#)



Other: [Carrying Faith to Relationships by HGBA](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What does it mean to be Christian?

Consider reading Philippians 3:17-4:1 then discuss: Why do you think Paul says what he does in verse 17? What emotions does Paul display in verse 18? Verse 19 describes further the "enemies of the cross," How does this sound like our world today? (There are many selfish, indulgent, pre-occupied people in our world. most don't think of God.) From where does Paul say we are citizens, and how should this affect our way of life? (Heaven...this should focus us, center us, and motivate us.)

Paul points out that we need to be different. Because of Christ and because of the joy we have, our behavior should not be like that of someone of this earth. We cannot claim to be Christians and cling to self-made rules. Neither can we claim to be Christians without being different from non-Christians.

- Love one another
- Sacrifice for others
- Pray for everyone specially for those who are unjust and cause harm
- Our love for everyone and for everything should be through or within the scope of our love for God.
- St. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans 12:17-19 "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord."
- If you find fault with someone who is plotting against you, why expose yourself to the same accusation?" St. John Chrysostom
- In the Thanksgiving prayer we pray for ourselves and others daily. "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..."

+ Christ is a great teacher.

- God meant for us to live in the world, not to isolate ourselves from our neighbors. In His prayer to the Father, in John 17, Christ prays for His disciples not to be taken out of the world but to be kept from the evil one.
- He wants us to separate from the evil ways of the world, while still living in it. He told us "Not be conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2), and to be "unstained by the world" (James 1:27).



- “The fashion of this world is groveling and worthless, and temporal as well. It has nothing noble or uplifting about it but is wholly perverted.” Johns Chrysostom
- The morality level in the world is rapidly declining causing many to stumble. However, as Christians, we should not be surprised. Matthew 24:12-13 says: “...because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”
- It is important to have positive relationships with our neighbors (believers and non-believers). Love our neighbors as ourselves (Leviticus 19:17-18). God’s glory is the goal.
- We are the light of the world and the salt of the earth “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” Matthew 5:13
- “Be not conformed” says the apostle, “to this world: but be ye transformed in the renewal of the mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” St. Clement of Alexandria
- We are called to love, serve, and work with non-believers. However, St. Paul advises us to be “unequally yoked” with them. 2 Cor. 6:14-15
- God also tells us to “Take my yoke upon you” Matthew 11:2; just like a lead ox, where part of the yoke is around us, and the other part is with Jesus. Surrendering our will to Him and allowing him to lead is the only safe way to live in this world.

+ How can we keep our faith in a mostly faithless world?

- We must learn about God’s word and truth to be able to discern what is right and wrong. We must be guided by His Words and teachings.
- We should interact with our neighbors but keep away from their compromising behaviors. “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good”. Romans 12:9 God loves the sinners but does not accept sin.
- We should be watchful and not conform to the sinful behaviors of others : “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8
- Prayer is an essential part of our Christian life that ensures our peace and maintains our connection with Christ. It is also an effective way to ask God to work in the lives of our neighbors and lead them to Him.
- We should love our neighbors better than the world does.
- We should not judge others, but exhibit love without condemnation “For what have I to do with judging those outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”” (1 Cor. 5:12-13).
- Being part of the church community allows us to stay strong in our faith and not feel alone. (For example: getting involved in a church service, attending meetings and bible studies on a regular basis..etc)
- It is possible to love our neighbors as ourselves, while we still reject walking with them in ways that do not please God. The Holy Spirit grants us the strengths to serve all people- including those who hate us. God also gives us the wisdom to discern gray areas that may lead us away from Him, as long as we abide in Him and keep him in the center of our lives.

+ Guidance for living a Christian life

- Beware of the little foxes: “Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom” (Song of Solomon 2:15)
- We are to bear fruit and not be like the fig tree that has leaves without fruits (Hypocrisy).
- There are certain behaviors that our society may accept but are not acceptable to God, such as hypocrisy, little lies, profane language...etc.. We need to be vigilant in recognizing those “little foxes/ sins”, the gray areas that can lead to much bigger sins and slowly lead us away from God.
- The difference between Christians and unbelievers is that we have faith in Christ and unbelievers have faith in something else. Thus, St. Paul emphasizes that believers must not think or act like unbelievers “must no longer walk as the Gentiles” (Eph. 4:17).
- Daniel refused to give up his faith and love for the true God.
- Esther held on to her faith despite knowing of the persecution against the Jews. She refused to protect her status as a queen and risked her life to save her people.
- St. Anba Abraam was meek, humble, had a pure life, and he prayed much in seclusion. He was charitable to the multitude of poor that came to the bishopric residence. He gave them all what he had of money. He was well read of the Holy books. Many miracles were performed, through his prayers, on his hands.

Theme: Service

Building Block 7: Orthodoxy in a Block



Lesson 7.10: Simple but Not Easy Ways to Defend the Faith

Objective

To understand that the faith has always had to be defended. Apostles and saints of the early Church made that defense in various ways.

Application

Ask students to pray during the coming week that God will help them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 5:1-14](#), [Joshua 24:15](#), [Ephesians 6:11](#), [John 10:9](#), [Philippians 1:7](#), [1 Peter 3:15](#), [2 Timothy 2:24-25](#), [Colossians 4:5-6](#), [Matthew 22:36-40](#), [Acts 9:1-22](#), [Acts 17:22](#), [Romans 1:18-25](#), [1 Corinthians 1-2](#).



Liturgy: [Introduction to the Midnight Praises](#)



Patristics: [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#), [St. Augustine](#).



Story: [St. Paul](#), [St. Augustine](#).



Other: [How Can I Be a Faithful Christian in a Politically Correct Society?](#), [Apologetic Fathers: Giving a defense by Fr. Michael](#), [Apologetics literature](#).

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Defining Apologetics

- Apologetics may be simply defined as the defense of the Christian faith.
- The word “apologetics” derives from the Greek word apologia, which was originally used for a speech of defense or an answer given in reply.
- In ancient Athens it referred to a defense made in the courtroom as part of the normal judicial procedure. After the accusation, the defendant was allowed to refute the charges with a defense or reply (apologia). The accused would attempt to “speak away” (apo—away, logia—speech) the accusation.
- The word appears 17 times in noun or verb form in the New Testament, and both the noun (apologia) and verb form (apologeomai) can be translated “defense” or “vindication” in every case.

+ What are the challenges today?

- In America, we live among many people who are not Orthodox, and in some cases not Christian. What is the best way to live among our neighbors in a loving way, but still stand by our faith? [Matthew 5:1-14](#)
- What can be some simple but not easy ways of defending the faith? [Joshua 24:15](#); [Ephesians 6:11](#)
- Why do we need to defend our faith? So that everyone can receive eternal life. Jesus said “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” [John 10:9](#)
- Do you think most people are ready to defend the faith when they are young, or do they become ready as their knowledge grows? Growing the knowledge through prayer, reading, learning and relying on the word of God. Listening to sermons. The holy Bible has all the answers.

+ Why do we have to share our faith and defend it?

- When was the last time you recommended something to a friend or family member? Maybe you loved a certain menu item at your favorite restaurant, or maybe you told your friends about a movie you saw last week that they just had to see. Or maybe you recommended a TV show.
- No matter what, chances are you’ve made hundreds of recommendations in your lifetime, and you probably didn’t think twice about it.
- Why? Because, as human beings, we love for others to share in our joy when we find something awesome! We love to tell others about our



favorite experiences because we want them to experience what we have! The same is true when it comes to our relationship with Jesus.

+ What are some steps that we must take?

- Commit to deepening your own understanding, Philippians 1:7. As Christians, we are all called to defend our faith. Every Christian is expected by God to do it at some point in their life. 1 Peter 3:15 says, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;”
- Be mature: Even if the person you are talking to is immature, don’t conform to that behavior. Take your time to ponder questions or objections before you answer them. That way you will give the wisest answers possible. If you are immature, people won’t take you - let alone your core beliefs - seriously. 2 Timothy 2:24-25
- “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Colossians 4:5-6
- Be wise: Not everyone who makes objections to Christianity cares about our response. Some people just love to argue. When we are dealing with non-believers who just want to put Christians down, we ought to answer their questions briefly. If it gets to the point where they continuously belittle us or our faith that means it is time to drop the conversation. If we stay in these conversations too long, it may shake our faith and cause us to doubt what we believe. However, if a non-believer genuinely wants to know about Christianity, then it is important to go in depth and give them as much wisdom as they can handle. This is the person we want to really focus on. This is the person that is open enough to take what you have to say seriously.
- Love: Remember the two most important commandments Jesus said the two most important things are loving God and loving people, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40)
- St. Cyril of Alexandria wrote about the commandments “For the person who is grounded in the love of God clearly also loves his neighbor in all things himself. The kind of person who fulfills these two commandments experiences all the commandments.”

+ How did the church fathers defend the faith?

- St. Paul: Read Acts 9:1-22 and Acts 17:22 This story of Saint Paul’s conversion from the days when he was Saul, persecutor of the Church, emphasizes the point that Paul had to grow and change dramatically in order to become a defender of the faith.
- If we display God’s love in the way we respond to questions and criticisms of our faith, God can work powerfully through our words to bring people into a relationship with him.
- In his Epistle to the Romans, he dealt with apologetics. According to St. Paul, God’s existence and divinity are clearly revealed in nature. All human beings, he says, “knew God,” but they suppressed the truth, refusing to acknowledge God and falling into idolatry instead. Romans 1:18-25
- Paul’s letters elsewhere repeatedly deal with apologetic issues that arose as both Jews and pagans who had confessed Christ and become associated with the churches Paul had founded developed radically different interpretations of the meaning of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1-2 Paul warned the Corinthian believers against trying to accommodate the gospel to the wisdom of the Greeks.
- St. Augustine was one of the greatest apologists and theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries. He became a Christian after trying Manicheism, a dualistic philosophy that viewed both good and evil as ultimate realities, and Platonism, which convinced him that Manicheism was false and so, by his own testimony, helped him on the path to Christianity.
- Augustine’s teaching on apologetical issues has inspired apologists and theologians from his day to the present. In his approach, faith and reason are interactive in coming to know the true God in Jesus Christ. Reason precedes faith in that a rational mind and recognition of the truth of what is to be believed must exist if we are to believe anything. But faith precedes reason in that the truths of the Christian faith are in large part unseen—not only is God invisible, but the redemptive acts of God in Jesus Christ occurred in the past and cannot be directly witnessed. Because these truths cannot be seen, they must be accepted on the authority of God’s revelation as given in Scripture and witnessed by the church. These truths can then be understood as the believer comes to appreciate their significance from the inside.
- St. Augustine says, “For understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore, do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe that thou mayest understand.”

+ What is our goal?

- As Christians: Learn to defend without getting defensive
- Argue without being argumentative, and speak the truth in love.



- Learn from Jesus and His disciples how they gave people reasons to believe.
- Learn the difference between knowing and showing that Christianity is true.
- Learn and discover our role and the role of the Holy Spirit in personal evangelism.
- Liturgy Connection: The Introduction of the Midnight Praises: Arise, O you children of the light ...

Theme: Service

Building Block 7: Orthodoxy in a Block



Lesson 7.II: Adapting without Conforming

Objective

To understand that one can live in the world without being of the world and how to adapt to our surroundings and understand how to communicate and love everyone without being conformed to the world's and society's values.

Application

Adapt to the culture you are living in without compromising the truth of the Gospel. Believers in Jesus Christ are simply in the world—physically present—but not of it, not part of its values (John 17:14-15). Step away when you recognize the environment around you is starting to change the way you think. Immerse yourself in God's Word. Know the truth inside and out so you can recognize lies when you hear them.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 17:14-15](#), [Acts 17:24](#), [John 3:16](#), [1 John 2:15](#), [1 John 5:19](#), [3 John 1:9](#), [1 Corinthians 9:20-22](#), [Roman 12:2](#), [Roman 12:2](#), [1 Corinthians 6:12](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:21](#), [Revelation 3:15-16](#), [Matthew 5:13-16](#), [1 Corinthians 9:20-22](#), [2 Corinthians 5:15](#), [Colossians 1:13](#), [2 Corinthians 5:17](#), [Romans 12:2](#).



Liturgy: [The Conclusion to the Coptic Catholic Epistle Reading](#)



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



Story: [Diotrephes](#)



Other: [Ling Between the Words Sermon](#), [The Letter of St. Paul to the Romans](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

Consider having this discussion: Most of us have friends that we share common interests with, but you may also have a friend who is the opposite of who you are. In our relationships with others, it is important to know who you are.

Do you back down when someone does not agree with what you believe? Are you easily influenced by what others say? Do you care more about fitting in, than being true to who you are on the inside?

You need to know who you are because otherwise you could become someone else's idea of who you should be.

+ Definitions:

- What does Adapting really mean? According to the dictionary, it is to adjust oneself to different conditions, environment, etc.,
- What does it mean to be conformed? According to the dictionary it is to be similar or identical
- To be conformed to this world is to be identified with and shaped by the world's values and pleasures.

+ What happens when we conform to the world?

- The Bible uses the word world in three different ways: it can refer to the material universe, the inhabited world, or the earth which God created. "The God who made the world and everything in it..." (Acts 17:24).
- It can also refer to people as in John 3:16—"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, ...".
- And in its negative connotation, it can mean those who are opposed to God, "Do not love the world or anything in the world." 1 John 2:15
- However, conforming to the world means opposing God because Satan is the ruler of this world.
- The first Adam was created in the image of God and given the authority of this world. But Adam rebelled against God. When he did this, he actually took sides with Satan and thus came under the rule of Satan. So originally God gave the authority of the world to Adam, but Adam handed it over to Satan. Thus, Satan gained control of the world and became the ruler of this world, "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19).
- In saying this, however, let us keep in mind that God is always the sovereign ruler of the universe. It is only through God's permissive will



that Satan is allowed to rule the world.

- Satan's purpose is to draw men's hearts away from God and from doing His will. Satan has something attractive and appealing to offer each person. He deceives people into thinking that the things of this life are all that matter. He wants them to spend their lives seeking after these things so they will never have time to think about God or about life after death.
- According to St. John Chrysostom, when St. Paul says, "Be not fashioned according to this world," he chooses the word "fashion" in order to indicate the fleetingness of this world of passions. "Be not fashioned according to the passions," one might say. Also, the word St. Paul uses for "world" is *aeon*, which can also be translated as "age" or "the world according to time"—once again to indicate the fleetingness of worldly delights... If you speak of riches, or of glory, or beauty of person, or of luxury, or of whatever other of the world's seemingly great things, it is a fashion only, not reality, a show and a mask, not any abiding substance."
- According to St. John Chrysostom, St. Paul chooses his words to show that "the world's ways are a fashion, but virtue's ways are not a fashion, but a kind of real form with a natural beauty of its own, lacking the trickeries and fashions of outward things, which no sooner appear than they end up as nothing. If, then, you throw the fashion aside, you will speedily come to the form."
- St. Isaac the Syrian writes: "'The world' is the general name for all the passions. When we call the passions by a common name, we call them the world. But when we wish to distinguish them by their special names, we call them passions. The passions are the following: love of riches, desire for possessions, bodily pleasure from which comes sexual passion, love of honor which gives rise to envy, lust for power, arrogance and pride of position, the craving to adorn oneself with luxurious clothes and vain ornaments, the itch for human glory which is a source of anger and resentment, and physical fear. Where these passions cease to be active, there the world is dead'. Someone has said of the saints that while alive they were dead; for though living in the flesh, they did not live for the flesh. See for which of these passions you are alive. Then you will know how far you are alive to the world, and how far you are dead to it."
- An example of someone conformed to the world is Diotrephes, as St. John explained, "who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us." 3 John 1:9.
- The Church knows how important it is for us not to conform to the world, so we read at the Conclusion to the Coptic Catholic Epistle Reading, "do not love the world or the things in the world. The world is passing away, and its lust; but he who does the will of God abides forever. Amen."

+ Adapting without Conforming: How can we keep this balance?

- St. Paul says, "and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Corinthians 9:20-22).
- And he also says, "And do not be conformed to this world" (Roman 12:2)
- How can we do both? How does not being conformed to the world fit with becoming a Jew to win them etc.? The answer is in John Berry's Model.

+ John Berry's Model

- When people immigrate to another country, they have to make some adjustments and adapt. However, they have to learn how to integrate well in order to live a normal life in their new homeland. Let us use Berry's model to explore four different ways of adapting to a new culture.
- Assimilation: They may assimilate which means that an individual does not wish to maintain his/her identity and seek daily interaction with the other culture. But the Bible teaches us to, "And do not be conformed to this world" (Roman 12:2); "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Corinthians 6: 12); and "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5: 21)
- Marginality: when there is little interest in cultural maintenance, or in relations with other groups. But the Bible tells us, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3: 15-16).
- Separation: when there is a value placed on holding onto one's original culture, and at the same time a wish to avoid interaction with others. We cannot live in isolation from the society we live in. We were told to be salt and light to the people around us "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." (Matthew 5: 13-16).
- Integration: when there is an interest both in maintaining one's original culture and in daily interactions with others. And this is what St. Paul talked about, "and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those [who are] under the law, as under the law, that I might



win those [who are] under the law; to those [who are] without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those [who are] without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all [men,] that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:20-22). This is the balance we need to have to adapt to our new culture without compromising our own values.

+ *Applying this model to us, Christians. Do we belong to the Assimilation group, Marginality group, Separation group, or the Integrated group? Discuss!*

- Know who we are.
- As Christians, we are foreigners in a strange land, waiting to go home to our dear Father. How are we integrating into this world’s culture? How are we allowing it to shape our thoughts, actions, and desires?
- St. Paul says, “He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” 2 (Corinthians 5:15). And “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13).
- It is no longer a matter of what we are allowed or not allowed to do; it becomes a matter of serving Him and His interests, and not our own.
- As a new creation, (2 Corinthians 5:17) we are different from the world. We don’t need to fit in. We are called to stand out!
- We are lights of hope to those who are stumbling around in spiritual darkness. We shine when we live our life in such a way that those who don't believe can see Jesus in us and know that there is something we have that is good and wonderful, something they want for themselves, too.
- How shall we know the balance? The answer is: “Be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2).
- Do not be afraid to tell your friends ‘no’ when you do not want to go along with what they are doing
- We should not hate or despise the world. We can still enjoy the beautiful creation God has given us while avoiding its dangerous darkness. The world's values are not Christian values. The world's pleasures are not the pleasures of an Ambassador of Christ, tempting as they may be. Personal pleasure is no longer our goal in life, as it once was, but rather the worship of God and living our lives as light in the dark.
- Make every effort to live, think, and act like an Ambassador for Christ's Kingdom.



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