



COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

9th Grade





Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Overview and Milestones	6
Acknowledgements	7
Providing Feedback	7
Disclaimer	7
Building Block 1: My Body Image	8
Lesson 1.1: What Does the Bible Say About Our Bodies?	9
Lesson 1.2: Our Bodies and Dancing	11
Lesson 1.3: Our Bodies and Drugs and Alcohol	13
Lesson 1.4: Our Bodies and Food	15
Lesson 1.5: Our Bodies and Sex	17
Lesson 1.6: The Sacrament of Marriage	19
Lesson 1.7: Immorality in 1st Century Corinth Compared to 21st Century	21
Lesson 1.8: Sins of the Tongue	23
Lesson 1.9: An Open Discussion Review: "My Life, My Choice"	25
Building Block 2: My Spirit	26
Lesson 2.1: What Does the Bible Say About Spirit?	27
Lesson 2.2: Bearing Fruit	29
Lesson 2.3: Fruit of the Spirit	31
Lesson 2.4: The Way of Victory: Overcome the World	33
Lesson 2.5: Spiritual Maturity	35
Lesson 2.6: Abide in Christ	37
Building Block 3: Inspiring Role Models	39
Lesson 3.1: Intercession and Role Models of the World and of Saints	40
Lesson 3.2: Models of Martyrs - Persevering Faith	42
Lesson 3.3: Models of Repentance	44
Lesson 3.4: Inspiring Role Models: From Repentance to Evangelism	46



Lesson 3.5: Trusting Our Leaders	49
Lesson 3.6: Becoming a Godly Role Model	51
Lesson 3.7: Jesus Our Ultimate Role Model: Baptism, a Second Chance	53
Lesson 3.8: Jesus' Model on the Cross: Forgiveness	55
Building Block 4: The Divided Kingdom - OT Timeline 3- Spiritual Warfare	57
Lesson 4.1: The Divided Kingdom, Northern Kings: Lost Warfare	58
Lesson 4.2: The Divided Kingdom, Northern Prophets: Tools for Warfare	60
Lesson 4.3: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Kings: Pride	63
Lesson 4.4: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Kings: Faithfulness	65
Lesson 4.5: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Prophets: Do not Procrastinate!	67
Lesson 4.6: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Prophets: Moral Courage	69
Lesson 4.7: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Prophets: God's Love	71
Building Block 5: The Way, The Truth and The Life	74
Lesson 5.1: Introduction - The Fall of Man and the Birth of Sin	75
Lesson 5.2: The Way 1 - What Does it Mean to be Lost?	77
Lesson 5.3: The Way 2 - God's Way and Our Way	79
Lesson 5.4: The Way 3 - How Can We Find Our Way?	81
Lesson 5.5: The Truth 1 - Absolute Truth vs. Relativism	83
Lesson 5.6: The Truth 2 - Recognizing the Need for truth	85
Lesson 5.7: The Truth 3 - The Deceiver	87
Lesson 5.8: The Life 1 - Reasons for not Obeying the Commandments	89
Lesson 5.9: The Life 2 - Having and Losing	91
Lesson 5.10: The Life 3 - Living in the Light VS. Living in Darkness	94
Lesson 5.11: Trusting God - The Way, the Truth and The Life	97
Building Block 6: Independence with God	100
Lesson 6.1: Spiritual Disciple	101
Lesson 6.2: Our Gifts and Talents	104
Lesson 6.3: Children of God	107
Lesson 6.4: The Beatitudes	109
Lesson 6.5: Life of Sanctification	112
Lesson 6.6: Life of Purity	115
Lesson 6.7: Life of Prayers	118
Lesson 6.8: Life of Faithfulness	121



Building Block 7: Becoming Radiant	124
Lesson 7.1: Christ is the Source of Light	125
Lesson 7.2: Light of the World	128
Lesson 7.3: Do What Jesus Wants Us to Do	131
Lesson 7.4: Make a Difference	134
PK-G12: VERSION 1, 2020-2021 – DRIVE ARCHIVE	138



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

Self-Control & Independence

Rationale: *This is a pivotal year, and their desire to experiment peaks. It is crucial they learn the virtue of self-control as they will surely be tempted to exceed appropriate levels. However, if they've been well grounded over the past 2 years, they should have a strong sense of right and wrong as well as a desire for orthodoxy (provided the previous years were well delivered). Controlling these peaking desires thus needs to be presented as a beautiful virtue which they can choose and aspire for as an aspect of their independence.*

Psych Analysis



Physical

High energy, physically healthy and nearing maturity



Intellect

Learn best when related to their personal lives, easily bored, have weak understanding of cause and effect



Social

Peak of experimentation (drinking, drugs, smoking, sex), close friendships important, show off, test rules and limits, struggle with identity



[Detailed Characteristics](#)

Building Blocks

BB1: My Body Image

My Body Image, Dancing, Drugs & Alcohol, Food, Sex, Marriage, Comparing us to the Corinthians, Sins of the Tongue, "My Life, My Choice"

BB3: Inspiring Role Models

Intercessions, Martyrs: St. Abanoub, St. Barbara, Leaders: St. Anthony, Trusting Our Leaders: Numbers 12, Repentance: Adulterous Woman, St. Moses, St. Mary, Becoming a Role Model, Jesus' Baptism, Jesus on the Cross, Q&A & Review

BB5: The Way, The Truth and the Life

The Birth of Sin, What Does Mean to be Lost?, How Can We Find Our Way?, God's Way and Our Way, Source of Disobedience, Absolute Truth, Trusting God, Having and Losing, Living in the Light VS. Living in darkness, Recognizing the Need for truth, Q&A & Review

BB2: My Spirit

What Does the Bible Say About Spirit?, Bearing Fruit, Fruit of the Spirit, Overcome the World, Spiritual Maturity, Abide in Christ

BB4: The Divided Kingdom

Northern Kingdom Kings, Northern Kingdom Prophets, Southern Kingdom Kings, Southern Kingdom Prophets

BB6: Following the Way, Truth, and Life

Spiritual Disciple, Our Gifts and Talents, Children of God, The Beatitudes, Life of Sanctification, Life of Purity, Life of Prayers, Life of Faithfulness

BB7: Becoming Radiant

Christ is the Source of Light, Light of the World, Do What Jesus Wants Us to Do, Make a Difference, Q&A & Review

End of Year Milestones & Objectives



Scripture

- + Comfortable/Know the events that lead to the divided kingdom and their destruction/captivity
- + Can use scripture to answer modern day struggles (Dancing, Drugs, Alcohol, Sex)



Spiritual

- + By the end of this year, you may have a first wave of willing pre-servants
- + Growing in self-reflection
- + Trying to trust God
- + Know different types of prayers and how/when to use



Social

- + Determining Personal Strength & Talents
- + Understands the dangers of modern struggles (Dancing, Drugs, Alcohol, Sex)
- + Purity: If struggling, at least not encouraging others
- + Value loyalty of others, and being loyal



Rituals

- + Many should be choosing to fast the entirety of fasts
- + Confessing regularly



Acknowledgements

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

Providing Feedback

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

Disclaimer

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



Building Block I: My Body Image

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block I: My Body



Lesson I.I: What Does the Bible Say About Our Bodies?

Objective

To understand how to define our bodies by Godly standards rather than by appearance

Application

Dress and care for our bodies in a Godly manner as a temple of the Holy Spirit

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 1:26](#); [Lev 11:45](#); [Matthew 5:48](#); [I Corinthians 3:16-17](#); [I Corinthians 6:19-20](#)



Liturgy: [Basil Reconciliation Prayer](#)



Patristics: St. Clement; St. Anthony; St. Basil; Cyrus of Alexandria; St. John Cassian



Story: [St. Perpetua](#); [St. Simon the Tanner](#)



Other: [What is Man by HH Pope Shenouda III](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + If our bodies will return to dust, then why should we take care to treat them a certain way?
 - Genesis 1:26: “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”
 - One view of the body is that it is a form of personal property or individual expression. Christians view it from the lenses of creation. We were made in the likeness of God and our goal is to be reconciled with him. Therefore, our bodies are not our own, and we need to use God’s image and commandments in how we see and treat our body.
- + What was this spiritual man in the likeness of God meant to be before the Fall?

Consider asking the class what it means for man to be in the likeness of God since we know that we cannot become divine like God.

 - The Spiritual Man by HH Pope Shenouda III: The spiritual man - before the fall - was innocent and simple. He did not know sin at all. Adam and Eve were both naked and were not ashamed, and Eve did not recognize the deceit of the servant.
 - In addition to innocence, the spiritual person also strives for holiness and perfection just as God is holy and perfect. “You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:45). “Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Mt 5:48).
- + Through his crucifixion, Christ provided us a way for redemption and reconciliation through the Holy Spirit, which resides in us.
 - I Corinthians 3:16-17: Once we receive the Holy Spirit in baptism, we become the temple of God.
 - “We ought to preserve the flesh as the temple of God.” - St. Clement of Rome
- + How do we care for our bodies in a way that reconciles us with God? Is the body something evil that must be oppressed?
 - What is Man? by HH Pope Shenouda III: God does not create evil so our body is not evil in itself but only if it clings to the material and lusts of the world and walks against the Spirit.
 - “The body is purified by much fasting, many vigils and prayers cutting off from himself all the lusts of the flesh.” - St. Anthony
 - Feed the Spirit to regulate the body as St. Basil says, “See that you do not add to the flesh and grant great power to what is inferior [the flesh]. For if you weigh down one side you truly make the opposite lighter, so also with body and soul, the increase of one necessarily produces a decrease in the other.”
 - When Cyrus of Alexandria was asked about the temptation of lust, he said, “If you are not tempted, you have no hope; if you are not tempted, it is because you are sinning. The man who does not fight sin at the stage of temptation is sinning already in his body. The man who is



sinning in his flesh has no trouble from temptation.”

+ Glorify God in your body.

- I Corinthians 6:19-20
- Our bodily prayer can help us achieve prayer of the heart as St. John Cassian says, “The effort of bodily prayer can help those not yet granted real prayer of the heart. I am referring to the stretching out of the hands, the beating on the chest, sincere raising of eyes towards heaven, deep sighs and constant prostrations.”
- Examples of martyrs who gave up their bodies for the sake of chastity like St. Perpetua or other examples like St. Simon the Tanner who plucked his eye out for the sake of his purity.
- We were created in incorruption, as we pray the reconciliation prayers of St. Basil liturgy, “who formed man in incorruption”

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block I: My Body



Lesson 1.2: Our Bodies and Dancing

Objective

Define appropriate limits of dancing

Application

Avoid pressure to engage in inappropriate dancing at celebrations

References and Resources



Scripture: [Galatians 5:19](#); [Matthew 14:1-12](#); [Exodus 15:20](#); [2 Samuel 6:14](#); [Genesis 3:1-7](#); [1 Peter 2:11](#); [Philippians 4:8](#)



Liturgy: [Reconciliation Prayer/Baptism Prayer](#)



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



Story: [St. John the Baptist Martyrdom](#)



Other: [SUS Q & A](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Is dancing a sin?

- Dancing can lead to lustful thoughts. Lewd dancing is sinful. Galatians 5:19 says, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness.” Lewd refers to seductive behavior. Even if you are dancing alone or with friends of the same sex, your dancing may be a stumbling block for those watching.
- Matthew 14:1-12: Herodias dancing seductively led to St. John the Baptist’s martyrdom.
- Some stories of prophets in the Bible speak of dancing or “leaping” in celebration. This indicates that not all dancing is sinful.
- Midnight praises/Exodus 15:20: Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.
- 2 Samuel 6:14: King David danced before the Lord.
- Some Oriental Orthodox churches in Africa include appropriate dancing from their culture in their liturgical rites.

+ Dancing and other forms of entertainment can be deceptive joy that the Devil uses to lead us away from our spiritual life.

- Genesis 3:1-7: The Devil tricked Eve to desire a false joy in the tree.
- “When we disobeyed Your commandment by the deceit of the serpent, we fell from eternal life and were exiled from the Paradise of joy.” - St. Basil Liturgy Reconciliation Prayer

+ So should you just go to prom and promise not to get on the dance floor?

Consider presenting several examples of celebrations and asking the class if they are appropriate.

- One of the deceptions is to make us think we can withstand the temptations of inappropriate situations or places.
- 1 Peter 2:11: “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul”
- “Keep them from going to unsuitable places, so that the Lord may guard them from Satanic temptations.” - Adult Commandment Baptism Prayer

+ Flee from sin.

- St. Ephrem, one of the oldest Fathers of the Church, said this: “Who invented the dances and balls? Was it St. Peter? Was it St. John or some of the Saints? Certainly not, but rather the Devil, the enemy of souls.”
- Further, he adds, “Where there are balls, the angels are sad and the devils are jubilant.” And also, “It is not possible to jump and dance here and enjoy eternal happiness afterwards because the Lord told us ‘Woe to you that now laugh: for you shall mourn and weep.’ (Lk



6:25)”

- St. Basil describes dances as a “shameful showroom of obscenities.” St. John Chrysostom calls them the “school of impure passions.” St. Ambrose declares them “choirs of iniquity, destroyers of innocence and sepulchers of purity.” And he exclaims, “The daughters of infamous mothers may go to dances and balls to become like them, but those who are chaste must avoid dances if they do not want to perish.” (*Lib. III de Vir.*).
- “Where dancing is, there is the evil one! For God did not give us feet for this but that we may walk orderly and behave seemly not jumping around like camels. If the body is base, much more the soul.” - St. John Chrysostom
- Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”
- The body is given over to temptation, which is rooted in the mind. As Christians we know that we must never play with temptations, for in doing so we have already fallen half-way. Thus, an Orthodox Christian who takes his salvation seriously would never partake in seductive dances, for he would know this to be a dangerous game.
- Example of Joseph fleeing from sin when seduced by Potiphar’s wife.
- It is good to take to heart the advice of Saint Ephraim of Syria, “Think about the good so as not to think about the bad.” Guard against spending time with people whose jokes and story-telling are occasions for sinful thoughts, and avoid bad company, for “Bad company corrupts good character (1 Corinthians 15:33).”
- Avoid the temptation of partaking in sensual dancing, and instead involve yourself in activities that promote righteous thought and pure actions that lead to glorying God. Paul writes, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” (Philippians 4:8).
- Take a moment and ask yourself, “Do I wish to avoid participating in questionable activities” or “Do I try to walk as close to sin as possible and sacrifice as little as I can for the Lord?”

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block I: My Body



Lesson 1.3: Our Bodies and Drugs and Alcohol

Objective

Realize dangers of drugs and alcohol

Application

Abstain from substances and encourage others who are tempted to abstain

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Corinthians 3:16](#); [Ephesians 4:30](#); [Proverbs 20:1](#); [Matthew 6:24](#), [Ephesians 5:18](#)



Liturgy: [Litany of the Sick](#)



Patristics: St. Isaac the Syrian, Homily 5; St. Ambrose of Milan ; St. John Chrysostom; St. Jerome



Story: [Judith and Holofernes](#), [Belshazzar](#), and [Noah](#)



Other: [Q & A SUS](#), [Addiction article by SUS](#), Letter I by St. Anthony; [Testimonials](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Addiction is like a new iPhone.

Consider asking class about the various things we can become addicted to, not just drugs and alcohol.

- Seeking out even good things with no moderation can be harmful. Seeking out or experimenting with drugs and alcohol is worse because these substances are physically harmful and affect your self-control.
- Dependence: Addiction is a physical, emotional, or social dependence on an object or experience. In the case of drugs and alcohol, the dependence is on the mood-altering chemicals and the artificial feelings those chemicals produce.
- “Whoever does not voluntarily withdraw himself from the causes of the passions is involuntarily drawn away by sin. These are the causes of sin: wine, women, riches, and robust health of the body. Not that by their nature these things are sins, but that nature readily inclines towards the sinful passions on their account, and for this reason man must guard himself against them with great care.” - Isaac the Syrian

+ Addiction makes you a different person.

- Absorbs your focus.
- Increasing tolerance means you consume more and more over time.
- Lack of self-awareness and control means you engage in destructive activities, especially when confronted about your behavior. You build a sense of denial and convince yourself you are in control or can stop what you are doing.
- Litany of the Sick: “All souls that are distressed or bound, grant them mercy, O Lord.”
- Present the stories of Judith killing Holofernes, Belshazzar drinking from the temple vessels, and Noah becoming drunk and naked.
- “No one should claim that drinking wine is not a sin, when just one hour, during which Noah drank wine, bared him naked, who for 600 years lived respectable. Spoiling the soul will ultimately lead to falling into lust. Once the stomach is stuffed, the other members of the body will stir up.” - St. Jerome
- “How great is the dominion of wine; that made him, on whom the great flood could not prevail, become naked.” - St. Ambrose

+ “It’s just one drink.”

- Consuming alcohol may not be a sin on its own but abusing alcohol is. “The scripture does not say do not drink wine but drink not to drunkenness.” - Apostolic Constitutions
- Unfortunately, one often leads to another. Causes of substance abuse include emptiness, anxiety, and stress from our circumstances. If we



- normalize having one drink, our future stresses may draw us to use substances as a coping mechanism.
- Discuss how to avoid persons and places that lead to trying drugs or drinking alcohol.
- Know to seek both spiritual and medical guidance should you suspect abuse by you or others.
- + Addiction separates us from God and enslaves us to sin.
 - Spiritual dangers of substance abuse include destroying the temple of the Holy Spirit within us (1 Corinthians 3:16)
 - Addiction leads to a multitude of other sins which can hinder a person's repentance and cause them to lose the kingdom by enslaving them to sin. (Proverbs 20:1; Matthew 6:24)
 - Occupy yourself with your spiritual life and be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)
 - Seek comfort and address problems through spiritual guidance rather than resorting to intoxicating substances.
 - "One drunk with wine sways and stumbles but one filled with the Spirit has solid footing in Christ. This is a fine drunkenness which produces even greater sobriety of mind." - St. Ambrose of Milan
 - "I give you spiritual drink; for drunkenness even cuts off the articulate sound of our tongue; it makes us lisp and stammer, and distorts the eyes, and the whole frame together. For they who sing psalms are filled with the Holy Spirit." - St. John Chrysostom

Consider showing one of the testimonial videos that are available under the references

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block I: My Body



Lesson 1.4: Our Bodies and Food

Objective

Realize gluttony is a sin and to be careful of what we eat to preserve our temples

Application

Learn about nutrition, be aware of what you eat, and control what you eat

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 3](#); [Philippians 3:18-20](#); [Proverbs 25:16](#); [Romans 14:17](#)



Liturgy: [Lent Fraction \(Fasting and Prayer\)](#)



Patristics: St. Basil the Great; St. Anthony



Story: Moses, Daniel, and the three youths



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ How can food be a temptation?

- Satan deceived Eve to eat from the Tree when she should have abstained from it. Food is a basic need but we are sometimes tempted to over-indulge. We work on self-control through fasting, and temptation becomes even stronger during fasts.
- “Of one plant you have forbidden me to eat.” - Gregorian Liturgy
- But what are Jesus’ followers to remember? “Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly await for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body.” Philippians 3:20
- Food is good, but we have something much better to look forward to.

+ Everything in moderation!

Consider asking “Is the body evil and that’s why we limit its desires?” This should review the first lesson in this building block.

- Philippians 3:18-19: “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.”
- Paul compares two groups of people: those who are trapped by their human natures, and those who have been set free by our savior Jesus Christ. We should follow a spiritual canon that teaches us to control our lusts and focus on Christ rather than let our bodily desires go unchecked. Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.
- Food is a gift from God (Ecclesiastes 3:13), and we can gladly partake of that gift as long as it doesn’t control us.
- “If he allows his body to be given over to unbridled self indulgence and to be stuffed with as much food as possible every day he will, like some wild beast, be dragged down to the earth by the violent counter reactions he experiences and there he will lie, groaning to no avail.” - St. Basil the Great
- “When a man stuffs his body with food and drink the heat of the blood from the abundance of nourishment rouses up warfare in the body.” - St. Anthony

+ Eat just right.

- “There are some treats which produce only a little pleasure when tasted in passing but when they are eaten to excess they become troublesome and immediately we feel disgust for them and are eager to get rid of them, thinking that our life would be seriously endangered if they were to remain in our bowels for any length of time. Indeed overindulgence had brought death to many or made it so that they no longer enjoy living.” - St. Basil the Great
- We should understand what nutrition our body needs and make sure we keep our bodies, which are a gift from God, healthy.
- In addition to gluttony, there are eating disorders that can afflict the body. One is anorexia, where a person has a distorted image of their body and eats too little out of an unwarranted fear of being overweight. Another is bulimia, where a person binge eats and then takes harmful steps to avoid weight gain, such as over-exercising or vomiting.



- Eating disorders are among the most difficult psychiatric disorders.
- Eating right and healthy is important and spiritually essential however if we find ourselves struggling to do that it is very important to seek out help from professionals like dietitians and mental health professionals.

+ Conquering the Desire

- Fast Giving up certain food and drink for certain days and seasons is the test to see whether we control our appetites. If we cannot do so, then we know that gluttony controls us.
- Worship and praying more. *“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.r.”* (Colossians 3:2-4)
- Give to the needy. There are so many who are hungry today. Remember, “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” *Revelation 19:9*, where, as Saint Basil the Great wrote in his lovely prayer, “the voice of those who feast is never silent, and the delight of those who behold the inexpressible beauty of your countenance passes all telling”.

+ Exercising self-control to fast is a powerful part of our spiritual life.

- There are many examples of saints who fasted and accomplished great deeds such as Moses, Daniel, and the three youths.
- The Lent Fraction (Fasting and Prayer) has many examples of the power of fasting, such as, “Fasting and prayer are those which the people of Nineveh pursued until God had mercy on them and forgave them their sins, and lifted His wrath away from them.”

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block I: My Body



Lesson 1.5: Our Bodies and Sex

Objective

Clarify social misconceptions on sex and explain the Christian understanding of sex.

Application

Control lustful thoughts, abstain from inappropriate relations, and reject media representations of sex.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21](#)



Liturgy: [Prayer for God's Accompaniment, Agpeya](#)



Patristics: St. Basil the Great



Story: David & Bathsheba



Other: [Bishop Youssef on Lust; What is the passion of lust? By Fr. Anthony Mourad](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Sex is a gift from God.

- God gave us the gift of reproduction within marriage (see Genesis). In addition to procreation, sex is a type of physical love for married couples and protects against adultery and sexual immorality while married.
- Our identity in Christ is about glorifying the Creator of all in all we do, including our sexual thoughts, actions and interactions. We do this by remaining pure in thoughts and deeds even in marriage.
- In the Coptic Orthodox Church, sexual union in marriage is sanctified, sacred, and holy. Scripture tells us in Hebrews 13:4, “*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled,*” and in 1 Corinthians 7:3, “*Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.*”

+ Media presents a twisted view of sex.

Consider asking the class to describe how movies represent teenage relationships and sexuality.

- Birth control pills were initially only available to married women in the early 1960s. That restriction was gradually removed and at the same time political and cultural movements caused social morals about sex to shift to emphasize “individual liberty” in sexuality. Premarital sex, pornography, and masturbation became frequently depicted in the media.
- Thinking like this has led to immense sorrow, and the bad fruit of the sexual revolution over the last 60 years are obvious: the aggressive increase of domestic violence, adultery, STD, pregnancy out of wedlock, abortion, and divorce. Living according to the values of the sexual revolution neither glorifies the Holy Trinity nor promotes the dignity and salvation of men and women.
- The depictions of sex in media, especially in pornography, embed a twisted view of sex in our minds without us being aware. Whether this be in regards teenage relationships or self-pleasure, we become exposed to dangerous and sinful thoughts about these acts. This challenges and strains our self control. In fact, many married adults continue to be addicted to pornography and masturbation even after marriage.
- Thoughts of and acts of sexual morality are severe sins. Use verses regarding the eternal consequences of fornication (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and Galatians 5:19-21).

+ Love is not the same as lust.

- One common mistake in how media presents sex is that it confuses lust for love. The sexual acts media depicts are not acts of love but of lust. The person is motivated by desire and self-pleasure. Love is selfless and giving while lust is selfish and taking. Bishop Youssef’s example of King Ahasuerus linked above. Sex between married couples is a physical act of love and unity (see “What is the passion of lust?” linked



above)

- Lust can lead to other sins. 2 Samuel II - Story of David sleeping seeing Bathsehaba then falling into sin
- "As for lascivious intercourse and impure copulation and all such deeds of a soul carried away by sexual frenzy is it not clear that these acts are altogether damaging and blatantly harmful to nature?" - St. Basil the Great

+ How do we exercise self-control?

- Like other temptations, we need to pray for strength from God to fight the sin and not give up even when we fall.
- A prayer by St. Mary the Egyptian: "O Lady Virgin, who gave birth in the flesh to God the Word! I know that I am unworthy to look upon your icon. I rightly inspire hatred and disgust before your purity, but I know also that God became Man in order to call sinners to repentance. Help me, O All-Pure One. Let me enter the church. Allow me to behold the Wood upon which the Lord was crucified in the flesh, shedding His Blood for the redemption of sinners, and also for me. Be my witness before Your Son that I will never defile my body again with the impurity of fornication. As soon as I have seen the Cross of your Son, I will renounce the world, and go wherever you lead me."
- Prayer for God's Accompaniment from the Agpeya. "Grant me Your grace O Lord Jesus, the longsuffering, and be with me that I may dwell in You unto the end."

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block I: My Body



Lesson I.6: The Sacrament of Marriage

Objective

Understand how to strive towards a holy marriage

Application

How can I prepare myself to be a good spouse? What criteria do I look for in a spouse?

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 1:28](#), [1 Corinthians 7](#), [Matthew 19](#), [John 2](#)



Liturgy: [Crowning Ceremony General Commandment](#)



Patristics: St. Gregory of Nazianza, St. John Chrysostom



Story: [Isaac & Rebekah](#), [Aquila & Priscilla](#)



Other: [Marriage and Family Life St. John Chrysostom](#); [Marriage Talk, Bishop Youssef](#); [Marriage and Family Life by H.G. Bishop Moussa](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + The very first marriage ceremony!
 - Review Genesis 2:18-25
 - We learn basic principles of responsibility needed to be accomplished prior to marriage (Adam naming the animals synonymous to high schoolers learning independence, finishing school, getting a job etc)
 - “*There is no relationship so close as that of husband and wife, if they are united as they ought to be.*” - St. John Chrysostom
 - “*He created one from one, and again these two he makes one, and thus He makes one; so that even now man is born from one. For a woman and a man are not two but one man.*” St. John Chrysostom
- + The Purpose of Marriage is to mirror Christ’s love for the church
 - Do we marry for self-satisfaction (sexual or otherwise) or to give ourselves in love for the other?
 - Assist in salvation, procreation of Godly children, protect from adultery
 - 5 Components of God’s Love: it is free, total, and self-giving, faithful, and fruitful. The love shared between spouses in marriage is a reflection of how God loves.
 - Our church does not believe in divorce for just any reason. Marriage is a commitment, allowing us to work on our shortcomings
 - “*One in spirit they urge each other on by the goal of their mutual love. For marriage does not remove God, but brings all closer to Him, for it is God Himself who draws us to it.*” - St. Gregory of Nazianza
- + What is my role as a Christian Husband or Wife?

Consider asking the class what they believe the Man/Woman’s role is in a marriage based on the media contrasted with the Bible

 - Overview the Crowning Ceremony prayers as Liturgical reference
 - In what way are the newly crowned couple the King and Queen?
 - In what ways is a Christian marriage a partnership of equals? (We are all equal before God and both belong to the other.) Does equality mean identical roles? What is the role of the husband, as discussed in Ephesians? What is the role of a wife? How can that be played out in today’s society? Let students share about their families.
 - Husband’s primary role: Love your wife / Wife’s primary role: Respect your husband
- + Is Marriage hard?



- It is the complete abandonment of your own selfish desires for another
 - Two backgrounds merge to form a new unit and start a family of their own
 - Must get married for the right reasons and at the right time
 - Look to parents, mentors, role models for advice when looking for a potential spouse, honest & wise council is key
- + Who can I look up to in the Bible as a role model of a good marriage?
- Isaac & Rebekah: Highlight the importance of seeking a partner with a similar foundation. The church does not support inter-religion marriages (different from intercultural) (Genesis 24:1-9)
 - David & Abigail: Abigail gives David wise advice, David humbly accepts and thanks God for her intervention (1 Samuel 25)
 - Aquila & Priscilla: Committed to serving the church with zeal (Romans 16:3)
 - Jacob & Rachel: Jacob worked diligently for her hand in marriage for 14 years (Genesis 29:20-28)

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block I: My
Body



Lesson 1.7: Immorality in 1st Century Corinth Compared to 21st Century

Objective

We need to be a light in the darkness of society

Application

Be a positive influence in your interactions

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Corinthians 3, 4:8-21, 5:1-2](#)



Liturgy: [Litany of the Assemblies](#)



Patristics: St. Athanasius



Story: St. Demiana, Daniel

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Was life harder back in Biblical Times or Now?
 - Reading St. Paul first letter to the Corinthians, one can see how is amazingly relevant to the body of Christ today
- + An Overview of the history of Corinth

Consider leading a debate as to which era was the most sinful & secularized. The period of the apostles, or now? Why? Divide room into 2 groups

 - The city of Corinth was prominent in the first century. It was one of the greatest trading centers of the world. It is located in Greece on an isthmus between the Aegean and Ionian Seas, which guaranteed its importance both militarily and commercially.
 - Corinth was famous for its markets and luxuries, but also for drunkenness, pagan idols, and immorality. Corinth was devoted to two things -- the pursuit of pleasure (largely passion), and of wisdom.
 - The Corinthian believers struggled with a culture that was opposed to Christianity. They were continually assaulted by the doctrines, dogmas and ideas of men following the great philosophers.
 - That was the church to which Paul wrote this letter, and as you read it, you see that it was a church in trouble; it was the biggest problem church in the New Testament
- + The Sins of Corinth
 - The letter falls into two major divisions; there is a great section dealing with what "the carnalities," and it is from chapter I-II. Then there is a closing section from chapter twelve through chapter sixteen that deals with what Paul calls "the spiritualities" -- the carnalities versus the spiritualities. The carnalities included everything that was wrong with this church; the spiritualities were what they needed to correct it.
 - The Corinthians were strong, wealthy, wise. They were viewed as the head of Greece (first city) at the time
 - The devil comes in to tempt and destroy
 - The Corinthians fall into pride, sexual immorality, gluttony, eating food offered to idols, greed. Nearly an independent chapter is dedicated to each one of these subject in the I Corinthians.
- + The Sins of Today
 - As you read this letter through, you will see that we suffer today from all the carnalities, in principle at least, and that what we desperately need to set our lives right are the spiritualities.
 - Today, we are intelligent, have so much knowledge at our fingertips, born in the church, educated



- The devil comes in to tempt and destroy
- We fall into pride, sexual immorality, gluttony, eat food offered to idols (conforming to world), greed
- + “We are all in the same game, just different levels, dealing with the same hell, just different devils”
 - Discuss the Litany of the Assemblies from the liturgy
 - “The worship of idols, utterly uproot from the world. Satan and all his evil powers, trample and humiliate under our feet speedily. All offenses and their instigators, abolish. May all dissensions of corrupt heresies cease.”
- + How can you be the light of your society/family/circle of friends?
 - “*God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*” (1 Corinthians 1:9). We are called to share the life of the Son of God. That is what fellowship is -- it is sharing.
 - When faced with people saying to him, “The world is against you, Athanasius!” St. Athanasius replied, “Then I am against the world.”
 - St. Demiana: “I would have preferred to hear about your death rather than to hear that you have renounced your faith and forsaken the God Who created you! If you do not return to your first faith and renounce the worship of stones, you are not my father and I am not your daughter!” Because of this, her father returned to the emperor to proclaim his faith and was martyred.
 - Daniel, throughout his life, challenged the status quo by choosing the path less traveled because of his dedication to God and His Truth.
 - Daniel and his friends chose to eat vegetables instead of the king’s delicacies, did not bow down to idols, and prayed despite a decree not to.
- + Discussion:
 - Jesus said, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” Why then did Paul instruct us to judge our brethren and submit them to church discipline?
 - How can the corruption of an individual spread throughout a church to defile everyone?
 - Why must Christians not dissociate from wicked and sinful people who are not church members? How can we preach the gospel to the lost without judging them?

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block I: My
Body



Lesson 1.8: Sins of the Tongue

Objective

To understand how influential our speech is to us and those around us

Application

Reframe your mind to think and speak positively (verses, praises, give thanks)

References and Resources



Scripture: [James 3:2-12](#), [Sirach 28](#), [1 Corinthians 14](#)



Liturgy: [Placed within me the gift of speech](#)



Patristics: St. John Chrysostom; St. John Saba



Story: St. Arsenious



Other: [Bishop Gregory on the Tongue](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + “Words can build you up, words can tear you down”
 - Proverbs 18:21 (Death and life are in the power of the tongue)
 - What are some negative uses of our words? (*Allow students to come up with several examples, such as gossip, lying, filthy language, etc.*)
 - Have you experienced hurtful words in your life?
 - The tongue is a serious matter, and it is related to our spiritual lives in a significant way.
 - Discuss Chapters on the Dangers of the Tongue: Sirach 28 and James 3
- + Sins of the Tongue
 - Anger - James 1:19, Cursing - Colossians 3:8, Gossiping - Sirach 28:13, Lying - Revelation 21:8, Sexual speech - Ephesians 5:4
- + “You will give account of EVERY idle word you speak”
 - But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” - Matt. 12:36-37
 - Challenge the class to evaluate how they spend their time on social media. Wasting time in empty conversations? Building others up?
- + What are some positive influences of the tongue?
 - Words of encouragement, praising God, edification - Ephesians 5:19
 - “Placed within me the gift of speech.” - Gregorian Liturgy
- + Those that Tamed the Tongue
 - “I have always something to repent for after having talked, but have never been sorry for having been silent” - St. Arsenios, teacher of the Kings
- + Practical ways to control the tongue
 - Pray for a pure heart and tongue & Memorize verses (St. Anthony guidance)
 - Make it a habit to say positive things - compliment others, look on the bright side, etc
 - Make it a habit to be thankful, rather than complain - journal, take a nature walk admiring God’s creation, etc
 - Consider the words you use before you decide to speak. “Is it true? Is it necessary? And Is it kind?”
 - St. John Chrysostom advises us before Great Lent: Let the mouth fast from foul words and unjust criticism



- “God has surrounded the tongue with a double wall with the barrier of the teeth and the fence of the lips in order that it may not easily and heedlessly utter words it should not speak.” - St. John Chrysostom
- “Whoever is cautious with his tongue, his treasure will never be taken away from him. The mouth of a silent translates the mysteries of God, and whoever swiftly talks distances his Creator from him.” - St. John Saba
- James warns that blessings and curses shouldn’t come out of the same mouth (James 3:10). Propose an activity that will make youth more aware of their speech. Bring some wristbands. Challenge them to wear them every day for one week. When they say something that displeases God, they must switch the wristband to the other hand. Count the number of hours/days between switches, trying to beat their record.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block I: My Body



Lesson 1.9: An Open Discussion Review: "My Life, My Choice"

Objective

Realize your body is not your own but a gift from God that you are responsible for

Application

Make decisions based on what is right rather than what feels right

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#); [Romans 12:1-2](#)



Liturgy: [Myron Prayer](#)



Patristics: St. Ephraim the Syrian, Counsels to a Novice Monk, St. Justin Martyr, Fragments, Fragment 18



Story: St. Mary & her Life of Submission



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Is this true: Your life, Your choice?
 - Your Body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
 - We are called to present our bodies as living sacrifices - Romans 12:1-2
 - Living sacrifice means to deny our will and submit to God's plan for our lives
- + How do things like music, social media, what we eat, following celebrities/sports, etc. influence the choices we make?
 - Social media and celebrities often paints an unrealistic & false image of happiness and peace
 - Everything we choose to do or choose not to do impacts us in some way
 - Give a simple example of overeating = weight gain / going to the gym = weight loss
- + Christ saved us with His Blood
 - God calls us to a life of witnessing, setting a good example, and ultimately being unified with Him
 - Being a temple of the Holy Spirit, "You have become a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit." - Myron Prayer
- + Controversial Topics
 - Abortion - "I can make whatever decision is best for me at any given time"
 - Homosexuality - "I can love whoever I want"
 - "In the measure to which a man cuts off and humbles his own will, he proceeds toward success. But insofar as he stubbornly guards his own will, so much does he bring harm to himself." - St. Ephraim the Syrian, Counsels to a Novice Monk
 - "To yield and give way to our passions is the lowest slavery, even as to rule over them is the only liberty." - St. Justin Martyr, Fragments, Fragment 18
- + St. Mary & her Life of Submission
 - Submitting to God's will is not easy. However, God will lead the way.
 - St. Mary was a young girl who was engaged. Now she was expecting a baby. In her culture that could mean death by stoning. How could she explain that the angel of the Lord had appeared to her and asked her to be part of a holy miracle that had been determined before creation? But she said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)
 - St. Mary was willing to do what God asked of her and was submissive to His will for her life.
 - Qualities we should emulate: Humility, obedience, submission



Building Block 2: My Spirit



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 2: My Spirit

Lesson 2.1: What Does the Bible Say About Spirit?

Objective

To understand how to feed and protect the Spirit

Application

Practice spiritual exercises (especially meet with your Father of Confession)

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 3:6](#); [John 4:24](#); [John 6:63](#); [Gal 5:16](#); [1 Thess 5:19-25](#); [Eph 4:30-32](#); [Mark 12: 24](#); [Romans 8:14](#)



Liturgy: [Final Benediction](#)



Patristics: [Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor – Chapter VI; Letter to Diognetus](#)



Story: [Nicodemus](#)



Other: [SUS Q & A](#); [Why be Spiritual](#) by HG Bishop Yousef; [What is Man](#) by HH Pope Shenouda III & [Spiritual Means](#) by HH Pope Shenouda III



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + When someone dies, where does their spirit go?
 - Distinguish the soul from the Spirit (Sometimes they are used interchangeably in the Holy Bible): The soul gives life to the body "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev 17:11,14), while the spirit gives life with God. Therefore, animals have souls but not spirits. Our spirits are immortal. Humans and animals have souls. As for the spirit, it is the breath of God that He breathed into Adam, it exists only in humans and it is eternal.
 - 2 different meanings of soul: (1) The soul which makes a creature alive and (2) a soul as referring to the inner life of man, his emotions and his desires.
 - The term "spirit" is used in the Scriptures generally to denote purely spiritual beings; also the spiritual, immortal part in man. While the term soul specifies the immaterial part of man that concerns life, actions, and emotions, the term spirit is that part related to worship and divine communion.
 - More on this can be found in the Suscopts Q&A [Soul vs. Spirit](#) and [On the Spirit](#)
- + Why does our church insist that all babies get baptized at a young age rather than wait till they grow up and make that decision themselves?
 - Our Lord said to Nicodemus "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Jn 3:6), Is born of the Spirit" means of the Spirit of God, or by the agency of the Holy Spirit; and "Is spirit" means is spiritual, that is, spirit-like, holy, pure.
 - A mother of a newborn can't wait till the baby grow up and tell her they need milk as the baby will be dead by then; likewise, our Church is our mother who wants to feed our spirits by nourishing it with the source of eternal life (our Lord Jesus), this ensures a healthy and robust growth to our spirit.
- + Communion with the Holy Spirit and nourishing our spirit
 - Gifts us with Holy Spirit that we may worship Him in Spirit and truth - John 4:24
 - "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" - Romans 8:14



- Feeding the Spirit with guidance of your Spiritual Father.
 - Comparing the reliance of our bodies on Food (often thinking of what we will eat and always feeling hungry when we miss a meal) with the reliance of our Spirit on spiritual food; Prayer, Scripture reading, regular confession, regular communion, sermons, etc... and the Holy Mysteries); John 6:63, Galatians 5:16 are extremely important since our Spirit is more valuable than our body.
 - Quenching the Spirit - I Thessalonians 5:19-25; Ephesians 4:30-32
 - St. Clement on our union with the Spirit: "Thus also we who are baptized, having wiped off the sins which obscure the light of the Divine Spirit, have the eye of the spirit free, unimpeded, and full of light, by which alone we contemplate the Divine, the Holy Spirit flowing down to us from above."
 - Liturgy Connection: Final Benediction: "Make us all worthy, O our Master, to partake of Your Holies, unto the purification of our souls, bodies and spirits." - St. Basil Liturgy
 - "According to the word of salvation He who made what is without (the body) also made what is within (the spirit) certainly by the one operation and at the same time, made both on that day." - St. Peter of Alexandria
- + Could the Sadducees be right?!!
- Sadducees denied the existence of the spirit (Acts 23:8), they also denied eternal life, Jesus corrected them "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.""; Mark 12: 24

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 2: My Spirit



Lesson 2.2: Bearing Fruit

Objective

To understand that we ought to express our faith with works that bear fruit

Application

Do good deeds throughout this week. Perhaps even a kind word to someone in need of it.
Try to put someone else's needs before yours.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 15:5](#), [Matthew 3:8](#), [Matthew 7:19-20](#); [Psalm 1:1-6](#); [Luke 8:13](#), [James 2:19-26](#), [Luke 8:5-15](#), [Matthew 16:27](#), [Matthew 21:33-41](#), [Matthew 25:14-30](#), [Isaiah 27:3](#)



Liturgy: [One is the Holy Father](#)



Patristics: - St. Cyril of Alexandria; St. Didymus the Blind; St. John Chrysostom



Story: [St. Paul of Tammoh](#)



Other: [Called and Appointed to bear fruit by Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Did Anybody try to plant an apple tree?

- Growing fruit takes long-term commitment—from pruning apple trees for good form to pest control—for success, etc..This means that bearing one's fruit is one thing, while maintaining it during the trials is another. Therefore, the maturity of fruits on the trees is not the finale in the spiritual struggle (journey), but rather the ability to withstand when the rain descends, the floods come, and the winds blow.
- We are Called to Bear Fruits of the spirit and to preserve them. The Lord Christ, in his conversation with His disciples before crucifixion said, "I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16).
- Apples trees aren't just for people with acres upon acres of land. Even in a small space, you can plant a hedge of dwarf apple trees and yield a successful crop. The same goes for bearing fruit of the spirit; it is not only for priests and servants; we are all invited to bear these lovely fruits and grow in our spiritual life..
- Perhaps St. Paul understood the importance of maintaining the fruit when he said, "If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:14-15).

+ Bearing fruit

- Parable of the sower - Luke 8:5-15. To grow fruits, make sure you are a good ground clean and ready for the presence of the word of God. Before planting a tree, you need to remove all weeds from the soil.
- "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." - John 15:5 - Don't rely much on your powers and abilities, as this hinders God's work, but instead put all your natural talents under God's guidance, and you'll see the fruits.
- Mark 11:13-22, The example of the fig tree

+ Why do I care about fruits, isn't my faith enough to enter the Kingdom?

- Discuss the dogma that we cannot obtain salvation without works - James 2:19-26 . A man is justified by works, and not by faith only.
- The false teaching that faith alone suffices. "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" - Matthew 16:27
- "Faith without works is not faith at all, just as a dead man is not really a human being. There is no doubt that faith saves and then lives by doing its own works so that those works which are added to salvation by faith are not those of the law but a different kind of thing altogether." - St.



Didymus the Blind

- "Faith without works are dead and works without faith are dead also. For if we have sound doctrine but fail in living, the doctrine is of no use to us. Likewise if we take pains with life but are careless about doctrine that will not be any good to us either. It is therefore necessary to shore up the spiritual edifice in both directions." - St. John Chrysostom
 - Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers: They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." (Matthew 21:33-41)
 - We can learn from the lives of the saints. The example of St. Paul of Tammoh: he was born in Egypt around 227 in the Thebaid of Egypt. Settling into a mountain cave, Saint Paul dwelt there for ninety-one years, praying incessantly to God both day and night. He sustained himself on bread, which a raven brought him, and he clothed himself with palm leaves.
- + How can we produce good fruits?
- "Let those awake whose heart is sterile and unfruitful. Open your mind. Receive the sacred seed. Be like the productive and well-tilled soil. Bring forth unto God fruits that will raise you to an incorruptible life. Guard your mind. Shut the entrance against the thief. Drive away from your hearts the flocks of birds in order that the seed may abide with you; that you may be ground abundant in corn and very fertile, and rich abundantly in bringing forth fruit." - St. Cyril of Alexandria.
 - We received the sacred seed through baptism and we received it through communion and the word of God. We need to watch all our senses for any evil thoughts, sights, etc... who can sneak in and steal the grace and blessing from us, same as in the apple example; growers need to prevent any pests, birds or rodents who might try to sneak in and eat and damage the fruit.
 - Invest in your God-given talents, and God will top up in abundance: Matthew 25:14-30 - "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.
 - The branch cannot continue to grow if it does not abide in the vine through the unity of the mind and heart with God in continual meditation in His word, and through alert ears to the voice of the Holy Spirit and His guidance at all times. Here the words of the Lord are fulfilled: "I, the Lord, keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day" - Isaiah 27:3
 - To evaluate if you are abiding well in Christ, ask yourself, "Do I honor and participate fully in the Holy Sacraments of the blessed Church? We say in the Liturgy, "The Holies for the holy."
 - Start your day with a prayer asking God to strengthen you and help you show your good fruits. Ask God to show you who needs help and support and have nobody in the fast-paced world we live in; remember, the Good Samaritan was praised by God for taking the time to care for a person in need.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 2: My Spirit



Lesson 2.3: Fruit of the Spirit

Objective

Need fruit of the Spirit for Salvation

Application

Prayer Exercises (especially agepeya)

Pick a characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit and focus on it for a week and try that every week.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 7:22-23](#), [Galatians 5:22-23](#), [Luke 11:13](#), [Matthew 25](#), [John 15:16](#), [2 Peter 1:5-7](#), [2 Timothy 3:2-4](#)



Liturgy: [Greet one another](#)



Patristics: [Sr. Benedicta Ward, The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, \(Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1975\), pp. 89-95](#)



Story: [St. Paul](#)



Other: [The Fruit of the Spirit by HG Bishop Youssef, Fruit of the Spirit HHPSIII \(Arabic\)](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + What was the first miracle St. John the Baptist performed ?
 - Do you realize that John the Baptist performed not one miracle? Yet he produced tremendous fruit.
 - For those of us who would like to see miracles, St. John the Baptist didn't perform any, yet called by Jesus: "For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" Luke 7:28
 - In your opinion, performing miracles or bearing the Fruit of the Spirit is more important? Here is our Lord's answer to that question: "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" - Matthew 7:22-23
- + What exactly is the fruit of the Spirit?
 - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23
 - "These spiritual fruits reign in one in whom sins do not reign. These good things reign if they are so delightful that they themselves uphold the mind in its trials from falling into consent to sin." Augustine of Hippo
 - Note the singularity of the word fruit and not fruits. Being gifted with the Holy Spirit, a sustained relationship with God should bring about all of these characteristics. You may focus on a particular characteristic of the fruit that you want to strengthen. It could be kindness, helpfulness, etc. "Abba Poemen said that Abba John said that the saints are like a group of trees, each bearing different fruit, but watered from the same source. The practices of one saint differ from those of another, but it is the same Spirit that works in all of them." - [Sr. Benedicta Ward, The Sayings of the Desert Fathers, \(Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1975\), pp. 89-95](#)
 - The fruit of the Spirit is more focused on our actions as expressed through our relationship with God. As we pray in the liturgy, Greet one another..."
 - "And why does he say, the fruit of the Spirit? it is because evil works originate in ourselves alone, and therefore he calls them works, but good works require not only our diligence but God's loving kindness. He places first the root of these good things, and then proceeds to recount them, in these words, Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law". John Chrysostom
 - When we have the Holy Spirit working through us, it will be portrayed through its fruit in us and it will become a means of witnessing to others.



- + I notice the fruit of the Spirit is growing, how can I maintain it and get it to grow more? ([HG Bishop Youssef article on John 15:16](#))
 - You need to nourish the fruit by fasting, prayer, communion and reflection. If you strive to be better and do better, you will be able to maintain the fruit of the Spirit. Keeping Christ as your primary focus is what will help you.
 - The branch cannot continue to grow if it does not abide in the vine through the unity of the mind and heart with God in continual meditation in His word, and through alert ears to the voice of the Holy Spirit and His guidance at all times. Here the words of the Lord are fulfilled: "I, the Lord, keep it, I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day" - Isaiah 27:3
 - Prayer is powerful and when we ask God for His strength and guidance, He will provide the support we need to strengthen our fruit of the Spirit. Remember God desires to give us the fruit of the Spirit "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." John 15:16
- + Self-Control
 - Growth in the faith requires self-control: "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." - 2 Peter 1:5-7
 - How often do we see spoiled kids who are never satisfied with all the great things their parents offer them? They are always looking for more items and are never happy no matter what. These kids will grow to be men and women with no thanksgiving nor self-control, listen to what St. Paul said about them "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" - 2 Timothy 3:1-4
 - Perhaps we can all learn from St. Paul a valuable lesson in Self-Control "...learned in whatever state I am in to be content. I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:11-13).



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 2: My Spirit



Lesson 2.4: The Way of Victory: Overcome the World

Objective

To understand that our faith grants us victory in the world

Application

Apply your faith to any issue you have in your life.

Always pray and ask God for His strength and guidance. With that, anything is possible.

Start with a sin that you're struggling with and pray to God to help you become victorious.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Jn 16:33](#), [Matt 16:13-19](#), [1 Jn 5:4-5](#); [2 Tim 2:11-13](#); [1 Cor 15:57](#)



Liturgy: [End of Fraction](#)



Patristics St. Anthony the Great, "On the Character of Men and on the Virtuous Life: One Hundred and Seventy Texts," Text I, (The Philokalia: The Complete Text (Vol. 1))



Story - Elisha and Gehazi; or Daniel and the Lions Den, Noah, Job, Joshua, Esther, David, Solomon, St. Paul



Other: [Victory over the world HG Bishop Youssef](#); [Victory to overcome the world is our Faith Fr. Daoud Lamej](#); [Overcoming the World Suscopts Q&A](#); [Spiritual Warfare Article by HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Is the Kingdom you belong to of this world?
 - While still here on this earth, we are potential residents of either one of these two spiritual kingdoms based on our choices and how we conduct our moral life.
 - Satan Kingdom occupied by demons and all earthly minded people - Matthew 4:9
 - God's Kingdom ruled by God Himself and occupied by the angels, the heavenly hosts, the righteous, the departed saints waiting in the Paradise of Joy and the righteous on earth who strive to reach this kingdom by living a holy life according to the scripture.
- + Spiritual Warfare: Every war needs a weapon, what is our weapon?
 - Spiritual discernment is the tool to understanding what pertains to the spirit and the spiritual warfare. (Gal 5:17, 1 Cor 2:14)
 - 2 Kings 6 illustrates the existence of the two worlds and what goes on in either of the two. During the fierce battle that was taking place in the city where Elijah lived, victory seemed far-fetched to Elisha's servant, Gehazi, and he fell in despair. Elisha, the prophet and man of God, could see through his spiritual eyes what was going on in the metaphysical world and knew that victory was theirs. In order to restore his servant's confidence, he prayed to God to open the servant's eye to what was going on in the supernatural realms.

The servants may also give examples of Daniel and the Lions Den, Noah, Job, Joshua, Esther, David, Solomon, St. Paul
 - We pray, "So that with pure heart, cleansed lips, an enlightened soul, an unashamed face, a faith unfeigned, a pure conscience, a perfect patience ..."
 - How do we deal with spiritual warfare and a sin we are struggling with? The Cross, prayer and prostrations are our weapons. (Col 2:15)
 - Liturgical connection: Praise for St. Anthony the Great - Kiahk Midnight Praises
- + The Nature of the Warfare: Know your enemy!
 - Social Battle: between us and the world; He has overcome everything that we may be victorious through Him (John 16:33). We are meant to have struggles in this world and it is meant to be difficult. But nothing is too much for Christ. We live in a society that is deviating more and more away from Christ. So we need the anchor of our faith to not be lost.
 - Personal Battle: Flesh and the Spirit (Gal 5:17)



- Supernatural Battle: us against Satan and his evil powers (1 Peter 5:8).
- + Victorious in Battle
 - Through Prayer and unity: 2 Cor 2:11, 1 Cor 3:13
 - Through Faith which is that upon which the church is built (Matthew 16:13-19)
 - Through Discernment: “Men are often called intelligent wrongly. Intelligent men are not those who are erudite in the sayings and books of the wise men of old, but those who have an intelligent soul and can discriminate between good and evil. They avoid what is sinful and harms the soul; and with deep gratitude to God they resolutely adhere by dint of practice to what is good and benefits the soul. These men alone should truly be called intelligent.” St. Anthony the Great
 - Every army has a king and a leader. The king who is victorious in battle is glorified, who is our King of Glory? (Ps 24:7-10)
 - Liturgy Connection: End of the Fraction - Faith unfeigned, Lent Fraction. Resurrection Re-enactment.
 - "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13). If we remember this verse and live by it, nothing in this world is too difficult.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 2: My Spirit



Lesson 2.5: Spiritual Maturity

Objective

How to mature spiritually

Application

Focus on bringing Christ in an aspect of your life you hadn't thought of before and evaluate how realistic it is. For example, how can you bring Christ in your decisions at lunch break?

References and Resources



Scripture: [James 1:25](#); [Ephesians 4:14,15](#); [2 Peter 3:18](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:3](#); [John 6:51](#); [Revelation 3 \(Church of Laodicea\)](#)



Liturgy: [Myron Prayers](#)



Patristics: [\(St. John Chrysostom, Conversations on the Gospel of John, 59:2\)](#)



Story: [Signs of Spiritual Maturity](#)



Other: [The Life of Spiritual Maturity by HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Walk the walk!

- Definition: It is the practice of the beliefs of Christian faith. What you believe in, you put into action. It is the connection and integration between Christian knowledge and your actions.
- When you look at the Christian law, you are not just a hearer of the law but a doer and this will be blessed. This is what is said in James 1:25.
- You may discuss what it means to be a doer of the word. This can be both a short word on a life of integrity or a life of true service.
- Is Christ being formed in those who hear and participate in the active spiritual life of the church or not? That is an important question we have to ask ourselves to evaluate where we are.

+ The breastplate of the faith and the truth!

- The grace of the Holy Spirit will help you live the law of Christian beliefs. The Holy Spirit will guide you and remind you of the truth that is in the Bible.
- Liturgy Connection: Myron Prayers
- Unlike physical growth, there is no quantitative way to measure one's spiritual growth. And yet, we can still do it, not by using a measuring tape or a weight balance, but by measuring ourselves against the saints, the heroes of the Christian faith, most of whom gave their lives as martyrs for the faith in Christ!

+ A spiritual nutritional growth!

- Do you think that you are really patient and humble? Compare yourself to the trials and tribulations of saint George, or, saint Catherine or saint Mina and even more contemporary saints like saint Kyrillos, and you will know immediately how far you still have to go. In order to make this comparison you will certainly need to read the stories of the lives of these men and women. You need the desire to practice the truth found in the Bible. You need to nourish your Holy Spirit (Communion will cleanse us from sin and nourishes us). As you read about their lives you will be growing spiritually at the same time
- "The Holy Scriptures lead us to God and open the path to the knowledge of God." [\(St. John Chrysostom, Conversations on the Gospel of John, 59:2\)](#)
- Need to connect all aspects of our lives to God: Spirituality reflects and is concerned about all aspects of our lives. It will reflect how we socialize with friends, how we deal with our teachers and parents. If we have spiritual maturity, it will always be reflected no matter who we deal with and



who we interact with.

- Many confuse spiritual growth with the increase in knowledge. But that is not spiritual growth
 - If we want to grow spiritually we ought to humble ourselves, fall down at the feet of our spiritual father and confess our sins
 - When we live by Christian spirituality, we will reap the rewards of Heaven, we will be able to produce the Fruit of the Spirit (Joy, Love, Kindness, Peace, etc.)
 - Life of discipleship to Christ: Our best example is Jesus Christ. Christ is the epitome of the example we need to follow. Not celebrities, friends, peers, etc.
 - We need to rely on the Grace of the Holy Spirit (John 1:5-8): Spiritual formation is training yourself to rely on the power of God instead of yourself to guide you and help you mature spiritually. The Holy Spirit will work inside of you to transform you and shape you to the likeness of Christ.
 - Jesus explained how we can grow in the parable of the sower. We ought to plant ourselves in God's Word, water ourselves in prayer, remove any bad habits, and use everyday life as a path to growth.
 - Consider sharing the video on "Signs of Spiritual Maturity" By Fr. Kyrillos Ibrahim. [Fr. Kyrillos Ibrahim](#)
- + You may discuss what they believe are obstacles of spiritual maturity.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 2: My Spirit



Lesson 2.6: Abide in Christ

Objective

Finding refuge in Christ

Application

Reflect on your thoughts and actions and analyze them daily. Do they embody the actions and life of Christ?

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 15:4-6](#); [1 John 2:24-25](#); [2 John 1:9](#); [Romans 8:9-10](#), [John 6:56](#), [Joshua 20](#), [1 John 3:4-9, 24](#), [Numbers 35](#)



Liturgy: [Third Hour Agpeya Gospel and Litanies](#)



Patristics: Tertullian



Story: [St. Paul raising Eutychus](#)



Other: [Life & Miracles of the thrice blessed Bishop Makarios of Qena book I page 51-52](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Actively partaking from the True Vine

- Focus on the Eucharist as a main way to abide in Christ. When we partake of the Holy Eucharist, we are opening ourselves and allowing Christ to enter us and strengthen the Holy Spirit within us.
- The Eucharist connects us to Christ and thus strengthens our spiritual lives. It is our key to eternal life and salvation.
- In the Gospel of St. John 15:4, Christ says "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." Here, Christ is saying that when we abide in Him, all things are possible and we will be able to bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit. We are nothing without Christ. He is the true vine and when we let Him in, we can bear good fruits.
- Liturgy Connection: Third Hour Agpeya Gospel and Litanies
- Read Acts 20 and make the connection between verse 7 and verse 11.

+ He is our refuge

- Discuss the cities of refuge of Numbers 35. God ordained cities for refuge for those who committed murder unintentionally. These cities were to be a sort of protection from those who would hunt to avenge the blood of their lost one.
- Our sins bring forth death, as such, our enemy attempts to claim us as his at each of our failures. But by abiding in Christ, by approaching confession, and partaking of communion, we are graced with a protection that no enemy can conquer.
- Similarly, the world at times is against us, hunting us. Christ is our refuge, comfort and protection. Abiding in Him protects us from harm.
- When we abide in Christ, He can work miracles and wonders through us. He can strengthen us and help us with our struggles or difficulties that we face daily. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phillipians 4:13). There is no greater strength than that of Christ. Having Christ in your corner is the greatest power you can ever need.
- "The flesh feeds on the Body and Blood of Christ that the soul likewise may be filled with God" Tertullian
- If Christ dwells in us, we will keep His commandments and will be far from evil or evil thoughts (1 John 3:4-9, 24). Good deeds and actions will radiate from you and your actions will reflect on the ways of Christ.

+ The danger of not abiding

- You may discuss John 15:6 and the danger of not abiding. To not remain in Him is to cut oneself off from the source of all life.



+ Confess, repent, commune, and repeat!

- “Keep on confessing and partaking in communion so you can reach where I am, because those who confess and partake of the Eucharist have a great position with the saints in heaven” A message and vision from the thrice blessed Bishop Makarios of Qena (1991)
- If we have a great position with the saints in heaven through confession, repentance and communion, then how much more do we have with Christ?



Building Block 3: Inspiring Role Models



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 3:
Inspiring Role Models

Lesson 3.1: Intercession and Role Models of the World and of Saints

Objective

To understand the Dogma of Intercession

Application

If you haven't already done so, start a friendship with a Saint that you feel is close to your heart, ask for their prayers for your spiritual life as well as for any other life matter. Each Saint has a specific power or or talent that we can use and have them pray for us (Ex. when you lose or misplace something, praying and asking Ava Wanas). Have a saint for the class and try to apply the attributes of that Saint to your daily life (Whether it be courage, repentance, grace, compassion, love, strength, will power, etc)

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Timothy 2: 5-6](#), [Romans 8:34](#), [Romans 8:26-27](#), [Exodus 32:11-14](#), [James 5:16](#), [Numbers 21:7-9](#), [Job.42: 7-8](#), [Kings 11:9-13](#), [Matthew 22:32](#), [Luke 16:20-31](#), [John 13:21-30](#), [Hebrews 12:1](#), [Matthew 18:20](#), [Luke 5:17-26](#)



Liturgy: [Hymn of the Intercession \(Hiten\)](#);



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



Story: [Abraham and Lazarus](#), [Moses and the Golden Calf](#), [St. Mary's apparition](#), [Jesus heals a paralytic](#)



Other: [SUS Legacy Curriculum Grade 7 Oct W4](#); [HHPS3 - Comparative Theology: The Intercession Of Saints \(Arabic\)](#), [HG Bishop Rafael: The Intercession Of Saints \(Arabic\)](#), [HH Pope Shenouda III](#); [LA Diocese on Intercession](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Does the Orthodox Church worship saints?

- Is it okay to ask St. Mary and the saints to intercede and pray for us?
- What would you do if you saw St. Mary appearing on top of our church?

Discuss with the class how each one will react and what they will ask her to do for them. This should lead to a brief intro about her apparition in Zeitoun and how Many miraculous healings occurred too, from blindness, polio, paralysis, cripples, cancer and terminal illness. Steer the discussion to explaining that Saints can perform miracles through their intercession to God on our behalf.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GC1Bm_MVaCI

+ Discuss the different types of intercessions:

- Atonement intercession of Christ, ONLY through Jesus - (1 Timothy 2: 5-6, Romans 8:34)
- Holy Spirit - (Romans 8:26-27)
- Saints - Moses intercedes for his people (Exodus 32:11-14)
- Praying for one another - friends, family, enemies etc. (James 5:16)

+ What was the first miracle of Jesus? Who interceded for this miracle to happen?

The transformation of water into wine at the Wedding at Cana is the first miracle attributed to Jesus, it was done through the intercession of Saint Mary (John 2: 3-5). Address the Protestant accusations and differences in the dogma of intercession of saints with the correct Orthodox understanding.

- The presence of intercession in Scripture: (Numbers 21:7-9).
- God requests people to ask the intercession of the righteous ((Job.42: 7-8).
- The departed Saints have greater favour with God to the extent that He has mercy on people for their sake even without them praying. How



much more than if they do pray for someone? (1 Kings 11:9-13)

- The departed Saints are alive, they see us, feel us and they intercede and pray on our behalf (Matthew 22:32, Luke 16:20-31)
- We DO NOT worship Saints, we “Praise God in all His saints” (4th Hoos)
- “We should seek intercessions and the fervent prayers of the saints because they have special boldness before God.” – St. John Chrysostom
- Dogma of Intercession reveals our humility and need for prayers as well as our love for the victorious church.
- In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man we read that the rich man asked for Abraham’s intercession, “*And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ‘Then 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.’*” (Luke 16:23-24)

+ God often requested the intercession of the righteous on behalf of other people.

- God often asked for, approved, and allowed this to happen.
- Some examples for intercessions that God accepted: The story of the Patriarch Abraham and King Abimelech: (Gen 20: 1-7); The story of Job the righteous, and his three friends (Job 42:7-8)
- In both incidents, God Himself addresses a person, and yet declines to grant the forgiveness of a sin unless a particular Saint prays on behalf of that person. God does so in order to exalt his Saints and honor them before people, and He accepts, even requests such intercession.
- The intercession of Abraham on behalf of Sodom: (Gen 18:26-32).

+ Did Jesus love St. John more than St. Peter?

Discuss with the class why St. Peter “mentioned to” St. John to ask Jesus about who will betray him, even though they were all sitting together and he could have asked himself? (John 13:21-30)

- St. John was leaning on Jesus' breast, meaning he had a closer connection, and for sure St. Mary is closer to where God’s throne is, that’s why we ask for her intercession “Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, Saint Mary, O Lord, grant us the forgiveness of our sins.” - Divine Liturgy
- In the Hymn of the Intercession, we ask for St. Mary’s intercessions and the prayers of many saints.
- If you have a family that loves and cares for you, why face the world and sin alone? (Hebrews 12:1)
- “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20. Asking a saint to pray with you will make you two.
- If you are looking for real, honest and loving friends, look no further. St. Mina and Pope Kirolos friendship example.
- “Look after your father so that when he goes to the Lord he may personally intercede with him on your behalf- then it will be well with you.” – St. Arsenious
- “By imitating the virtue of these saints we may be able to share their crowns too. For if we subvert the flame of those things just as they did the fire, we will be able to stand near them and share the same boldness of speech.” – St. John Chrysostom

+ Do you ever feel like the paralytic let down through the roof of the house? (Luke 5:17-26)

- Are you immobilized spiritually or maybe facing hardships in your life (like the Paralytic)? The world is so busy and loud and no one is paying attention. Because of the faith of some real friends you can be healed by God’s power. If that is your case, the interceding Saints are always willing to lend a helping hand.
- “Though a Christian prays alone, he has the choir of saints standing with him.” – St. Clement of Alexandria
- “And all the choir of Your saints, through whose prayers and supplications have mercy on us all and save us, for the sake of Your holy name, which is called upon us.” - The Commemoration of the Saints, Divine Liturgy

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 3: Inspiring Role Models



Lesson 3.2: Models of Martyrs - Persevering Faith

Objective

To understand that the perseverance of the martyrs is an inspiration for us

Application

Choose a Martyr each week and read about them. Find the key aspect of their lives and try to apply it to yours.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Acts 7 \(story of St. Stephen\)](#), [John 16:33](#),
[Matthew 11:12](#), [2 Maccabees 7](#), [Romans 10:9-10](#), [John 10:22](#)



Liturgy: [Coptic New Year Hymn](#)



Patristics: [St. Ambrose of Milan](#),



Story: [St. Abanoub](#), [St. Barbara](#),



Other - Martyrdom Anba Youannes of Gharbia, [Letters of St. Ignatius \(to the Romans\)](#), [Cult of the Saints by St. John Chrysostom](#); [Martyrdom in Christianity \(Arabic\)](#), HG Bishop Raphael; [The Coptic Calendar And Martyrdom](#), HG Bishop David; [The Crown of Martyrdom](#), HH Pope Tawadrous II



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What does the word martyrdom mean?

- It means a person whose blood has been shed on account of faith.
- It means someone who declares his faith and preaches the Word of the Holy Bible.
- It means testifying through the observation of God's Commandments.
- "That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." [Romans 10:9-10](#)
- The Feast of the Nayrouz means the feast of commemorating the martyrs. They are not commemorated once a year, but every day. Their stories are written in the Synaxarium. The commemoration of the Saints is prayed with every Liturgy.
- "By the death of martyrs religion has been defended, faith increased, the Church strengthened; the dead have conquered, the persecutors have been overcome. And so we celebrate the death of those of whose lives we are ignorant." St. Ambrose of Milan

+ Who was the first martyr in the New Testament?

Consider going into the details of St. Stephen's life and his ministry as a deacon.

- St. Stephen was the first martyr. He died because of his love for Jesus Christ.
- St. Stephen was defending the faith, which angered the heathens and they stoned him to death.
- St. Stephen did not waiver until his last breath.
- Read the story of the martyrdom of St. Stephen, [Acts 7](#).

+ Why were the Christians persecuted?

- The Christians were zealous about their faith. They were spreading the faith throughout the world. This angered the heathens.
- The heathens did not understand that the kingdom of God is not of this world.
- "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from here." [John 18:36](#)
- And you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endures to the end shall be saved. [John 10:22](#)



- Emperor Diocletian persecuted the most number of Christians. He was also the last. He killed anyone that would not bow down to his gods. On this Tertullian said: "If the martyrs of the whole world were put on one arm of the balance and the martyrs of Egypt on the other, the balance will tilt in favor of the Copts."
- + Who was St. Abanoub? [The child saint martyr.](#)
 - He was orphaned at a young age. When he was 12 years old he wanted to confess his faith. That was during the reign of emperor Diocletian.
 - St Abanoub's faith was very strong. He wanted to shed his blood for Jesus Christ.
 - Archangel Michael strengthened him and healed him through the torch he endured.
 - Many became Christians after witnessing the miracles when St. Abanoub got up and walked after his legs and arms were cut off.
 - St. Abanoub's story teaches wisdom and perseverance.
- + Who was St. Barbara? [The martyr of the Lord.](#)
 - St. Barbara lived alone in a tower isolated from the world. As she admired God's creation, she was curious about the Creator.
 - She learned about Jesus Christ from her friends.
 - She requested that the bathhouse her father, Dioscuros the governor, was building for her to be changed to include 3 windows for the Holy Trinity and a cross carved in the wall above.
 - She sent for Origen, who taught her about Jesus Christ, to come and baptize her.
 - Her father was angered by his daughter's decision to become Christian. When he could not change her mind, he went after her with a sword. She escaped.
 - He sent his soldiers to find her and take her to the imperial governor. He tortured her severely. Her wounds were miraculously healed. Finally he ordered her beheading.
 - St. Barabara's story teaches to be hungry for the faith, seek to always learn and not be shaken by any threat.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 3: Inspiring Role Models



Lesson 3.3: Models of Repentance

Objective

To understand the power of repentance and the power of God to forgive. Be inspired to the hope of repentance and fleeing judgment.

Application

Always repent after committing any sin

Carefully examine yourself at the end of each day for any sins that you might not have noticed through your busy day and ask God for forgiveness.

Make it a habit to schedule a monthly appointment with your Father of confession to confess your sins.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 7](#), [Luke 15](#), [Prayer of Manasseh](#), [Ezekiel 18:21-24](#), [John 20:22-23](#), [Joshua 7:26](#), [Acts 19:18](#)



Liturgy: [The Confession: St. Basil Liturgy](#)



Patristics: [St. Ephraim the Syrian](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#); [St. Athanasius the Great](#); [St. John Saba](#)



Story - [St. Perpetua](#); [St. Moses the Strong](#)



Other: [HHPS III - Life of Repentance](#); [Confessions by St. Augustine](#); [On Repentance and Defeating Despair - St. John Chrysostom](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Where did King David's spirit go after his departure from this world?
 - Unfortunately, after Adam and Eve sinned and were exiled from paradise, even the spirits of saints went to Hades.
 - But how does that align with God's goodness and justice? That's why God planned his Son's death to pay that hefty price and give us a new eternal life. For "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)
 - But "He who created us without our help will not save us without our consent." - Saint Augustine. God respects our freedom of choice very much; he is never going to force us to enter his Kingdom even though he yearns for that; he is always calling to us, "Seek Me and live" - Amos 5:4.
 - 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. Let's open the door to God through repentance, which means a change of our sinful old ways and directions.
- + How did repentance change murderers and adulterers into Saints?
 - Stories of Saints who repented: St. Perpetua, St. Moses the Strong, St. Mary the Egyptian
 - Consider using the links of the references to share a few points about their stories of repentance
 - The motive for repentance is at all times humility, self-sufficiency - not a means of justification for oneself
- + Avoid the sin at the Source: Avoid places, people and situations that causes you to sin:
 - "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28)
 - "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matthew 5:22)
- + Immediate repentance:
 - "I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants" (Luke 15:18-19)
 - "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. Cry out, O sinner with all your might and spare not your throat; for your Lord is merciful and loves those who repent." - St. Ephraim



the Syrian

- “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
- + Father of Confession for confession and guidance: God requiring confession to a Priest in the presence of the Holy Spirit, for forgiveness:
 - “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)
 - “He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)
 - "As the baptized person is enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, likewise, through the priest, the penitent receives forgiveness of sins by the grace of Christ." - St. Athanasius the Great.
- + Always have hope!
 - “With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you. Says the Lord, your Redeemer” (Isaiah 54:8)
 - “Repentance saves and releases those whom the devil captured. Many years of the devil’s hard work is lost in one moment of repentance.” - St. John Saba
 - “Repentance makes adulterers into virgins.” - St. John Saba
 - Liturgy Connection: Nekkai O Panoti, Je Nan Nan, "Given for salvation, remission of sin and eternal life to all who partake of Him." - Confession St. Basil Liturgy

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 3.4: Inspiring Role Models: From Repentance to Evangelism

Building Block 3:
Inspiring Role
Models



Objective

To understand How the love of God plus our self control and perseverance can turn us to Evangelists.

Application

Let's focus our prayer this week on: "Draw me away We will run after you." - Song of Solomon 1:4. Let's ask our Lord to take all love of this world out of our hearts and make us understand the unique purpose he created us and gave us our special talents for. And to ask through the intercession of these two great saints that he may use us for spreading his good news to people around us.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Song of Solomon 1:4](#), [John 4: 3-10](#), [John 4: 19, John 4: 26](#), [John 4:29](#), [Proverbs 31:10](#)



Liturgy: [The holy liturgy of St. Basil the great](#)



Patristics: [St. Basil's Letter 204 to the church in Neocaesarea](#), [In the Life of Macrina the Younger, by St. Gregory of Nyssa](#); [St. Augustine](#)



Story: [The Samaritan Woman: St. Photini, video](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Where did Jesus meet the Samaritan woman?

- Jesus met the Samaritan woman at noon time at "Jacob's well" and asked her for a drink of water (John 4: 3-10).
- Noting the Lord was a Jew, she questioned the Lord's asking her for a drink of water (Samaritans and Jews did not like each other).
- After a quick conversation, she was very amazed and astounded at the all knowing of the Lord Jesus Christ about her life having never seen him before, she realized that he is no ordinary man (John 4: 19).
- He dealt with her in love and respect (which she wasn't used to) so she was able to open up and ask about the Messiah, Jesus revealed himself to her as the coming Messiah ((John 4: 26).
- Up to that point she had led a sinful life. She had had many husbands and was openly living with a man outside of marriage. She lived a shameful life. However, she responded to Jesus' love with genuine repentance and was forgiven for her sinful ways.
- St. Augustine comments and says, "Listen now and learn who it is that asks for a drink. Jesus answered her and said: If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", perhaps you might have asked Him and He would have given you living water. He asks for a drink, and He promises a drink. He is in need, as one hoping to receive, yet He is rich, as one about to satisfy the thirst of others. He says: If you knew the gift of God. The gift of God is the Holy Spirit. But He is still using veiled language as He speaks to the woman and gradually enters into her heart. Or is he already teaching her? What could be more gentle and kind than the encouragement He gives? If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", perhaps you might ask and He would give you living water."

+ A life of Evangelism: she is sometimes recognized as the first to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

- When she left the well, she rushed back to the city and told everyone "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (John 4:29).
- The town's people followed the Samaritan woman back to Jacob's well. They asked the Lord to come to their town where they stayed with the Lord and listened to His teachings for two entire days.
- She evangelized for her 5 sisters and two sons (who themselves became tireless evangelists).

+ A new Name, a New life: Does anybody know her name after Baptism?

- On the day of Pentecost the Samaritan woman and her five sisters were baptized. She took the name "Photini" which means "the enlightened one". Following her baptism, St. Photini helped to spread the Good News about the Lord, she became a missionary traveling and

preaching and was known for her brave Christian teachings.

- When Nero, the emperor of Rome, began to persecute Christians, Photini and her son Joseph were in Carthage, in Africa, where she was preaching the Christian gospel. After Jesus appeared to Photini in a dream, she sailed to Rome.
- Photini's arrival and activity aroused curiosity in the capital city. Everyone talked about her, "Who is this woman?" they asked. "She came here with a crowd of followers and she preaches about Christ with great boldness."
- Soldiers were ordered to bring her to the emperor. Before they could do so, Photini went to Nero (who was known for his brutality - ordering the death of his mother and his wife and responsible for the prosecution of many Christians).
- Photini wanted to teach Nero about Christ. The half-mad ruler of the Roman Empire did not frighten her with his threats to torture and kill her.
- Photini catechized Domnina (Nero's daughter) and her hundred slave girls and baptized them all. She gave the name Anthousa to Nero's daughter.
- When the emperor heard that his own daughter had been converted to Christianity, he condemned Photini and all her companions to death by fire. For seven days the furnace burned, But when the door of the furnace was opened, it was seen that the fire had not harmed the saints.
- In vain Nero subjected Photini, her sisters, sons and friends to every known torture. The saints survived unscathed to taunt.
- For three years they were held in a Roman prison. Saint Photini transformed prison into a "house of God." Many Romans came to the prison, were converted and baptized.
- Finally, the enraged tyrant had all the saints, except for Photini, beheaded; her five sisters: Anatole, Photo, Photis, Paraskeve and Kyriake and her two sons, Photeinos and Joseph received the crown of martyrdom together.
- One night, God appeared to her, made the sign of the cross over her three times. The vision filled her with joy. Many days later, while she hymned and blessed God, Saint Photini gave her soul into God's hands.
- The Samaritan Woman conversed with Christ by the well of Jacob, near the city of Sychar. She drank of the "living water" and gained everlasting life and glory. May her prayers and blessings be with us. Amen.

+ Preserving the faith: St. Macrina keeps the orthodox faith alive (with God's grace of course)

- St. Basil the great, St. Peter of Sebaste and St. Gregory of Nyssa were brothers and St. Macrina (the elder) was their grandmother. They also has a sister called St. Marina the younger.
- St. Macrina grew up a pagan. She learned about Christianity from St Gregory the Wonder-worker, and became his disciple (he was the bishop of Neocaesarea - her hometown - during her youth). She then lived under some of the worst persecutions of the early Christian era.
- In the reign of Diocletian, she abandoned her home and hid in the forests and desert places with her husband, Basil. Although their home was confiscated, they felt no pangs of regret. Stripped of everything except their love for God, they settled in an ancient forest and spent seven years there. Once the persecution had died down, St. Macrina and her family returned to Neocaesarea. A short time later, the Roman authorities stripped them of everything they owned and turned them out into the streets. By God's providence, goats would come down from the mountains and provide them with food. She survived due solely to God's miraculous intervention. She raised her child, St. Basil (the Elder), and in spite of the obstacles, she succeeded in passing on her faith and tradition to him.
- St. Macrina raised all of her grandchildren (she had 10), and she took special care to give them a sound religious education. Her care paid off: Basil became a monk and wrote a monastic rule that is still followed by monks; he (led by the holy spirit) formulated the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil that we pray today. Gregory became bishop of Nyssa and then archbishop of Sebaste. Peter preceded his brother as archbishop of Sebaste. All three brothers were champions of faith against Arianism. And Macrina the Younger who devoted herself to Jesus after the death of her fiancée, when she was twelve, and gradually transformed their family estate into a full double monastery, which Basil and Gregory often visited, she became abbess of a small community of nuns near the Black Sea.
- "Some time ago, there had been a celebrated Macrina in our family, our father's mother. At the time of the persecutions she had suffered bravely for her confession of faith in Christ, and it was in honor of her that the child was given this name by her parents." In the Life of Macrina the Younger, by St. Gregory of Nyssa

+ Living your belief: Model for a servant and an evangelist.

- St. Macrina's grandchildren, nine of whom survived to adulthood, were raised in an intensely Christian atmosphere, taught to read from the Psalms and thoroughly immersed in a Christian life. She taught her grandchildren to read from the Bible, trained them in piety and practical Christian values and told them stories of her spiritual father, St. Gregory The Wonder worker.
- St. Gregory developed and extended Origen's ideas on the otherness of God, and our ability to adequately explore His nature. He stood for the faith against the Arian heresy, most notably at the Council of Constantinople in 381, where his brother's St. Basil's and St. Gregory of



Nazianzus' contributions would make a lasting impact on the Christian understanding of the Trinity. It is in large part due to these men that the final version of the creed was accepted at the Council in 381 AD.

- She made no new insights into our understanding of the faith. She left no letters, homilies or books. But by simply living what she believed, by simply being a mother and a grandmother, by teaching her children and grandchildren by word and example, and through her steadfast faith, St. Macrina the Elder became a bridge of theology, passing on the Tradition entrusted to her, and enabling two brilliant men to take the next steps in theology.
- "What clearer evidence can there be of my faith, than that I was brought up by my grandmother, a blessed woman, who came from you? I mean the celebrated Macrina who taught me the words of the blessed Gregory; which, as far as memory had preserved down to her day, she cherished herself, while she fashioned and formed me, while yet a child, upon the doctrines of piety." St. Basil's Letter 204 to the church in Neocaesarea.



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 3.5: Trusting Our Leaders

Building Block 3:
Inspiring Role
Models



Objective

To understand that we have to honor the Clergical Member and trust our leaders as God's chosen ones to serve us.

Application

Always pray for all your church leaders so that God gives them wisdom
Honor and always speak highly of them.

Follow the leadership and guidance of your father of confession, it is important for your spiritual growth.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Psalm 104:24](#), [Genesis 1:26-31](#), [Acts 1:8](#), [Exodus 3:10](#), [Exodus 28:1](#), [Hebrews 4:15](#), [Matthew 10:1](#), [Matthew 15:12-13](#), [Ephesians 4:11-15](#), [Hebrews 13:17](#), [Hebrews 5:1-3](#), [1 Samuel 24:1-12](#), [Numbers 16:1-40](#), [Numbers 12:1-13](#), [Romans 15:30](#), [Luke 22:25-27](#), [Acts 13:22-23](#)



Liturgy: [Priesthood Ordination Prayers](#)



Patristics: Letter of St. Polycarp to the Phillippians



Story - [Moses to lead his people](#); [David and Saul](#); [Korah; Aaron and Mariam](#)



Other: St. John Chrysostom on Priesthood; Priesthood by HHPS3, [Priesthood \(Arabic\)](#), HG Bishop Raphael :[The Special Priesthood To The Priests \(Arabic\)](#), HG Bishop Raphael; [Priesthood of Melchizedek](#), HG Bishop Youssef; [The Holy Priesthood](#), Fr. Abraham Wassef



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is the Hubble telescope?

Discuss with the class how Hubble Telescope's images helped us recognize that our universe is planned, engineered and designed perfectly by God to work in perfect harmony; nothing is left to coincidence. If the sun was any closer, humans, animals and plants wouldn't have survived the heat. The moon's gravity is perfect for sea tides. The Earth tilts just perfectly to keep our climate balanced. (John 1:3).

+ God the perfect planner:

- In God's plan for us, he didn't leave anything to chance; he loved us so dearly that he created everything perfect for us and instructed us how to use it in an utmost way (Psalm 104:24)
- Likewise, God created a leadership system to make sure His people enjoy knowing and worshipping Him in complete harmony with one another. He even chose the leaders like David, Samuel, the apostles, and St. Paul, guided them and gave them unique knowledge and wisdom to accomplish their assigned tasks.
- In the story of Creation, God placed Adam as a leader and head to all creatures - having dominion over them all (Genesis 1:26-31)
- God used His leaders to guide His people throughout history *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* (Acts 1:8)

+ God's Chain of command (leadership hierarchy):

Consider discussing whether God needs representatives.

- God chose Moses to lead His people out of Egypt (Exodus 3:10)
- God asked Moses to ordain Aaron and his sons as Priests to lead prayers and offer sacrifices (Exodus 28:1)
- God continuously had prophets to share His word.



- Likewise, we have a hierarchy in our church, headed by the Pope, branching into Bishops, Priests, Deacons and servants. The whole church leadership system is led by Jesus, our High Priest (Hebrews 4:15)
- + Trust that God chooses our leaders and they are a God-given gift:
 - *"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease."* (Matthew 10:1)
 - *"Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?'" But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted."* (Matthew 15: 12-13)
- + Respecting our leaders:

Discuss with the class how the concepts of obedience and submission are often difficult to speak about because our culture is largely focused on self-centeredness. We don't welcome such words; rather we put up our guard because "nobody should have to tell us what to do or control us". However, God expects us to be dependent on Him, obedient to His commands and submissive to His authority, which He delegates to some in the body of Christ to lead, train and prepare us for every good work. (Ephesians 4:11-15)

 - Respecting our leaders is a clear biblical commandment (Hebrews 13:17)
 - The priest (an example of church leaders) is God's servant and church leader; through him all church sacraments are held. (Hebrews 5:1-3)
 - David's respect for Saul (God's anointed) is a perfect example, even when he knows that God rejects Saul and that David should be the king. Also, knowing that Saul is seeking to kill him, David refused the advice to kill Saul. (1 Samuel 24:1-12)
 - You may say in pride: Well, God speaks to me too; why didn't I get the same instruction directly from Him? The answer is: (Numbers 16:1-40)
 - Consequences of disrespect to leadership hierarchy (Numbers 12:1-13)
 - "Being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ." - St. Polycarp
 - "If one were to meet a Priest walking with an Angel, then one should greet the Priest first and kiss his hand since that hand has touched the Body and Blood of our Lord." - St. John Chrysostom
 - Liturgy Connection: Priesthood Ordination Prayers, you can choose to read the priest vow to notice the level of commitment required in their calling.
 - There is room in the church for disagreement (points of view) with leaders and asking questions but in humility and politeness, knowing that they are accountable to God for watching over our souls (Hebrews 13:17)
 - Show love to our church leaders through prayer. St. Paul always asked for prayers from the church brothers and sisters (Romans 15:30)
- + You as a future leader:
 - You might be already serving, or in the future, you might be a church leader; always remember: *"And He said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves'"* (Luke 22: 25-27)
 - Be a leader after God's own heart. (Acts 13:22-23)

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 3: Inspiring Role Models



Lesson 3.6: Becoming a Godly Role Model

Objective

To understand how to avoid being a stumbling block

Application

Think of some practical ways that you can influence your friends for the Kingdom of God. Find a Saint to intercede for you and start a friendship relation with him/her.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Acts 13](#); [Gen 18-19](#), [Psalm 1](#), [I Samuel 18](#); [I Corinthians 15:33](#); [Sirach 37](#); [Jonah 1:6](#), [I Kings](#); [Acts 16:22-25](#) [12: 8-10](#); [Matthew 18:6](#); [Psalm 119:133](#); [Proverbs 18:24](#)



Liturgy: [The Synaxarion](#)



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



Story: [St. Gregory](#) and [St. Basil](#); [Rehoboam](#)



Other: [Ten Concepts of HHPS III on Friendship](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Family Split: Abraham and Lot

Consider asking the class what difference can our friends make in our life to make us in the likeness of God or otherwise, make us sinful.

- Lot desires his own path and vision: “And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. II Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.” - Gen 13:10-11
- What do you think could be Lot's family destiny if he stayed with Abraham, rather than leaving him and choosing what he believed is a better land with its evil dwellers?
- Lot chose a life according to his own eyes and vision rather than God's. Should he have stayed with Abraham, who followed God, He could have saved his family from enduring so many hurtful and unpleasant events and could have saved his wife from death. Companionship with God's people can dramatically change lives for the best.

+ Damage of bad influence and unreliable friends:

- “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’ Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God.” (I Corinthians 15:33-34)
- “One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24)
- Eve's influence on Adam and Satan's influence on Eve led to the Fall. Genesis 3:1-5, shows how bad influence can lead to catastrophic consequences.
- Rehoboam's friends' bad influence and wrong advice led to the split of the entire Kingdom of Israel, which was never resolved. (I Kings 12: 8-10)
- Be very careful not to be a stumbling stone to your friends or anybody around you. (Matthew 18:6)

+ Power of good influences and friendship:

- Paul And Silas encouraged each other to pray and sing hymns, despite being in pain, inside the horrific roman prison. (Acts 16:22-25)
- Friendship of St. Basil and St. Gregory and how they supported each other spiritually, becoming some of the most influential Christian teachers of all time. [Sts Basil and Gregory, Two Bodies One Spirit - Gregory Nazianzen](#)
- “Preserve, then, my sons, that friendship you have 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 to, with whom you can share confidences, and to whom you can entrust the secrets of your heart. It is a comfort to have a trustworthy man by your side, who will rejoice with you in prosperity, sympathize in troubles, and encourage persecution. What good friends those Hebrew children were whom the flames of the fiery furnace did not separate from their love of each other!" (St. Ambrose)

+ Becoming a Godly Role Model:

- Friendship with God is the utmost and most profound, and most satisfying relationship we can ever have and enjoy; it changes us to be in His image and allows us to influence people around us positively. The LORD JESUS CHRIST calls us to abide in Him as the best companion anyone can ever have. *"but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."* (Proverbs 18:24)
- The close friendship between Abraham and our Lord allowed Abraham to intercede for Sodom. (Genesis 18:22)
- The purpose of reading the Synaxarion is to follow the example of these saints and martyrs.
- By filled by God and living their example, we become role models whether we believe care to see it or not. There is always someone that becomes inspired by us. Whether a friend, a family member, a child.
- How can someone choose their friends and how can they also be a good influence on them? Find these friends in holy places (Church), not in places leading to sin. (Psalm 1)
- "Nothing is so injurious to mankind as to undervalue friendship ; and not to cultivate it with the greatest care; as nothing, on the other hand, is so beneficial, as to pursue it to the utmost of our power" - St. John
- Advise your friends based on biblical principles. (Psalm 119:133)
- "Eating and drinking don't make friendships – such friendships even robbers and murderers have. But if we are friends, if we truly care for one another, let us help one another spiritually. . . Let us hinder those things that lead our friends away to hell." -St. John Chrysostom

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 3: Inspiring Role Models



Lesson 3.7: Jesus Our Ultimate Role Model: Baptism, a Second Chance

Objective

To understand the value of the new life Christians have in Christ as new creation through baptism

Application

Recognize that through baptism one is now a temple of the Holy Spirit, renewed and sanctified. St. Paul tells us that all believers have died with Christ and no longer live for themselves. Christians lives are no longer worldly; they are now spiritual. We ought to walk in newness of life, Romans 6:4. The new creation is no longer a *slave* to sin. We now have the choice to “let sin reign” or to count ourselves “dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11-12)

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 3:1-5](#); [Genesis 5:3](#); [John 3:3-6](#); [Romans 6:4](#); [1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#); [Romans 12:2](#); [2 Thessalonians 1:11-12](#); [1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#)



Liturgy: [Theophany Hymns](#); [Taught us the way of salvation](#), [Baptism Prayers](#)



Patristics: [St. Athanasius](#); [St. Severus of Antioch](#); [St. Gregory of Nazianza](#); [St. Gregory of Nyssa](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story - [St. Peter the Seal of the Martyrs and water freezing](#)



Other - St. Cyril of Alexandria on Christ's Baptism, St. Basil's homily on Christ's Baptism, St. Gregory's Baptism on Christ's Baptism, Athanasius on the Incarnation, [On the Incarnation: Saint Athanasius \(Popular Patristics Series Book 44\)](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Should someone celebrate their birthday on the day they were born or the day they were “reborn”?

Consider asking the class, what is the point of celebrating birth if the end is death? Consider getting them curious about the word “reborn” and use it as an entry point of discussion.

- Since the Fall (Genesis 3:1-5), all people are born in sin (original sin / corrupt nature) Genesis 5:3 and eventually die, so why celebrate?
- Don't worry; Jesus has the answer; “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3)
- Perfect, now we can live forever, but the hard question is: How can we be born again? Nicodemus asked Jesus the same question. (John 3:4)
- Jesus answered, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” (John 3:5-6)
- You know what happens when a portrait that has been painted on a panel becomes obliterated through external stains. The artist does not throw away the panel, but the subject of the portrait has to come and sit for it again, and then the likeness is re-drawn on the same material. Even so was it with the All-holy Son of God. He, the Image of the Father, came and dwelt in our midst, in order that He might renew mankind made after Himself, and seek out His lost sheep, even as it says in the Gospel: “*I came to seek and to save that which was lost.*” This explains also his saying to the Jews: “*Except a man be born anew...*” He was not referring to a man's natural birth, but to the re-birth and re-creation of the soul in the Image of God...the Savior of us all, the Word of God, in His great love took to Himself a body and moved as Man among men, meeting their senses, so to speak, half way. He became Himself an object for the senses, so that those who were seeking God in sensible things might apprehend the Father through the works which the Word of God did in the body. - St Athanasius De Incarnatione pp.41-43
- To enter the kingdom of God, we have to be baptised. “*Under grace, when those who have committed countless crimes enjoy baptism they are restored to life and no penalty for their wrongdoings is demanded of them.*” – St. John Chrysostom.
- St. Peter the Seal of the martyrs and the miracle of water freezing: In the city of Antioch, a man of high authority had agreed with Diocletian the Emperor, to return to paganism. That man had two children and because of him, their mother could not baptize them there. Therefore, she took them to Alexandria. On her way there, the sea was troubled by a violent storm and she was afraid that her two sons would drown and die without being baptized. She therefore dipped them in the sea three times saying, “*In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy*

Spirit," then she cut her breast and with her blood made the sign of the Holy Cross over their foreheads. Eventually, the troubled sea calmed down and she arrived safely to Alexandria with her sons. On the same day, she brought them to be baptized. Whenever, the Patriarch, St. Peter tried to baptize them, the water would solidify as stone. This happened three times. When he questioned her, she informed him of what had happened to her at sea. He marvelled and praised God saying, "That is what the church proclaims, that it is one baptism." Therefore, the baptism she performed in the sea was accepted by the Lord.

- + Our Savior who came and did the ultimate heroic act is restoring our nature back and allowing us to be righteous and live in holiness
 - His death and resurrection was to renew our creation, Blessing our nature in Him. *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:4)
 - "The power of baptism is to be understood as a covenant with God for a second life and purer lifestyle." - St. Gregory of Nazianza.
 - "The Word took true flesh equal in substance to us whom He was earnest to heal and renew." - St. Severus of Antioch.
 - "If we have been conformed to His death, sin henceforth in us is surely a corpse, pierced through by the javelin of baptism!" - St. Gregory of Nyssa.
 - "The Spirit's grace receives them in the baptismal pool and renders the person who has prostituted themselves a son of God and restores life in the person deadened by sins." - St. John Chrysostom.
 - Liturgy Connection: Theophany Hymns; Gregorian Liturgy - Blessed My nature in you, taught us the ways of salvation, Baptism Prayers.
- + How to live a life worthy of Baptism (second baptism in confession)
 - Live for God who bought you for a high price: (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
 - Don't be conformed to this world: (Romans 12:2)
 - Glorify the name of our Lord Jesus: 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.
 - Preserve God's temple in a holy state: (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)
 - "God requires three things of every person who has received baptism: correct faith from his soul, truth from his tongue and self control from his body." - St. Gregory of Nazianza.
 - "The power of baptism is to be understood as a covenant with God for a second life and purer lifestyle." - St. Gregory of Nazianza
 - By "putting on Christ" in baptism, we take on the renewed image Christ introduced into man. Now we're able to be saved through accepting Him and living a holy life participating in the likeness of His death and resurrection.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 3:
Inspiring Role
Models



Lesson 3.8: Jesus' Model on the Cross: Forgiveness

Objective

Understand Salvation and God's forgiveness

Application

When praying the Lord's prayer "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" think of something that someone has done to you and you have not yet forgiven them. Spend time this week, praying so you can forgive them.

Take communion as much as you can to gain God's power in forgiving others.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 26:14-16](#); [Matthew 26:69-75](#); [Matthew 27:28-31](#); [Mark 15:13](#); [John 20:25](#); [Luke 23](#); [Matthew 5:44](#); [1 Corinthians 13: 4-7](#); [Isaiah 53:5](#); [John 12:27](#); [John 18:11](#); [Luke 23:34](#); [Matthew 8:15-17](#); [Romans 12:19](#); [Romans 12:21](#); [Matthew 6:12](#); [Matthew 18:23-35](#); [John 15:5](#); [Matthew 25: 31-40](#); [John 3:16](#)



Liturgy: [Great Friday Hymns \(Omonogenes and Fai et Taf Empf\)](#), [6th Hour Agpeva Litany](#), [St. Basil Liturgy Reconciliation Prayer](#)



Patristics: [St. Ambrose of Milan](#); [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#)



Story: [Right Hand Thief](#), [St. Peter's crucifixion](#)



Other: [On the Incarnation by St. Athanasius](#), [Called to forgive](#), [HG Bishop Angealos](#); [God Desires Forgiveness \(Arabic\)](#), [HG Bishop Raphael](#); [Parable of the Servant who does not forgive](#), [HG Bishop Raphael](#); [The Principle of Forgiveness](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Have you ever been betrayed or hurt by one of your very close friends while you are planning a delightful surprise for them? If not, can you imagine how it feels?

Get the class to discuss how hurt from a close friend can cause pain, emotional distress and anger, and how it is not that easy to get over it.

- Christ was: Betrayed by Judas (Matthew 26:14-16)
- Denied by Peter (Matthew 26:69-75)
- Mocked and insulted by the soldiers and the public (Matthew 27:28-31)
- Called to be crucified by the public in favor of releasing Barabas, the killer (Mark 15:13)
- Doubted by Thomas - John 20:25
- And his response was: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34)

- + But why would the Holy, Almighty, All-powerful God endure all that? He did nothing wrong after all: Luke 23:40-41

- Our Savior did this ultimate heroic act to release us from Satan's bondage "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy spirit and the Virgin Mary and became Man. And He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried. And on the third day He rose from the dead, according to the scriptures, ascended to the heavens;" - NICENE CREED.
- "The mercies of God have changed the place of death into that of His resurrection, and turned the sleep of death into something we look forward to enjoy." - St. Ambrose of Milan
- "By the death of His own flesh, He slew death and brought the race of man back again to incorruption; for Christ rose again for us." - St. Cyril of Alexandria



- Liturgy Connection: Great Friday Hymns (Omonogenes and Fai et Taf Empf).
- “By Your death You made alive the dead man, whom You created with Your own Hands, and had died in sin.” - 6th Hour Agpeya Litany
- “Death which entered into the world by the envy of the devil; You have destroyed.” - St. Basil Liturgy Reconciliation Prayer

+ What is God teaching on the cross?

- The true and ultimate meaning of love: John 15:13 and I Corinthians 13: 4-7
- Isaiah 53:5: *“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.”* He was ONLY hurt because He loved us and wanted to save us at any cost.
- Favoring others over ourselves as He favored us over Himself: *“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.”* (John 12:27)
- Obedience: As he obeyed the Father: (John 18:11)
- Forgiveness: He was kind, loving and forgiving during His physical, mental and spiritual excruciating pain and agony: Then Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”* (Luke 23:34)
- Forgiveness is for all who repent as the thief on His right, *“And Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.’”* (Luke 23:39)
- Forgiveness is not weakness, but it is a powerful voluntarily act of love (John 10:18)
- You are loved. If God suffered so much for you, then you are so precious in His eyes (John 3:16)

+ So if someone hurts me, should I bite my tongue and say nothing or do something about it?

Consider debating the question and finally conclude that the Lord gives us a framework of decision making in scripture.

- *“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”* (Matthew 8:15-17)
- Never use violence: (Matthew 26:51-52)
- Don’t seek vengeance *“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”* Romans 12:19
- Always remember: *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”* (Romans 12:21)

+ Following the footsteps of Jesus as our role model:

- Now that we've been forgiven through Jesus's death, we should forgive others *“And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.”* (Matthew 6:12)
- As all the Apostles and Jesus disciples forgave those who persecuted them. St. Peter was crucified. However, he asked them to crucify him head downwards, and he delivered up his soul into the hand of the Lord forgiving those who crucified him.
- Notice the word “As”, meaning if we don’t forgive, we won’t be forgiven.
- The ultimate danger of not forgiving: This can jeopardize our spiritual and eternal life- the parable of the unforgiving servant: (Matthew 18:23-35)
- In the liturgy, the priest prays *“According to Your good will, O God, fill our hearts with Your peace. Cleanse us from all blemish, all guile, all hypocrisy, all malice, and the remembrance of evil entailing death. And make us all worthy, O our Master, to greet another with a holy kiss, that without falling into condemnation we may partake of Your immortal and heavenly gift in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* It is therefore imperative that we reconcile with other people before proceeding to partake of anything with Christ.
- Pray for those who hurt you, ask God to give you the power to forgive them and to provide them with the ability to repent their sin: (Matthew 5:44), remember, this is not easy but Jesus said *“for without Me you can do nothing.”* John 15:5
- Since Jesus did no evil, yet He paid for all our evil deeds (Isaiah 53:5), the least we can do is to offer help to those who are in need (financially, emotionally, physically,...etc.), remember on the judgment day, you’ll be called “blessed” for such deeds. (Matthew 25: 31-40)



Building Block 4: The Divided Kingdom - OT Timeline 3- Spiritual Warfare

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 4.1: The Divided Kingdom, Northern Kings: Lost Warfare

Building Block 4: The
Divided Kingdom - Old
Testament Timeline 3 -
Spiritual Warfare



Objective

To understand the outcome of disobeying God as the kings of north who lost their warfare because of they did not realize the need for God

Application

Track your spiritual cannon and take time for self-reflection at the end of each day

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Kings 17:7-23](#), [Genesis 3:1-5](#), [James 5:17-19](#), [1 Kings 18:1-46](#), [1 Kings 21:11-14](#), [Psalm 16:11](#), [1 Kings 16:30,33](#), [Genesis 6](#), [Colossians 3:2](#), [Phillippians 4:8](#), [Romans 8:5](#), [1 Corinthians 10:31](#), [Romans 12:2](#)



Liturgy: [St. Basil Anaphora](#); [Gregorian Anaphora](#);



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



Story: [King Solomon and Jeroboam](#), [Ahab and Jezebel](#), [St. John the Short](#)



Other: [Do we Need God in our life](#), [HG Bishop Youssef: Why be Spiritual](#), [HG Bishop Youssef: Book - Characteristics of a Spiritual Man by HHPS3](#), [Might Arrows](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ From Creation to Kings, A Quick Review

- The fall in Genesis shows how disobeying God was the introduction of death and sickness into the world.
- St. John Chrysostom says, "Since man had shown great disobedience, God cast him forth from his life in paradise. God curbed man's spirit for the future, so that he might not leap farther away. He condemned him to a life of toil and labor, speaking to him in some such fashion as this: "The ease and security that were yours in abundance led you to this great disobedience. They made you forget my commandments. You had nothing to do. That led you to think thoughts too haughty for your own nature.... Therefore, I condemn you to toil and labor, so that while tilling the earth, you may never forget your disobedience and the vileness of your nature."
- Contrast the disobedience of Eve with the obedience of Abraham and introduce the other patriarchs.
- Discuss the captivity of the Israelites in Egypt, the Exodus, and conquering Canaan, quickly highlighting how mighty God is and how He helped the Israelites when they were faithful.
- Give an overview of the period of Judges and the enthronement of King Saul, who was dethroned due to disobedience.
- Mention the time of King David and King Solomon, reminding of the gift of wisdom that Solomon received from God.

+ After Solomon, the Kingdom is divided and the North quickly turns away from God.

- Before his death, King Solomon began to turn away from God because he took many foreign wives and built idols for their foreign Gods. So God told Solomon that 10 tribes of his kingdom would be taken away by one of Solomon's servants.
- After King Solomon died, his son Rehoboam became king and the people asked Rehoboam to reduce their taxes. Rehoboam rejected the plea to reduce taxes, so 10 tribes withdrew their allegiance to the house of David and proclaimed Jeroboam their king.
- Jeroboam was a servant of King Solomon, and he had the potential to be as great of a king as King David because God promised to be with him if he followed God's commandments (1 Kings 11:38).
- However, instead of building the northern kingdom of the 10 tribes on God's commandments, Jeroboam built a separate capital in the north with temples for idols instead of Jerusalem and God's temple in the south because he feared that pilgrimages to the temple in Jerusalem as prescribed by the Law might be an occasion for his people to go back to Rehoboam.
- He even made feasts for the idols that coincided with feasts in Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:25-33), essentially ensuring that the Northern Kingdom

forgets about God entirely.

+ Murder and greed abound under the rule of evil kings.

- The Kings of the North were subsequently all evil. One may meditate that as they had no allegiance to God and no laws associated with God, evil subsisted throughout the life of the Kingdom. This reminds us that, "There is no salvation outside the Church." - St. John Chrysostom
- The succession of kings was marked by murders. King Nadab murder by Basha, Elah murdered by Zimri who in turned was murdered by Omri, etc...
- As this occurs, some notice the terrible downfall of the North and as seen in 2 Chronicles 15:9, members of the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon "fled" to Judah during the reign of Asa of Judah.
- Article by [Might Arrows](#): Present the story of Ahab and Jezebel as an example of the evil kings. Present Ahab in the historical [timeline](#).
- Judah falls to Assyria at the hands of Assyrian Kings Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul) and Shalmaneser V.

+ Take care to not become like Israel--divided and astray from God.

Consider asking the class the situation of a people in captivity. Highlight that not only did Judah lose their homes, but also their customs.

- When Judah disobeyed God, He allowed them to be punished so they would repent and return to him instead of perishing in sin. The same happens with us.
- Liturgy Connection: "He made us unto Himself as assembled people and sanctified us by Your Holy Spirit." - St. Basil Anaphora; "Who forgives our sins, who saves our life from corruption who crowns us with mercy and compassion." - Gregorian Anaphora
- Discuss the need to obey God, (the example of St. John the Short's obedience). "

"Aba Pemouah, who was his director for his first lesson, bade him to plant in the ground a walking-stick, and water it every day till it should bring forth fruit. Saint John did so with great simplicity, though the river was about 12 miles away from the stick. When he had continued his task, without speaking one word about it, into the third year the stick, which had taken root, pushed forth leaves and buds and produced fruit. The old hermit, gathering the fruit, carried to the church, and giving it to some of the brethren, said, ``Take, and eat the fruit of obedience''. Postumian, who was in Egypt in 402, assured that he was shown this tree which grew in the yard of the monastery and which he saw covered with shoots and green leaves."
- "There is nothing He could present to you better than Himself; but if you, on the other hand, happen to find anything better, go ahead and seek it in any possible way. God has no better reward to grant us, than Himself. Make us happy, O God, in being preoccupied with You; and not losing You." - St. Augustine

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 4: The Divided Kingdom - Old Testament Timeline 3 - Spiritual Warfare



Lesson 4.2: The Divided Kingdom, Northern Prophets: Tools for Warfare

Objective

Tools of spiritual warfare as guided by the prophets Amos and Hosea.

Application

Be aware of temptation and sin and know that the world is full of sin and it's always acting against us. Using the fruits of the spirit (Hope, Faith) help us battle the temptations of the world along with fasting and prayer.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 3:29](#); [1 King 16:30](#); [1 Kings 21:25](#); [Ephesians 6:10-18](#); [2 Corinthians 10:3-4](#); [1 Kings 19:8-18](#); [John 3:29](#); [Mark 2:19](#); [Matthew 25:1-13](#); [Hosea 4:12-14](#)



Liturgy: [Thanksgiving Prayer](#)



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



Story: [Hosea and marrying a prostitute](#)



Other: [The struggle of our Spiritual Lives](#), HG Bishop David Diabolic Warfare St. John Chrysostom

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Spiritual Warfare

Prior to starting, consider reviewing the definition of a prophet and the qualifications of a true prophet vs. false prophets. The difference between major prophets and minor prophets and the reason for studying these prophets.

- What is spiritual warfare? Read Ephesians 6:10-18. St. Paul wants followers of God to know how to fight in this spiritual battle and, ultimately, know how to win.
- Spiritual warfare is about recognizing that we have an enemy, the devil, who is battling to pull us away from God. "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." (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).
- It is also an ongoing struggle of living our lives in a way that puts pleasing God before pleasing ourselves or others.
- Christians must trust that God gives every resource they need to engage in spiritual warfare. He wants His children to have hope, because He has already won the ultimate battle through Jesus' death and resurrection. He literally gives us His strength by giving us His Holy Spirit.
- The Devil always presents us with sin in the form of attractive practices. God always has a witness for Himself throughout all generations regardless of how evil. Never become numb to sin but always fight against it.
- Liturgy Connection: "You have given us the authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy." Thanksgiving prayer
- "Hell can't be made attractive, so the Devil makes attractive the road that leads there." - St. Basil the Great

+ Historical Background: Amos and Hosea and the broken Covenant

- Part of the Twelve Minor Prophets. Although Amos is ranked third, his prophecy was the first to be recorded. Present Amos and Hosea in the historical [timeline](#).
- Both prophets were active during the eighth century B.C.E. during the reigns of Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah. This era was called the time of the divided Kingdom. During these years, the twelve tribes were divided into two kingdoms. The southern kingdom, known as Judah, was made up mostly of the tribe of the same name, as well as the house of Benjamin. Its capital was Jerusalem, where its worship life centered in the temple that Solomon had built for the Lord. The northern kingdom, known as Israel, was made up of the remaining geographical tribe.
- 760 BC - Amos (King Jeroboam II 783-753) - Stable and prosperous time period, including territorial expansion under Jeroboam and Uzziah in the Southern Kingdom.

- 760 - 722 BC - Hosea (King Jeroboam II, Zechariah 753-2, Shallum 752, Menahem 752-42, Pekahiah 742-40, Pekah 740-32, Hoshea 732-722 - end of N. Israel) - Chaos after the assassination of Jeroboam's son, Zechariah, after a year on the throne.
- Between the death of Jeroboam and the fall of Samaria (Capital City) in 722, Israel (Northern Kingdom) had 6 kings, and all but one (Menahem) were assassinated by their successors.
- The driving theme of the books of Amos and Hosea is the description and condemnation of Israel's idolatry. Both authors frequently use "Yahweh," the name representing God's special relationship between Him and Israel. This is intentional—Israel hasn't just rebelled; they've broken a covenant with their covenantal God. The God whose love they have rejected is the God who chose them and brought them out of the land of Egypt into the Promised Land.

+ Amos and Social Justice

- Amos claims he was not a prophet, nor a son of a prophet, (Amos 7:14) but rather a cattle herder and tender of sycamore trees. The Lord often works through the simplest of people to reveal important messages. He became a great proclaimer of the justice of God against the injustices of His People. His message was not a popular message in Israel, as Amos boldly pointed out sin and God's righteous judgment. Many sentences in the book of Amos begin with something like this: "This is what the Lord says: 'For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent'" (Amos 2:6).
- God's deepest desire was that they would turn from their sins and repent. He desires that for us, too (Matthew 3:2; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 2:5, 21). God's words to Israel in Amos 5:4 are also God's message to every human being: "Seek Me and live."
- He was quoted by St. Stephen (Acts 7:42-43, Amos 5:25) and once by St. James (Acts 15-17, Amos 9:11).
- Amos's message stands as one of the most powerful voices ever to challenge hypocrisy and injustice. Highly critical of the wealth gap between those living in luxuries and those in utter poverty - not because he was pushing for socialistic equality but because those living in luxury were profiteering as a result of economic and legal exploitation of others.
 - Amos 2:6-8 (...for they sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals...they trample the heads of the poor into the dust of the earth...they drank wine through false accusations in the house of their God),
 - Amos 3:15 (...I shall destroy the ivory houses along with many other houses as well...)
 - Amos 4:1-2 (...who oppress the poor, who trample the needy...)
 - Amos 5:21-24 (I hate, I reject your feast days...instead, let justice run swiftly as does water from the mountain, and let righteousness be as a stream that cannot be crossed.)
- When discussing social justice, it is important to note that rich can refer to not only money, but also one's attitude towards God, others, and own resources in the face of challenges. The main issue at hand is not that of wealth, but of humility; Abraham and David were exceedingly rich, but they depended on God and were called Righteous
 - Amos 4:4-5 - These two verses condemn the Northern Kingdom for their hypocrisy (You come to Bethel and act lawlessly and multiply your transgressions in Gilgal. You bring your sacrifice in the morning and your tithes every three days. Moreover, outside they read things of the Law and call for professions. Proclaim that the children of Israel love these things," says the Lord God.).
 - Thus, their outward appearance of worship condemns them (5:21-24). Despite their hypocrisy, the Lord called them to repentance many times - through both goodness and difficult times, yet in each of these times the Lord mourns, "yet you did not return to Me" (v. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11). Like Pharaoh, the Israelites had hardened their hearts in response to their hardships, rather than evaluating whether their difficulties were as a result of their faithlessness towards God.
- St. Basil the Great, On Social Justice - "I know many who fast, pray, sigh, and demonstrate every manner of piety, so long as it costs them nothing, yet would not part with a penny to help those in distress."
- We may easily fall into the trap of compartmentalizing our lives: we offer God the minimum: some tithes and just a few hours of worship on a Sunday, and then we proceed with the rest of our lives expecting that God will fulfill all our petitions because we've followed the tradition.
- As a society, our public figures (politicians, celebrities, athletes, etc.) frequently evoke God's name ("May God Bless America," "I thank God for this award/win," etc.), we evoke His name in large gatherings with songs and slogans, yet our actions may be completely far from God.
- It is important to note that we are a part of society; it is not enough that we recognize the faults in our society - we play a part in any unrighteousness that occurs if we have not acted against it, much more especially in a democratic society.
- End Amos by reviewing Amos 5:21-24 again; the Lord abhors our sacrifices if done in unrighteousness. Relate to the Parable of the Pharisee and Publican (Luke 18:9-14)

+ God sending messengers that relate to empower us in the Spiritual Warfare [Hosea]

Consider discussing with the students the following questions: Have you ever given love and trust, and then been betrayed? Or have you ever been



loved and trusted by someone but then, in weakness, betrayed that trust and damaged the relationship and thus know the longing to be loved and trusted again?

- Touch on the story of Hosea marrying a prostitute and its symbolism
 - Hosea lived during the tragic and devastating final days of the Northern Kingdom
 - Hosea was commanded to marry an adulterous woman, Gomer; by experiencing the pain of having an unfaithful wife, Hosea can better understand and prophesy to Israel then, and now us, the pain of God who likens us to his bride (John 3:29, Mark 2:19, Matthew 25:1-13, Revelation 21:2, 9-10, Ephesians 5:22-33).
 - We regularly leave God committing sinful adultery but God is patient with us. Hosea is preaching a message of repentance where, just like God asked him to continually pursue his adulterous wife, he shows us how God will continue to pursue us despite our adultery (Hosea 4:12-14). In fact, he desires to take us out of our adulterous habits, take us to a wilderness, not to destroy us, but rather to be intimate with us (Hosea 2:13-14).
 - Tertullian, a fiery Christian writer from Carthage North Africa (c.200) said, "The principal crime of the human race, the highest guilt charged upon the world, the whole procuring cause of judgment is idolatry."
 - Emphasize that our falling away from God is as heartbreaking as a broken marriage, yet when we repent the Lord doesn't merely *accept* us as a cheating spouse but restores us to our initial pre-fall betrothed state. As St. Jerome says, it isn't just a *reconciliation*, but another wedding celebration.

+ To Keep Hope and Faith in the Spiritual Warfare Journey [Elijah]

- Have you ever felt as if everyone is against us, as Christian? Elijah felt the same in his day.
- In the time of Elijah, the nation of Israel was ruled by King Ahab, who did what was evil in the eyes of God, along with his wife Jezebel (1 Kings 16:30: 21:25). King Ahab led the people to turn to Baal, a pagan god, and reject the Lord as the true God. The people of Israel were divided.
- Elijah was so discouraged by the threats of Jezebel but God gave him courage and made him feel better by showing him that things are actually better than they seem (1 Kings 19:8-18). (To be noted, this story is used in the Grade 8 curriculum)
- God used him during an important time in Israel's history to oppose a wicked king and bring revival to the land. Elijah's ministry marked the beginning of the end of Baal worship in Israel.

+ Importance of embarking in the spiritual warfare

- Putting on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18) and protecting your relationship with God (or fighting your way to it.)
- "One who begins well isn't perfect. It is the one who ends well whom God approves of. Therefore, do not try to be extremely disciplined right away. Above everything beware of your own confidence, lest you fall from a height of discipline because of lack of training. It is better to move ahead little at a time. So then withdraw from the pleasures of life little by little. When you have mastered one passion, then begin waging war against another and before long you will get the better of them all." - St. Basil the Great
- "Be on your guard, lest evil spirits deceive you and distract you. For they strive to hold you as their slaves and servants and they subdue all those who fail to make strong opposing efforts for their own salvation." - St. Justin the Martyr

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 4.3: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Kings: Pride

Building Block 4: The Divided Kingdom - Old Testament Timeline 3 - Spiritual Warfare



Objective

Students will learn that a truly successful life is one that keeps the spotlight pointing to God

Application

Each one of us has some type of influence on others. Manasseh certainly did. The question is, how will we use our influence? Will it be for good, as the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), or will we be imitators of the world? (Romans 12:1,2). God wants us to remain a separate, holy nation (1 Peter 2:9,10)

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Chronicles 26:6-8](#); [2 Kings 15:5, 27](#); [Numbers 3:10, 18:7](#); [2 Kings 21:1-18](#); [Hebrews 12:5-11](#); [2 Chronicles 33:12-13](#)



Liturgy: [Confession Agpeya Prayers](#)



Patristics: [St. Anthony the Great](#); [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#)



Story: [Uzziah and Manasseh](#)



Other: [Fr. Tadros Malaty](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Destruction of unrepented Pride [Uzziah]

Consider discussing with them what success really means by asking: Which would you choose if you could: Success or failure? The answer is obvious! Who wants to fail? We all want to succeed in everything we do. But the irony is that the success we all seek can easily destroy us. We've all heard of successful people--athletes, musicians, movie stars, or businessmen--whose success opened them up to temptations that ruined or even killed them. The life of King Uzziah illustrates that. Uzziah succeeded admirably, but his success got him into pride; his pride led to a sin that in a few moments abolished years of achievements.

- Present Uzziah in the historical [timeline](#). Uzziah took the throne at the age of 16, and reigned for about 52 years. His reign was "the most prosperous except that of Jehoshaphat since the time of Solomon." Uzziah is a successful, powerful king when he seeks the Lord.
- 2 Chronicles 26:6-8 Uzziah fought against the Philistines who were long time enemies of God's people.
- Unfortunately he allowed the power to go to his head and pride led to his downfall. His sinful pride made him believe he could do anything because he had so much power.
- He entered the temple of Jehovah to burn incense on the altar of incense. Azariah the High Priest saw this as an attempt to usurp the priesthood and confronted him with a band of eighty priests, saying, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense." (2 Chronicles 26:18). Then an earthquake arose and he was given leprosy and was compelled to reside in "a separate house" until his death (2 Kings 15:5, 27; 2 Chronicles 26:3)
- Uzziah clearly heard the truth from God's Word what he should do. He had an opportunity to respond by repenting from his wickedness or continuing in his rebellion, 2 Chronicles 26:17- 19. Sadly, Uzziah was so filled with himself and a false belief that he had power to do anything he wanted. God showed Uzziah mercy by not putting him to death immediately (Numbers 3:10, 18:7)
- To avoid allowing our sinful hearts to think we can live life our way and ignore God's ways, is to guard our hearts. We must continuously study God's Words (Psalm 119:11) so we are familiar with what He says we should live our lives like.
- According to St. Cyril of Alexandria the way to get rid of pride is. "If the poison of pride is swelling up in you, turn to the Eucharist; and that Bread, Which is your God humbling and disguising Himself, will teach you humility. If the fever of selfish greed rages in you, feed on this Bread; and you will learn generosity. If the cold wind of coveting withers you, hasten to the Bread of Angels; and charity will come to blossom in your heart. If you feel the itch of intemperance, nourish yourself with the Flesh and Blood of Christ, Who practiced heroic self-control during His earthly life; and you will become temperate. If you are lazy and sluggish about spiritual things, strengthen yourself with this heavenly Food; and you will grow fervent. Lastly, if you feel scorched by the fever of impurity, go to the banquet of the Angels; and the spotless Flesh of Christ will make you pure and chaste."



+ Manasseh Repent and Finds Mercy: (2 Kings 21:1-18)

- God allowed Manasseh to rule the longest of any other evil King (55 years)
- Manasseh reversed the centralizing reforms of his father Hezekiah, and re-established local shrines. He restored polytheistic worship of Baal and Asherah (2 Kings 21) in the Temple, and sponsored the Assyrian astral cult throughout Judah. He even sacrificed one of his sons in the fires of Moloch worship.
- He said to have reached such a high level of evil that it is said he slew Isaiah in half.
- The Bible tells us: "And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done" This comparison of Manasseh to the northern king Ahab is a strong description of the southern ruler.
- Manasseh was on one occasion brought in chains to the Assyrian king, presumably for suspected disloyalty. The verse goes on to indicate that he was later treated well and restored to his throne. The severity of Manasseh's imprisonment brought him to repentance.
- 2 Chronicles 33:12-13 Manasseh's repentance: God disciplines His children because He is a good father who desires His children to live the abundant life He can give. His purpose for allowing any difficulty is to turn our hearts to Him so we can live a life that pleases Him. (Hebrews 12:5-11)
- God heard Manasseh's prayer and saw his humility and forgave him. The only sin God cannot forgive is an unrepentant and unconfessed sin in the heart.
- 2 Chronicles 33:14-20 Fruit of Manasseh's repentance: True repentance will be evident by the way a person lives after pleading for God's forgiveness. How do we know that Manasseh was truly sorry for the wicked life he lived? Read verses 15-16.
- Manasseh prayed and God heard him; the Coptic Church teaches us to offer prayers of repentance before and after confession as organized in the Book of Prayers, Agpeya.

+ Can you lose your salvation?

Emphasis: all humans in the OT were flawed, but it was their response to sin and adversity which matters.

- Many believers have perished so we need to protect ourselves through true repentance. The Westminster confession of Faith, a Calvinist non-orthodox doctrine, says: "They, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."
- We see that through Uzziah, like others prior to him such as King Saul, who effectively had short moments with God, when succumbing to continuous choices of evil, leads one to destruction. Thus the orthodox church does not believe in this Westminster confession of faith. Though one may have faith, one can lose his salvation without proper *continuous* repentance.
- However, God is patient with us and wants to see us return.
- We see God's grace when we follow His will (being without captivity longer; we see the north completely abandoned God while the South, with God survived longer as Assyria was not able to capture them due to God's protection)
- "There are souls which at first are hard of heart and persisted in the works of sin and somehow the good God in His mercy sends upon such souls the chastisement of affliction till they grow weary and come to their senses and repent." - St. Anthony; "If you wish, you can be a slave of passion and if you wish, you can be free of them. God has given you that power!" - St. Anthony the Great

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 4.4: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Kings: Faithfulness

Building Block 4: The Divided Kingdom - Old Testament Timeline 3 - Spiritual Warfare



Objective

The Grace in Faithfulness despite a lack of perfection.

Application

The leader of a nation influences the spiritual growth of the people under him. The leader can be for God, or against Him. We need to pray for our leaders.

References and Resources



Scripture: [2 Kings 23:31-25](#); [2 Chronicles 26:18](#); [2 Kings 15:5](#); [2 Chronicles 34, 35](#)



Liturgy: [The Priest prayer inaudible in the prayer of preparation and Liturgy of St. Cyril, Litany of the Priests](#)



Patristics: [St. Seraphim of Sarov](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: [Hezekiah and Josiah](#)



Other: [Old vs. New Covenant](#), HG Bishop Youssef; [Soteriology 3](#), [Soteriology 4](#), [Suscripts: Grace & Change](#), Fr. Daoud Lamei (Arabic);



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The Grace of Faithfulness [Hezekiah: 2 Kings 20]

Consider discussing: How should we pray? If someone told you that you only had one day to live, describe: A) How this would change you spiritually B) How would this change your attitude toward others? C) What things would you do on your last day of physical life? Read 2 Kings 20:1-6

- Present Hezekiah in the historical [timeline](#). Hezekiah was the son of King Ahaz and Abijah. His mother, Abijah (also called Abi), was a daughter of the high priest Zechariah.
- In 701 BCE, Sennacherib, King of Assyria, turned toward cities in the west. Hezekiah then had to face the invasion of Judah. Hezekiah did not rely on Egypt for support, but relied on God and prayed to Him for deliverance of his capital city Jerusalem.
- The Assyrians did not so much as "shoot an arrow there, ... nor cast up a siege rampart against it", and that God sent out an angel who, in one night, struck down "a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians," sending Sennacherib back "with shame of face to his own land"
- Emphasis: Hezekiah did all that he could do, and then placed his trust in the Lord - 32:7-8 - "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid of the king of Assyria, nor before all the nation with him, for there are more with us than with him. With him are arms of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to save us and to fight our battles."
- In the Liturgy of St. Basil the priest prays inaudibly in the Prayer of Preparation, "Yea, O our Master, be with us; be a partner working with us." Similarly in the Liturgy of St. Cyril, Litany of the Priests: "O God, be a partner with us, that we may serve Your Holy Name."
- Synergy - cooperation with God. Salvation is only through the Grace of God, but requires our active participation with Him. He cannot save us if we choose not to save ourselves. We cannot save ourselves by ourselves however; this requires an active commitment to work together with the Lord; we do our part, He does His.
- In contrast to Uzziah, Hezekiah's great-grandfather, who allowed his pride to get to him and was warned by Isaiah that he was about to die. As a result of this message, Hezekiah immediately repents to the point that so great was his prayer that the Lord granted him to live an additional 15 years.
- Later in his life, Hezekiah was ill with a boil or an inflammation which Isaiah initially thought would be fatal. However, as mentioned in Isaiah 38:5, Hezekiah lived another 15 years after praying to God. His son and successor, Manasseh, was born during this time: he was 12 years of age when he succeeded Hezekiah
- Emphasis: Books of Kings and Chronicles use the phrase, "The Lord was with him" only of Kings David, Solomon, and Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:7) which indicates they are in a special category amidst the kings.

+ The Search for God in barren land [Josiah: 2 Chronicles 34-35; 2 Kings 22-23]

- Josiah's father, Amon, had been the king of Israel only two years before his servants assassinated him. Both Amon and his father, Manasseh, had done "evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Kings 21:20). King Josiah is the last southern king who eventually does what pleases the Lord.
- Josiah reigned from 640 to 609 B.C.
- What makes Josiah so special? Josiah becomes king at the age of 8, yet by 16 was diligently searching for God at a time when idolatry was pervasive in Israel due to his unrighteous father/grandfather.
- During his reign Judah returned to reading God's Word and experienced spiritual renewal. For his work Josiah is remembered as one of the greatest kings of Judah.
- In his 20s – began purging Judah of idolatry and rebuilding the Temple. While rebuilding, they rediscovered the Mosaic Law and reestablished the Passover. The scriptures which Moses commanded parents to teach their children, which was bound to doorposts of their homes, which was partially inscribed by God's own fingers (commandments) had been lost.
- Emphasis – the specialty of Josiah, similar to David, Solomon, and Hezekiah. "And before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him" (2 Kgs. 23:25).
- "The memory of Josiah is like a blending of incense prepared by the art of the perfumer; it is sweet as honey to every mouth, and like music at a banquet of wine. He was led aright in converting the people, and took away the abominations of iniquity. He set his heart upon the Lord; in the days of wicked men he strengthened godliness" (Sirach 49:1-3)
- How often do we also forget the word of God? How many of our Bibles collect dust while we meticulously clean and memorize the things which interest us?

+ Faithfulness as Salt & Light in a wicked world

Emphasis: all humans in the OT were flawed, but it was their response to sin and adversity which matters.

- Believers like Josiah can live as salt and light in the wicked world that we are placed in.
- V. 33 "And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers".
- "You are the salt of the earth. It is not for your own sake, he says, but for the world's sake that the word is entrusted to you. I am not sending you only into two cities only or ten to twenty, not to a single nation, as I sent the prophets of old, but across land and sea, to the whole world." St. John Chrysostom
- Russian St. Seraphim of Sarov (d. 1833): "Acquire the Spirit of Peace and a thousand souls around you will be saved."
- We are called to address the sin around us; not with judgment and vileness, but with humble love and compassion for those struggling in the midst of a sinful society.
- Emphasize synergy: Josiah dedicated himself to the Lord and the Lord restored Judah to proper worship through Josiah
- Prophetess Huldah warned Josiah that the Lord's wrath was soon to visit Judah, but due to his repentance He delayed their exile – why exile? Because they returned to their old ways after the death of Josiah. While Josiah was alive and leading, the people responded with vigor to follow the Law.
- Upon his death, so great was the lamentation that Zechariah the prophet prophesied that the mourning of Josiah resembled that which would take place at the death of the Messiah (Zechariah 12:11)
- Reference back to verse 33 – encourage others to serve by example of your own service.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 4.5: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Prophets: Do not Procrastinate!

Building Block 4: The
Divided Kingdom - Old
Testament Timeline 3
- Spiritual Warfare



Objective

God rewards the non-procrastinating repentant

Application

Repentance is just as important as confession. Consider one wrong action for which God has allowed you to go without facing the consequences. Repent of these actions and ask God to help us know His direction and make wise choices.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Revelation 3:14-22](#), [Luke 7:36-50](#), [Luke 19:1-10](#), [Luke 13:3-5](#), [Jeremiah 26:18-19](#); [2 Kings 15, 16, 18](#); [Micah 3](#); [Isaiah 1, 6, 7](#)



Liturgy: [The Anaphora & Conclusion of the Adam Theotokia](#)



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



Story: [St. Mary of Egypt](#), [St. Perpetua](#); [Right Hand Thief](#)



Other: [The Book of Isaiah](#); [Synaxarium: Prophet Isaiah](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Love. Mercy. Justice [Micah's similar message to Amos]

Consider discussing: Which is hardest for you: justice, kindness (mercy), or humility? Why? What's the kindest thing someone did for you last week? You did it for someone else? How do you feel when you receive kindness? Why is it sometimes hard to show kindness? Who can you show kindness to most easily? How would life be different if we eliminated all acts of kindness?

- Micah is considered one of the minor prophets, whereas Isaiah is one of the major; again, not due to importance but due to size of their respective books. Present Micah in the historical [timeline](#).
- Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and prophesied around the time of the fall of Israel to the Assyrians (c. 722 BC), during the reigns of Jotham (good) (2 Kings 15:32-34), Ahaz (evil) (2 Kings 16:1-4), and Hezekiah (good) (2 Kings 18:1-7) in the southern kingdom of Judah.
- Micah's prophecy revolves around two major ideas: (1) Israel and Judah are to be judged; (2) God is to restore His people into His Kingdom.
- Much of his accusations against Israel and Judah are similar to those of Amos in Lesson 2 - injustice against the poor and lowly, including unjust business practices, theft, mistreatment of the innocent, and a government that did not care for its vulnerable.
- Focus: Micah 6:8 "And what does the Lord require of you, But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?"
- "Now hear this you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, Who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity: Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, "Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us." Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest." (Micah 3:9-12)

+ Pursuit of Mercy & Holiness [Micah]

- Micah prophesied the future destruction of Jerusalem and Samaria, the destruction and future restoration of the Judah and rebuked the people of Judah for dishonesty and idolatry.
- His message was: Love. Mercy. Justice. Humility. The overarching message of Micah is that God is Holy, and as a Holy God we should seek to act in a way that is becoming His holiness. Because He is holy, there are consequences to sin, yet there is hope for those who turn to Him. In the midst of dishonest and corrupt leadership, Micah 6:8 "He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?", gives us a path to seek holiness, and is among the best-known verses of Scripture.
- It is clear from Jeremiah's mention of Micah that he did not live out his days in fear of punishment or death, as so many prophets did. Instead, Jeremiah writes that his prophecy made a change and had a positive effect, Jeremiah 26:18-19)

- Much of Micah's indictment against Israel and Judah involves these nations' injustice toward the lowly—unjust business dealings, robbery, mistreatment of women and children, and a government that lived in luxury off the hard work of its nation's people.
- Where does injustice dwell in your own life? Do you need a call toward repentance, like the people of Israel and Judah did?
- Listen to St. John Chrysostom speaking of mercy, "Mercy is the Queen of all virtues, and as the best advocate, quickly and successfully opens the heavens for the merciful. Mercy is the mother of love, a cure for our trespasses, purification of the dirt in our souls, a ladder that leads to heaven, and binds the body of Christ."

+ Heavenly Sights [Isaiah]

- According to Isaiah 1:1, the prophet Isaiah's career lasted through the reigns of four kings in the southern kingdom of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Present Isaiah in the historical [timeline](#). Isaiah served as God's prophet to Judah for more than fifty years.
- In Judah, the sins of the people were distressingly similar to those in the northern kingdom of Israel: idol worship, the oppression and marginalization of the poor for personal gain, and business practices that fundamentally threatened God's Law.
- Isaiah prophesied to Judah, the southern kingdom. He warned the people of Judah about the consequences of their actions (captivity). The nation of Israel is blind and deaf to God's commands ([Isaiah 6:9-10](#); 42:7). Judah didn't listen, and Isaiah's predictions came true. Isaiah also declares that due to God's mercy and His promises to Israel, God will not allow Israel or Judah to be completely destroyed. He will bring restoration, forgiveness, and healing (43:2; 43:16-19; 52:10-12). God is a God of mercy, grace, and compassion (Isaiah 5:25; 11:16; 14:1-2; 32:2; 40:3; 41:14-16).
- The book of Isaiah reveals God's judgment and salvation. God is "holy, holy, holy" (Isaiah 6:3), and therefore He cannot allow sin to go unpunished (Isaiah 1:2; 2:11-20; 5:30; 34:1-2; 42:25)
- Isaiah in 6:2-3 describes a unique sight of the Seraphim. Why do they have 6 wings? Why do they cover their faces? Etc., they do so because they are witnessing a heavenly sight - God Himself. And as such they proclaim saying Holy, Holy Holy.
- From which we are inspired in the liturgy as standing in this heavenly sight: "You are He around whom stand the cherubim full of eyes, and the seraphim with six wings, praising continuously, without ceasing, saying, ... Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of hosts,..." The whole earth is full of His glory!
- The coal: St. Cyril of Alexandria reflects on the spiritual meaning : One of the seraphim is sent to Isaiah with a burning coal which he took from the altar with tongs. This is clearly a symbol of Christ, who, on our behalf, offered himself up to God the Father as a pure and unblemished spiritual sacrifice with a most pleasing fragrance. In the same way, Christ is received from the altar. We must, however, explain why Christ is like a burning coal. It is customary in Holy Scripture for the divine nature to be likened to fire. God appeared in this way to the people of Israel as they stood before the Lord at Horeb, which is Mount Sinai."
- Isaiah's prophecies of Jesus are many. He prophesied the Virgin birth, 7:14, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension.
- To those that repent and turn to the true God, the Lord promised mercy and forgiveness, but punishment and the judgment of God are appointed for the unrepentant. "If repentance is neglected for an instant, one can lose the power of the Resurrection as he lives with the weakness of tepidity and the potential of his fall." St. John Chrysostom
- His death: The Prophet Isaiah died a martyr's death. By order of the Jewish king Manasseh he was sawn through by a wood-saw. The prophet was buried not far from the Pool of Siloam

+ Heavenly sights: A result of mercy & repentance

- Church of Laodicea (worst Church with strongest reward). Story of the right hand thief and God's generous mercy of letting him into Paradise that very day and/or the story of St. Mary of Egypt and St. Perpetua
- "I seek those tears shed, not for display, but in repentance; I want those that trickle down secretly and in closets, out of sight, softly and noiselessly. I desire those that arise from depth of mind, those shed in anguish and sorrow, those which are for God alone." - St. John Chrysostom
- "When we preserve eighty or even a hundred years we will not reign for the equivalent of those years. Instead we will reign forever and ever! Although we contested on earth, we will not receive our inheritance here but rather we have promises in heaven." - St. Athanasius
- Liturgy Connection: "Your mercies O my God: are countless and exceedingly plenteous: are Your compassions. The sins that I have committed do not remember my Lord and do not count my iniquities. For you have chosen the publican and the adulteress You have saved and the right hand thief my Lord you have remembered. For you do not desire the death of a sinner but rather that he returns and that his soul may live." - Conclusion of the Adam Theotokia

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 4: The
Divided Kingdom - Old
Testament Timeline 3
- Spiritual Warfare



Lesson 4.6: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Prophets: Moral Courage

Objective

To understand that God's warnings about judgment are also an expression of grace.

Application

Read the Book of Jeremiah and contemplate on the qualities you see in Jeremiah you would like to have.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Jeremiah 1:4-10](#); [Jeremiah 25](#); [Jeremiah 52](#); [2 Kings 24-2](#); [2 Chronicles 26](#)



Liturgy: [The Book of Lamentations on Good Friday Prayer](#)



Patristics: [St. Augustine](#)



Story: [The fall of Jerusalem](#)



Other: [The Martyrdom of the Prophet Jeremiah](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Jeremiah's Monumental Task

Consider this discussion as an opening to the lesson: Do you ever feel like you're just too young or too small to do something? Can anyone think of a time when you might have said, "I just can't do it!" (Pause for responses.) We have all said that at one time or another. Maybe you said it when the coach asked you to play a new position for the first time, or while you were trying to do your homework. We've all found ourselves feeling defeated, saying, "I just can't do it." This is exactly what the prophet Jeremiah felt.

- Present Jeremiah in the historical [timeline](#). Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah the priest. He lived just north of Jerusalem. He was called after the fall of the northern kingdom, during the reign of the good king Josiah in Judah. Jeremiah's book is the longest prophetic book in the Bible. He also wrote another book just after Jeremiah called Lamentations.
- With the death of Josiah, his reforms came to nothing. His successors, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin, were all wicked. These, and the final king of Judah, Zedekiah, were the recipients of most of Jeremiah's prophecy.
- But did the kings listen to the words of the Lord? Instead, Jeremiah's prophecies brought him ridicule and he was despised and finally imprisoned.
- Read Jeremiah 1:4-10. God called Jeremiah to a monumental task before he was even born. But He wasn't going to leave Jeremiah to do it all on his own. God also promised to give Jeremiah all the words he would need to speak.
- "Jeremiah, like Isaiah, is one of the major prophets ... He prophesied when Josiah reigned in Jerusalem and Ancus Martius at Rome, when the captivity of the Jews was already at hand; and he continued to prophesy down to the fifth month of the captivity, as we find from his writings... Jeremiah thus prophesied not only in the times of Ancus Martius but also in those of Tarquinius Priscus, whom the Romans had for their fifth king. For he had already begun to reign when that captivity took place. St. Augustine, City of God, 18.33

+ Upholder of Integrity, TO ALL [Jeremiah]

- Jeremiah, like Isaiah, preached in Judah, the southern kingdom, but later, under the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. During this time, the Babylonians destroyed the temple and took captives; later they returned and leveled the city.
- Jeremiah faced persecution throughout his career as a prophet. He is one of the strongest, steadfast, saddest prophets in the entire Bible. He was called to stand up to kings, princes, priests, false prophets and people knowing that none would ever turn back to God. He watched as his nation Judah, ignored his repeated warnings from God and lived to see them taken into Babylonian captivity.
- Jeremiah, even though he faced hardships for 40 some years, remained true to God and kept telling others about their need for God.
- We can learn so much from him and find courage to do the same.
- Jeremiah obeyed God - he went and spoke to everyone God called him to - even kings and false prophets. But just because God said He would

be with Jeremiah, did not mean that Jeremiah would have an easy time.

- Jeremiah spoke for over 40 years to at least 20 different countries and cities (Jeremiah 25:17-27). Not once did he break down in public, but when upset, he always went to God in prayer instead. He faced many hardships. But through them all, God kept His promise and delivered Jeremiah from the evil people's plans to destroy him. Even though it was very difficult for Jeremiah, he remained steadfast and courageous and went to speak to foreign kings and his own people warning them of God's wrath to come if they did not repent.
- Lamentations - expresses total devastation and ruins as a result of the disobedience of God's people. Even in terrible judgment, God is a God of hope (Lamentations 3:24-25). Our God is a loving God (Lamentations 3:22), and because of His great love and compassion, He sent His Son so that we would not perish in our sins, but can live eternally with Him (John 3:16). Therefore, the Book of Lamentations is read on the Great Friday.

+ A Lack of Courage and Integrity leading to enslavement [Zedekiah and the Fall of Jerusalem]

- He was the last king of Judah and was king when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by Babylon in 586 BC and the majority of the people were carried into exile. The story of Zedekiah is told in 2 Kings 24-25, 2 Chronicles 36, and the book of Jeremiah.
- Zedekiah's original name was Mattaniah. He was the son of King Josiah and the brother of King Jehoahaz and King Jehoiakim. Zedekiah would not normally have been included in the line to the throne, but the kings preceding him made bad decisions, both spiritually and politically, and were removed in succession. Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, ruled for 3 months and "did evil in the sight of the Lord," and Pharaoh Necho took him to Egypt in exile (2 Kings 23:31-33). Necho put his brother Jehoiakim in his place.
- Jehoiakim ruled for 11 years. During his reign, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded. Jehoiakim swore allegiance to him and continued as a vassal king. He also did evil in the Lord's sight (by not removing all of the idols from the land) and then rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Upon his death, his son Jehoiachin succeeded him (2 Kings 24:1-7)
- Jehoiachin continued his father's evil ways. He reigned for 3 months and then was removed from the throne by Nebuchadnezzar. At this point Mattaniah, son of Josiah, was put on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar to rule as a vassal king. Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:18-20)
- Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king and he ruled for 11 years but continued on with all the evil of his brothers and nephew Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:18-20).
- In Jeremiah 21:9-10, during the siege of Jerusalem, Zedekiah asks Jeremiah to intercede to the Lord so that perhaps the Lord would deliver Judah. Jeremiah returns God's answer and reveals that He has irrevocably handed Judah over to judgment, first by plague, and those who escape will fall to the Babylonians. The only hope that any of the people have is to surrender to the Babylonians "He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes out and defects to the Chaldeans who besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be as a prize to him. For I have set My face against this city for adversity and not for good," says the Lord. "It shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire."
- Zedekiah heard God's definitive answer, but he did not like it. False prophets contradicted Jeremiah and preached a more favorable message (Jeremiah 23), but God reiterated His message to Jeremiah (chapters 24-25).
- During the siege, Zedekiah fled the city by night but was captured. Zedekiah's sons were killed before him, and then he was blinded and taken to Babylon in chains (Jeremiah 52, see also 2 Kings 25 and 2 Chronicles 36). Then the Babylonians broke down the walls of Jerusalem, burned the temple, and took the temple articles to Babylon with them. Zedekiah died in Babylon years later.
- Zedekiah had been presented with a tremendous opportunity. Zedekiah had direct messages from God through Jeremiah. Yet he would not submit to the Lord. As a result, Zedekiah lost his sons, his sight, his freedom, and his throne.

+ Contrast the moral courage of Jeremiah to the moral weakness and Cowardliness of Zedekiah

- Jeremiah was a failure by human standards - accused falsely instead of believed, persecuted by officials, betrayed by family. No one honored or obeyed Jeremiah's words. Even after his predictions about Zedekiah and Jerusalem were fulfilled, Jeremiah continued to be disbelieved. Yet from the standpoint of faith, the life of Jeremiah was successful by God's standards. He always remained true to his calling, willing to deliver God's word, regardless of the personal cost.
- Zedekiah asked at different times for Jeremiah to tell him the word from God, but again and again he wouldn't listen to that word. Instead he listened to his friends and his advisors.
- King Zedekiah was one of the Bible's most indecisive characters. He wouldn't choose whom he would serve and kept putting off turning from evil ways to seek and serve God alone and to follow His word.
- King Zedekiah associated himself with too many ungodly people in his own court and among the nations around him.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 4.7: The Divided Kingdom, Southern Prophets: God's Love

Building Block 4: The
Divided Kingdom - Old
Testament Timeline 3
- Spiritual Warfare



Objective

To understand that God's love is for all people and no person is out of the reach of God's love and salvation.

Application

Jonah disobeyed a direct order from God. A serious error? What were the consequences? What in our life is similar to Jonah's experience? Compare and examine oneself.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Jonah 1, 2, 3, 4](#); [Nahum 1, 2, 3](#); [Habakkuk 1, 2, 3](#); [Obadiah 1](#); [Ephesians 2:16](#)



Liturgy: [Jonah's Fast: Offering of Morning Incense](#)



Patristics: St. Augustine



Story: [The repentance of the Ninevites](#)



Other: [Coptic Synaxarium](#); [Fr. Tadros Malaty](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Being Proactive to the Messenger [Jonah]

Consider asking: Jonah lived after Elijah and Elisha and before Isaiah. At that time, Assyria was threatening the northern kingdom of Israel. And where was he being told to go – to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria! The ultimate evil! Do you think he would expect a warm welcome in the capital of his country's worst enemy? Did he have reason to be afraid? Did he have reason to hate the people he was asked to serve? How would you feel if you were asked to serve the biggest bully at school?

- Jonah, just like Nahum, Obadiah & Habakkuk - all prophesied away from Juda ; asserting God's authority over all people.
- Jonah reached out to the Ninevites and they responded with fasting / prayer.
- Some say Jonah struggled to go to Nineveh (which is in Assyria) due to a foreknowledge that these people would eventually destroy the North. The Lord however gives us ample chances and does not condemn us according to previous or future sins. All have an opportunity now. This opportunity is continuous.
- Despite knowing his mission from God, Jonah allowed prejudice and fear to control his actions
- Through the practices of grace we are able to overcome like the Ninevites who will condemn us on Judgment Day with their repentance.
- Never be discouraged by how bad the situation seems.
- "Souls become purer the more they rise to spiritual things and they rise more to spiritual things the more they die to fleshly things." - St. Augustine
- The Book of Jonah contrasts God's and humans' attitudes toward sinners. It is a story of God's love and compassion that stands in contrast to human indifference, condemnation, and bias toward disobedient sinners who are in need of salvation
- Discuss justice vs judgment: Why does God often choose to show mercy even though we deserve punishment? Do we usually show mercy toward others, or do we like to see people get what they deserve? How can we begin to show more mercy toward others?
- Liturgy Connection: The Prayers of Offering Morning Incense during Jonah's fast

+ Nineveh sees both Grace & Condemnation [Nahum]

- Place Nahum in the historical [timeline](#). Among the twelve minor prophets he is called the Poet Prophet. Scholars estimate Nahum was written between 663 and 612 BC. He is identified as an Elkoshite, (Nahum 1:1)
- Not long after the Assyrian city of Nineveh repented because of Jonah's preaching, the same city was denounced by Nahum for its godlessness—godlessness which earned God's righteous wrath. (Nahum 1:2)
- The God is a God of mercy to the repentant, yet a God of condemnation to the unrepentant. Avoiding the fierce punishment of the Lord is not



dependent on ethnicity, class, intelligence, skin color, or family history, but on repentance and faith.

- God had shown grace to the people of Nineveh in the time of Jonah, but their sin made them guilty.
- Nahum echoed parts of Exodus 34:6-7: “The Lord is slow to anger ... will not at all acquit the wicked” God was going to judge Nineveh. (Nahum 1:2-3) He would make war against them and defeat them, (Nahum 1:6).
- What is the result of Nineveh being destroyed for those in Judah? Nahum 1: 12-13?
- In addition to the message of judgment, Nahum—whose name means “comfort”—had a message of comfort for God’s people: When God’s judgment came upon Nineveh, His people would be safe. (Nahum 1:7)
- The day of judgment against Nineveh foreshadows the coming final day of judgment. On that day, Jesus will come and judge the earth. He will defeat His enemies—sin, Satan, and death—and He will rescue His people. God will not leave the guilty unpunished.

+ Channeling Frustrations into Prayer [Habakkuk]

- The Book of Habakkuk speaks to God concerning the evil he sees in Judah. Habakkuk identified himself as “Habakkuk the prophet” (Habakkuk 1:1). Habakkuk provides us with one of the most remarkable sections in all of Scripture, as it contains an extended dialogue between Habakkuk and God (Habakkuk 1-2).
- The book of Habakkuk pictures a frustrated prophet, much like Jonah, though Habakkuk channeled his frustration into prayers and eventually praise to God, rather than trying to run from the Lord as Jonah did
- God tells Habakkuk that God will deal with the evil people and they will be punished, and God was going to use the wicked Babylonians to do it!
- Habakkuk discussed problems of suffering and justice. He warned the people that the Babylonians were coming. Habakkuk preaches just a few years from Judah’s total destruction. Assyria had already fallen by the Babylonians as Nahum had predicted at this point. So we see that Israel was captured by Assyria, Assyria was destroyed, and now Judah is to be captured by Babylon and then later God says He will destroy Babylon for their wickedness also!
- He reminded the righteous that even when it looks like the wicked are doing well, God is in control and will rightfully deal with them
- We can learn from Habakkuk that evil is self-destructive – it will never work and will never last. The faithful ought to trust the Lord, no matter what. When we deal with doubt and struggles, God invites us to turn to Him and wait for His answer. God can and will judge His people when they become wicked. And, He can use someone more wicked than they to do it!

+ Even in darkness, there is hope [Obadiah]

- One of the twelve minor prophets and he lived during the fifth century B.C. The name Obadiah means “the Lord’s servant” or “worshiper of the Lord”. He was the son of Hananiah, the prophet from the tribe of Judah.
- Most of the Minor Prophets are messages to the people of Judah and Israel (the Southern and Northern Kingdoms of God’s people), but Obadiah’s vision is different. Like Jonah and Nahum, Obadiah’s writings mainly concern the people outside of Israel—in Obadiah’s case, it’s the nation of Edom, the House of Edom represents the tribe of Esau. Obadiah’s prophecies focus on God’s judgment against the Edomites for their part in destroying Jerusalem. Edom may seem to have won, but the Lord prevails in the end.
- Obadiah’s message is that God will not forget His people even in their captivity but will accomplish His purpose through and beyond the dreadful conditions they endure.
- Saint Augustine believes that Edom symbolizes the evil nations, who then accepted good faith through the prophets coming from Mount Zion². In this respect, this book stands for the church that unites the nations, which were previously the oppressors of Edom, as well as the Jews, who accepted Christian faith as is evident in: “...and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.” (Ephesians 2:16)
- The prophet ends his book by declaring: “...and the kingdom shall be the LORD’S”. This is the aim of God’s work: to reign over every heart and to set His throne in us!

+ Contrasting the Northern Kings and the Southern Kings:

- Test [Chart](#) of the 19 Kings of Israel which were all evil (the color each fellow indicates whether the king was good (green) or bad (red))
- How did Israel come to be divided? Review lesson 4.1. (After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided. Ten tribes formed the Northern Kingdom, called Israel; Judah and Benjamin formed the Southern Kingdom, called Judah)
- For two centuries (910-722 BC) the northern kingdom of Israel was ruled by kings who do great evil in the sight of the Lord. These centuries are marked by constant war, treason, and murder, ending in a catastrophic defeat by the nation of Assyria. God allowed the northern kingdom to be destroyed by Assyria. To destroy all sense of national identity, Assyrian conquerors carry off the population, dispersing them



in different parts of their empire and bringing in foreigners to populate the conquered land (2 Kings 17:5-24). The kings of the north disobeyed God and did not realize the need for Him. Therefore, they lost their warfare. The failings of leaders often have devastating effects on their people.

- Most of the Kings of the Southern Kingdom were good kings who worshiped God and made sure that their people did too. According to the Book of 2 Chronicles, they defeated their enemies, (13:21); had great riches and honor, (18:1); did what was right in the sight of the Lord, (27:2); restored the Temple in Jerusalem to its former glory, started Passover celebrations in Jerusalem and defeated the Assyrian Empire, (32:26); destroyed all the idols in Judah, (34:2). These kings are strong. Many of them are wealthy and able to defeat their enemies in battle, even powerful nations like the Assyrians. But the most important thing is that they all followed God. They honor and restore God's house, celebrate His holy days, and revere the laws He gave Moses. Sure, they're rich and powerful and mighty, but without their faith, they'd be none of that.
- Judah lasted a little more than a century longer than Israel. But sadly, some did not follow these good examples and God allowed the nation of Babylon to conquer Judah, destroying Jerusalem and its temple. God foretold that the exile would last 70 years. Judah was in exile for all that time—until, as promised, the nation was allowed to return to its own land.



Building Block 5: The Way, The Truth and The Life

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 5: The Way, The Truth and the Life



Lesson 5.1: Introduction - The Fall of Man and the Birth of Sin

Objective

To understand the importance of humbleness and obedience

Application

Do you want to solve all the problems of the world? Then the place to start is with yourself. Come back to God through prayer, confession and repentance. Meeting with the father of confession once a month is imperative to spiritual growth.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 3:1-5,14-15](#), [Phillippians 2:5-8](#), [John 13:5-9](#), [1 John 5:2-3](#), [Deuteronomy 6:4-5](#), [James 1:22-25](#), [Matthew 7:24-27](#), [John 15:10-14](#), [Romans 2:6-11](#), [Romans 5:19](#), [John 6:38](#), [Matthew 26:39](#), [Philippians 2:5-8](#), [Proverbs 28:26](#)



Liturgy: [Gregorian Reconciliation](#)



Patristics: [St. Gregory of Nazianus](#); [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#), [St. John Climacus](#); [St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: [Cain and Abel](#), [Tower of Babel](#); [St. John the Short](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is life in Paradise like?

- Christ says to the robber on the cross: "Today you will be with me in paradise".
- Life in Paradise is freedom from the Passions of the soul: St. John Chrysostom writes: "Man lived on earth like an angel; he was in the body, but he had no bodily needs; like a king, adorned with purple and a diadem and clothed in royal garb, he took delight in the dwelling of Paradise, having an abundance in everything.... Before the fall men lived in Paradise like angels; they were not inflamed with lust, were not kindled by other passions either, were not burdened with bodily needs; but being created entirely incorruptible and immortal, they did not even need the covering of clothing." - Homilies on Genesis 13:4, 15:4.
- Paradise receives each deserving soul into a comfortable resting place awaiting the end of all tribulation and the Day of Judgment. The battle may be over for the departed soul; but the war persists for the rest of humanity until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in His glory. "When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed" (Revelation 6:9-11).

+ What is self-reliance?

- Merriam-Webster defines self-reliance as: "Reliance on one's own efforts and abilities"
- A social psychologist defines it as: "a reliance on internal resources to provide life with coherence (meaning) and fulfillment" (Baumeister, 1987: 171).
- Proper self-reliance is based, not on emotions or spur of the moment instincts, but rather on internal fundamentals and resources.
- Self-reliance is a form of pride, which God hates.
- One might be his own worst enemy! Who is your trust in? *"Whoever trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered."* Proverbs 28:26

+ History of the fall and its consequences on man

Consider asking about what they know about the story and then ask them, "Which character – Adam, Eve, or the Serpent -- was least responsible for causing sin to enter God's creation? What was the outcome of the story? What happened to Adam and Eve? What is the outcome when we sin? If we "get caught"? If we don't "get caught"?

You may also consider this activity: A Bite of Truth. Give each teen an apple and tell them to enjoy a few bites then set it aside. Have them check the apple 15 minutes later and they will see that the inside has already started to turn brown. Present this as an analogy to Adam and Eve biting into the fruit and exposing the world to deterioration. Also compare it to our personal lives and how quickly they change and suffer when we open ourselves up to negative influences. Though simple, this analogy can make a memorable point.

- What was Adam like when he was created? He was perfect. He was created in the image of God. Man was created in perfection and in grace.
- Through the fall, man lost this grace and now has a fallen image and likeness of God. This means they lost the source of the fullness of good. (Gen. 3:14-15)
- In the Gregorian liturgy (consider clarifying the different liturgies), we pray saying "You desired to restore him to his first estate."
- After the fall of man, the state of man is one that is corrupt, that is - in absence of the ability to find its way to heaven, incapable of seeing the truth, in absence of life.
- Quickly man decided to take things in his own hands (Cain murders Abel, Tower of Babel, the people reject the salvation offered by Noah.)
- How did we get into such a disastrous condition? The Bible tells us that it came about through the disobedience of the first man, Adam.

+ The Commandments

- As a result of man losing its way, God clarified to man His restoration plan. Beginning with the commandments and the Levitical laws.
- The commandments are a guide and pathway to staying on the road toward God. It protects us from the deceptions and lies of the enemy.
 - "Where there is fear there is keeping of commandments and where there is keeping of commandments there is purification of the flesh and where there is purification there is illumination." - St. Gregory of Nazianus
- The levitical offerings foreshadow the restoration of life through the offering/sacrifice of Christ the lamb.
 - "Christ therefore ransomed from the curse of the law those who were subject to it, had been unable to keep its enactments. And in what way did He ransom them? By fulfilling it. And to put it in another way: in order that He might expiate the guilt of Adam's transgression, He showed Himself obedient and submissive in every respect to God the Father in our stead." - St. Cyril of Alexandria

+ Obedience, first step to restoration (1 John 5:2-3)

- Ultimate goal is obedience to God, obedience to this way, truth and life. Achieved through practical means of obedience to those over us/responsible for us.
 - "Obedience is the burial of the will and the resurrection of humility." - St. John Climacus
- Christ's restorative work came through obedience to the point of crucifixion. (Matthew 26:39, John 6:38, Romans 5:19, Philippians 2:5-8)
 - "As in Adam, man's nature contracted the illness of corruption through disobedience, in the same way in Christ it recovered health, for it became obedient to God and committed no sin." - St. Cyril of Alexandria
 - "Therefore Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, we who were once slaves to the old law, and have proven absolute incapability in working according to its codes. How did He redeem us? By His keeping the commandments of the law. In other words, Christ the Redeemer has yielded instead of us, to the Father our God, in absolute obedience." - St. Cyril of Alexandria
- The Holy Spirit is granted to man, as a Helper, to assist us in following the commandments
- Virtue of obedience: Leads to humility and many spiritual fruits (St. John the Short)
- Obedience may be pursued in many ways, but ultimately one produces fruit in His obedience when it is done with wisdom, yet without second guessing. St. Peter teaches us: "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh." 1 Peter 2:18 - This is the same St. Peter, who when he did not understand Christ desiring to wash his feet would not allow Him to. Yet, St. Peter obeyed to have his feet washed without understanding (John 13:5-9)
- Disobedience and Judgment Day
 - "The words of the One coming to judge the living and the dead, I learn in them great necessity of ready obedience to God in all things. For there is no pardon for those who fail to repent of their disobedience." - St. Basil

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 5:
The Way, The Truth
and the Life



Lesson 5.2: The Way I - What Does it Mean to be Lost?

Objective

To understand the danger of being lost and necessity of being found

Application

The parable of the Prodigal Son reminds us that when we stray from God we can return to Him in humility and repentance and God will rejoice and lovingly accept us back. True repentance is essential.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 15](#), [Acts 9:1-9](#), [Ezekiel 33:11](#), [Genesis 3:1-5, 22-24](#), [Revelation 20:10-15](#), [Psalm 50](#), [2 Samuel 11:1-22](#), [2 Samuel 12](#), [Ezekiel 33:11](#), [Psalm 51](#)



Liturgy: [Gregorian Anaphora](#); [Basilian Agios](#); [Hymns of Judas page 256](#)



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



Story: [St. Paesa](#), [St. John the Short](#)



Other: [Return to God by HHP53](#), [Life of Repentance and Purity by HHP53](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + Discuss:
 -
- + Review previous lesson and the story of the fall and man being exiled and lost
 - All throughout the OT (Old Testament) God was sending Prophets to bring us back however death reigned over us
 - Finally God sent His Only Begotten Son to die in our place to rescue us from captivity
 - As we pray in the liturgy: "You have not abandoned us to the end but have always visited us through Your holy prophets and in the last days You did manifest Yourself to us ..." - Basilian Agios
- + Parables of the Lost - Luke 15

Consider some of the following discussion questions:

 - Have you ever lost something important to you? If so, how did you feel when you discovered this item was gone or lost? What did you do to find this item?
 - Have you ever been lost? If so, who came searching for you? Did they find you? How did you feel when you were the one lost?
 - Would you rather be the lost or have lost something important to you? What does it mean to be a lost person to God?
 - There are many who are lost - the homeless - the addicted - the abused - the neglected. But spiritual lostness is when you are cut off from God - when through sin we get separated from God. Jesus assures us that God will pursue us like a shepherd leaving his flock to find the one lonely lost sheep. Or the old widow who turns her house upside down to find her one small insignificant coin. Not one of us is insignificant to God
 - "Satan bound the inhabitants of earth with cords of sin." - St. Cyril of Alexandria
 - "The deceit of demons filled every part of the inhabited world, having mastered the life of men through the madness of idolatry." - St. Gregory of Nyssa
 - Parable of the Prodigal Son; Parable of the Lost Sheep; Parable of the Lost Coin (Why was he lost and why did he return?)
 - "You, O my Master, have turned for me the punishment into salvation. As a good shepherd, You have sought after that which has gone astray." - Gregorian Anaphora



- God desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he returns and lives.
- “ ‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’” - Ezekiel 33:11
- God will always accept the sinner in their return.

+ Returning to God because He is the Way

- When a person desires to repent, God will not abandon, but show them the way. Jesus said “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matthew 4:17
- Repentance: St. Paesa and St. John the Short
- [St. Paesa](#) was a good Christian. She lost her way but came back to Christ. It was revealed to St. John that she truly repented and her sins were forgiven.
- Repentance: Nathan's parable and David repentance and prayer (Psalm 51)
- Nathan wanted David to realize his sin. He told him a story about a rich man taking advantage of a poor man (2 Samuel 12 - consider reading). The story led David to realize his sin and pleaded for forgiveness. God forgave him.
- The moment David repented God accepted it.

+ Discuss doctrine of a believer perishing

- Hymn of Judas (Covenant Thursday page 256)
- Judas was one of the Disciples. He followed Christ. Jesus taught him the same as the others. He witnessed many miracles. He listened to many sermons. And yet his love for money was more than love of God.
- Jesus would have forgiven Judas if he had confessed and asked for forgiveness, like Simon Peter did. However, though He knew Jesus, walked with Jesus, lived with Jesus, He perished.
- Knowing Him, Believing in Him and even doing miracles in his name, is not indicative of a saving faith:
- “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” - Matthew 7:22-23



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 5.3: The Way 2 - God's Way and Our Way

Building Block 5:
The Way, The Truth
and the Life



Objective

To understand the importance of God's will and why man should follow His will.

Application

Over the course of the week, self-reflect on the decisions that man believes has nothing to do with God and present them to a servant or spiritual guide for discussion.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Isaiah 55:8-9](#), [Matthew 21:28-32](#), [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#), [Baruch 4:1](#), [John 4:1-2](#), [Genesis 24](#), [Philippians 4:6-7](#), [Deuteronomy 30:15-20](#), [Romans 8:35](#)



Liturgy: [St. Basil Liturgy pages 39, 52, 72](#)



Patristics: [Theophan the Recluse](#), [Cyprian Epistle 7](#), [Anatoly of Optina](#)



Story: [Parable of the two sons](#), [Jonah 1-4](#), [St. Athanasius](#), [King Solomon](#)



Theology Academy: [The Didache: The Way of Life](#)



Other: [Discovering the will of God](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Start with the story of the Fall and us listening to our own commandment as opposed following God's

Consider discussing: Are you struggling with God's will in your life? Do you ask your friends or your family for advice? Do you search the Bible for answers? Did you find clarity? Do we really seek God's will? Or our own? And when we discover what His will for us is, do we accept it happily?

- Making decisions without Him ultimately costs eternal life.
- Our instincts and thoughts are now naturally ungodly and imperfect.
- *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.'"* (Isaiah 55:8-9)
- The priest prays in the Liturgy "But let Your people be in blessing thousands of thousand and ten thousand times ten thousands doing Your will." (St. Basil pages 39, 52, 72)

+ Examples of God's control

- Tell the Parable of the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32). The first son at first declined, he regretted his decision and went and did his father's will.
- Doing God's will is a blessing. It leads to eternal life.
- Story of Jonah (Jonah 1-4)
- Why did Jonah reject God's will?
- Jonah wanted to do his own will and not God's. He realized that God is His Savior. He prayed and asked for forgiveness. His life was spared and he went on to do what God willed him to do. All of Nineveh repented and were saved from destruction.

+ What is God's will?

- Revealed will = Bible. A verse or a chapter in the Bible can be the key to resolving problems or helps reaching a life decision.
- Philippians 4:6-7 "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."



- Theophan the Recluse “But your job is to work upon yourself: for this you are chosen; the rest is in the hands of God. He who humbles himself shall be exalted.”
- Hidden will = God's individual plan for us.
- St. Athanasius was moved by seeing children acting out Christian rituals. He became one of the greatest Popes. He defended the faith against heretics.

+ What does it mean that God is in control?

- Does it mean: he causes everything to happen exactly the way it happens, or that He can change His mind anytime?
- God gave man free will. When man puts God first in all that he does, he sees His grace.
- If man chooses for oneself and goes with his own will, he suffers. King Solomon deviated from God's will. He went against God's will and chose love of foreign women who caused him to worship other gods. (I Kings II)
- Differentiating between God willing something and God allowing an event.
- God's will is clear, the kingdom of Heaven for all.
- God sometimes allows an event to make man strong, to test man's faith or to guide man on how to fight.
- A Russian Eastern Father says: “Are you fighting against your passions? Fight, fight, and be good soldiers of Christ! Do not give in to evil and do not be carried away by the weakness of the flesh. During the time of temptation, flee to the Physician, crying out with the Holy Church, our mother: “O God, number me with the thief, the harlot, and the publican (i.e., with the repentant), and save me!”

+ How does our will relate to the will of God?

- There are mainly 2 roads. Decisions leading to life, decisions leading to death. Choose life and good. (Deuteronomy 30:15-20)
- God is in control only if we let Him and we enact His will. Man still remains the driver. God being in control still requires that one works to see His will and does it.
- Jesus said “not as I will, but as You will” Matthew 26:39
- God knows where we are, how far off the path we are, and what it takes to get us there, and God will never say no when we ask for help. He'll always be there to help us find our way back.
- The Father corrects and protects us, if we still stand fast in the faith both in afflictions and perplexities, that is to say, cling closely to His Christ; as it is written, “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*” (Romans 8:35). “None of these things can separate believers, nothing can tear away those who are clinging to His body and blood. Persecution of that kind is an examination and searching out of the heart. God wills us to be sifted and proved, as He has always proved His people; and yet in His trials help has never at any time been wanting to believers.” - Cyprian, Epistle 7



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 5: The Way, The Truth and the Life

Lesson 5.4: The Way 3 - How Can We Find Our Way?

Objective

To be aware and able to use the resources available to be able to find our way to God

Application

Complete the entirety of fasts with it being a wilderness, cut off from your personal distractions (TV, social media, etc...)

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 7:7](#), [Isaiah 30:20](#), [2Timothy 3:16](#), [1Corinthian 10:31](#), [Psalm 32:8-9](#), [Matthew 11: 29-30](#)



Liturgy: [St. Basil Liturgy, pg 86](#)



Patristics: [Irenaeus of Lyons](#), [Origen](#), [John Cassian](#)



Story: [St. Cyprian](#)



Other: [Psalm 32](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + What should be the first thing to do to find the way?
 - First begin with asking. It is written in Matthew 7:7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”
 - We ask in prayer. We seek by learning God’s truth. We knock by doing God’s will.
 - God will show the way so that we are not led astray. “The Lord will give you the bread of affliction and scant water; and those leading you astray will no longer approach you, but your eyes shall see those leading you astray.” Isaiah 30:20
- + What type of messages show us the way?
 - Through the scripture. According to 2 Timothy 3:16 “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for:
 - Doctrine: (telling us how to get to where we need to be),
 - Reproof (telling us when we have taken a wrong turn),
 - Correction (getting us back on track going the right direction), and
 - Instruction in righteousness (continuing to guide us towards God’s best for us)
 - Reading the fathers and prophets, going through their life stories, all of these give us indications on how they found their way. Similarly, inspired by their accounts and explanations, we can find our way.
 - “For the prophets did not announce first one God and then another, but one and the same God under complementary aspects, and with many various names.” Irenaeus of Lyons
 - Listening to the directions of Christ Himself through scriptures and traditions
 - “He was incarnate and became man and taught us the ways of salvation” - St. Basil
- + What are some ways to discipline the body to find the way?
 - Solitude - Like exiling oneself to be one with God in prayer and repentance. Like the prodigal son.
 - Recognizing one's weakness - Fight and do not be discouraged. Ask for strength. Repent and partake of the Holy Communion.
 - Education - Read and learn from the Bible, writing of the church fathers, Synaxarium (History of the church), etc.
 - Preparing the soul and body - The Lord wants to reveal His glory in us. “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31
 - Fasting - taking control over the flesh desires, which directs the focus on the soul.
 - Consider having a short talk on the importance of regular self-reflection and its means, as well as visiting monasteries for spiritual retreats.



- “Now the way of the Lord is made straight in two fashions. First, in the way of contemplation, when thought is made clear in truth without any mixture of falsehood; and then in the way of conduct, after the sound contemplation of what ought to be done, when action is produced which harmonizes with sound theory of conduct.” Origen, Commentary on the Gospel of St. John

+ God’s Ambassador for you: Your Father of Confession & Guide

- Do not omit the power and value of a spiritual father, though at times information seems repeated, God has assigned them for you and will speak to you through them.
- Through confession - In Psalm 32, King David speaks of the wonders of confession, its benefits and the dangers of not confessing. One clear benefit is that, through genuine regular confession, one receives instructions and guidance from God through the priest.
- “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you.” - Psalm 32:8-9
- The example of St. Cyprian - He was a magician. The best in his field. A Son of a noble sought him to perform magic to get a young Christian girl (Justina) to fall in love with him. When Cyprian failed, he called on the demons and told them, "If you do not bring Justina to me, I shall adopt Christianity." The demons deceived him and when Cyprian saw how Justina’s faith destroyed the demons, he believed and was baptized. He went on to become the Bishop of Carthage and made Justina the head of a convent. They were both martyred defending their faith. St. Cyprian found his way.

+ God’s Plan is a hidden treasure hunt

- For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. - Jeremiah 29:11
- “Therefore according to the plain teaching of the Lord the king's highway is easy and smooth, though it may be felt as hard and rough: for those who piously and faithfully serve Him, when they have taken upon them the yoke of the Lord, and have learned of Him, that He is meek and lowly of heart, at once somehow or other lay aside the burden of earthly passions, and find no labor but rest for their souls, by the gift of the Lord, as He Himself testifies by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: Stand on the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, which is the good way, and walk in it: and you shall find refreshment for your souls. For to them at once the crooked shall become straight and the rough ways plain; and they shall taste and see that the Lord is gracious, and when they hear Christ proclaiming in the gospel: Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you, they will lay aside the burden of their sins, and realize what follows: For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30 The way of the Lord then has refreshment if it is kept according to His law.” John Cassian, Conference 24, Chapter 25
- Jesus said “I am the way, the truth and the life, No one comes to the Father Except through me.” John 14:6



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 5: The Way, The Truth and the Life



Lesson 5.5: The Truth I - Absolute Truth vs. Relativism

Objective

To understand that there is one absolute Truth and discuss relativism concept

Application

Understand what Christ's absolute truths are and live by them. Take some time for reflection to identify some things about our culture that conflict with what you know about the Orthodox Way of Life. Then discuss with your spiritual father how the Church can help you with these conflicts.

References and Resources



Scripture - [Baruch 4:1](#), [John 14:6](#), [1 Timothy 3:15](#), [Genesis 3:1-5](#), [Exodus 20:1-17](#), [Galatians 1:8-10](#), [Malachi 3:6](#), [James 1:17](#), [Hebrews 13:8](#), [John 3:15-22](#), [Genesis 3:1-5](#), [Matthew 7:28-29](#)



Liturgy: [Basilian Anaphora](#)



Patristics: [Against the Heathens](#), [On the Incarnation](#), [St. Athanasius](#)



Story: [St. Moses](#), [St. Philotheos seek the true God](#)



Other: [Moral Relativism](#), [Suscopts Article](#); [George Bassilios Article](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ All roads lead to Rome:

- Do all Paths Lead to the Same Destination? Is it possible that Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, etc. represent differing, yet valid, paths to the same differing, differing, yet valid, paths to the same destination?
- The earliest Christians were a minority living under governments that often persecuted and killed them.
- Since its origins Christianity has been an apologetic faith. Living among Jews, pagans, Gnostics and, later, Muslims, Christianity has had to explain itself within a pluralistic context.
- In this age, we have lost the confidence that statements of fact can ever be anything more than just opinions. The word "truth" now means true for me.
- Whether we realize it or not, this concept - Moral relativism - is the air we breathe, the background noise in our culture today. In this sort of cultural climate the only heresy is telling someone else that they are wrong. Tolerance has become the ultimate virtue, not "truth".
- According to the Barna Research Group, 81% of young Americans have adopted a view that "all truth is relative to the individual and his/her circumstances".

+ Moral relativism: "Who am I to judge?"

- Moral relativism suggests that when it comes to moral issues, there are no universally objective right or wrong answers.
- Only subjective opinions exist, which are no different from one's feelings about a favorite football team or ice cream flavor. It is up to the subject, the individual, to decide.
- Morality is not objective. It's an individual matter. Moral truth depends on the individual.
- However, to state that everything is relative is to make an absolute claim. If it is absolute, then it follows that not everything is relative.
- Problem of moral relativism and its spread in the way of thinking today. The assumption that morality is relative presumes there is no God, For His laws are absolute and leave no room for relativism.
- Two kinds of relativism: Cultural and individual.

+ Does Culture define morality?



- The wide variations in moral practices of various cultures indicate a broad diversity of values. However, a closer look reveals that moral differences often represent differences only in perception of the facts of a situation and not a conflict in the values themselves.
- Example 1: The dispute over Abortion. Much of the debate turns out to be a conflict about facts, not fundamental values. In most cases, those favoring abortion, like those who are not, agree that human persons are valuable. They disagree on whether the unborn child is in fact a human.
- Example 2: Murder of innocent people has been wrong in every culture at every time in history. Hitler agrees with this value, what has changed is his perception is the fact that they are not humans. He justified his killing because he considered them subhuman.

+ Logical fallacies of moral relativism

- Self-refuting, diversity of subjective belief has little to do with objective truth, can't blame others for doing something wrong, can't address the problem of evil, can't address the problem of injustice.
- Evil, praise, blame, justice, fairness, moral improvement, and tolerance--depend on some objective, external moral standard for its reality and application.
- Morality cannot come from something less than us because it has to have authority over us which is from God

+ What does it mean that God is absolute?

- God has no beginning, no end, is all in all, all powerful, all good, all knowing, all present, makes no mistakes and everything depends on Him.
- "He Himself is the Truth, He is the Way; that is, the true boundary of faith, and the exact rule and standard of an unerring conception concerning God. For by a true belief in the Son, namely as begotten of the very essence of God the Father, and as bearing the title of Son in its fullest and truest meaning, and not even in any sense a made or created being, we shall then clothe ourselves in the confidence of a true faith." - St. Cyril of Alexandria
- "The Savior works mightily every day, drawing men to religion, persuading them to virtue, teaching them about immortality, quickening their thirst for heavenly things, revealing the knowledge of the Father, inspiring strength in face of death, manifesting Himself to each, and displacing the irreligion of idols." - St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation, p31

+ Basis of Judgment Day

- Judgment day will be based on God's commandments as an absolute Truth
- You may consider reviewing the doctrine of the non-salvation of non-believers
- "He has appointed a Day for recompense, on which He will appear to judge the world in righteousness and give each one according to his deeds." - Basilian Anaphora

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 5:
The Way, The Truth
and the Life



Lesson 5.6: The Truth 2 - Recognizing the Need for truth

Objective

Pursuing Truth constantly as an ongoing process

Application

Gather a journal of all your doubts and questions and by the end of the year, through an honest *seeking* through those around you, you will *find*.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Timothy 2:3-4](#), [Ephesians 4:14-15](#), [Philippians 4:8](#), [Jude 1:4](#), [2 Corinthians 11:3](#), [1 Timothy 3](#), [Ephesians 4:29](#), [1 Timothy 3:15](#), [Acts 18:1-3](#), [Acts 18:26](#)



Liturgy: [St. Basil pg 64, 61, 125, 82](#)



Patristics: [Justin Martyr 1st Apology Ch2](#), [St. Justin Popovich](#), [St. John of Kronstadt](#), [Stromata](#),



Story: [Aquila and Priscilla](#)



Other: [Comparative Theology HHPS3](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is the Truth?

- Pilate asked our Lord Jesus Christ, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) but did not wait to hear the answer.
- The Truth is that there is one Savior, one God and one Mediator.
- God offers salvation equally to all.
- He created us to share in His goodness.
- He sent his only begotten son Who became the sacrificial lamb to save us from our sins.
- God desires for all men to receive salvation.
- "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:3-4

+ The Pursuit of Truth

- Learning by reading the word of God and the writing of the church fathers. Believing the Truth.
- Not being swayed from the Truth is to be strong in the faith.
- St. Paul wrote "that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ." Ephesians 4:14-15
- Meditate on that which is virtuous.
- St. Paul wrote "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely; whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." (Philippians 4:8)

+ The Discerning of Truth (comparative religions)

- Reason directs those who are truly pious and philosophical to honor and love only what is true, declining to follow traditional opinions, if these are worthless. For not only does sound reason direct us to refuse the guidance of those who did or taught anything wrong, but it is incumbent on the lover of truth, by all means, and if death be threatened, even before his own life, to choose to do and say what is right." St. Justin the Martyr
- Evaluate the Message:



- Does it have a high view of Scripture?
- Does it see Scripture as authoritative and sufficient?
- Does it add to or take away from Scripture?
- Does it have a high view of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?
- Is it consistent with the faith?
- Judas wrote “For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jude 1:4
- “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is Christ.” 2 Cor 11:3
- Evaluate the Messenger:
 - Is the lifestyle of the teacher/promoter consistent with or contrary to Scripture?
 - Christ is our teacher. The guidance given to us by the church is based on Christ’s guidance and life.
 - St. Paul describes what the virtues are of the person who desires the position of Bishop in “1 Timothy 3”.
 - Do they present the message with reverence?
 - “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearer.” Ephesians 4:29
 - Do Science and Faith oppose each other with regards to Truth?
- + How does Orthodoxy differentiate itself from other faiths, and what makes it true?
 - “I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” - 1 Timothy 3:15
 - The church testifies the truth of Christ as revealed through Scripture.
 - The church honors the saints who lived in Truth and those who died for testifying the Truth.
 - In the Liturgy of St. Basil the congregation says after the reading of the Gospel and the sermon “Blessed are they, in truth, the saints of this day, each one according to his name, the beloved of Christ”. St. Basil pg 64.
 - The priest prays inaudibly “Your law, Your fear, Your commandments, Your truths, and Your holy precepts, establish in their hearts” St. Basil pg 61.
 - The word Truth is repeated several times in the Liturgy. The deacon says in the confession “Amen. Amen. Amen. I believe, I believe, I believe that this is so in truth. Amen.” St. Basil pg 125.
 - In the Liturgy of the faithful the priest says “You, Who are 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.” St. Basil pg 82
- + The Daily & Continuous Pursuit of Truth
 - Not because I know of God or believe to have encountered God that no greater truth may be revealed. God is infinite and has continuous truths to reveal to us.
 - “In truth there is only one freedom – the holy freedom of Christ, whereby He freed us from sin, from evil, from the devil. It binds us to God. All other freedoms are illusory, false, that is to say, they are all, in fact, slavery.” St. Justin Popovich
 - “Christ taught us truth; the Devil teaches us falsehood, and strives in every way to contradict every truth; devising various calumnies against it.” John of Kronstadt
 - “But those who are ready to toil in the most excellent pursuits, will not desist from the search after truth, till they get the demonstration from the Scriptures themselves (Stromata 7:16:3).
 - The Example of Aquila and Priscilla. They were simply a working couple, tentmakers by trade. St. Paul stayed, worked and taught them. Acts 18:1-3 . They are an example of the good message and messengers.
 - When Apollos was teaching about St. John’s baptism (that is all he knew), Aquila and Priscilla taught him the way of God more accurately. “they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” Acts 18:26.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 5.7: The Truth 3 - The Deceiver

Building Block 5:
The Way, The Truth
and the Life



Objective

To understand the causes and results of sinning especially through our enemy the Devil

Application

Practice the means of grace which are Spiritual reading, Fasting, watching, praying and partake of the Mysteries

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 3](#), [Ezekiel 28:12-19](#), [Isaiah 14:12-15](#), [Matthew 4:1-11](#), [John 3:26-35](#), [Genesis 39:1-10](#), [Job, Colossians 2:14-15](#)



Liturgy: [Thanksgiving Prayer](#), [Kiahk pg42](#), [Litany of Congregation pg 71](#)



Patristics: [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#), [St. Basil the Great](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. John Saba pg20](#), [St. Athanasius](#), [St. Gregory Oration 38.9](#), [St. Athanasius, Life of Anthony 22.1](#)



Story: [St. Anthony fighting against the Demons](#), [St. Marina the Martyr](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ The fall of angels

- Lucifer falls due to pride
 - The prophecy in Ezekiel 28:12-19 is referring to Satan. It references his perfection when he was “living in Eden, the garden of God”. This is not a reference to an earthly king.
 - Lucifer is described as perfect, beautiful and wise until iniquity found him.
 - He wanted to claim his many qualities as his own and not from God.
 - The reference to the city of Tyre is because it is filled with unscrupulous merchants. It is the center of religious idolatry and sexual immorality. Which is accredited to the King’s actions who is Satan.
 - In Isaiah 14:12-15 Lucifer fully intends to take the place of the One True God. He is so prideful he said “I will” five times in those 4 verses.
 - Beware of self-delusion! Beware of the deceptions of the enemy! Do not think that a man is a real scholar of the Bible because he can quote by memory ever so many passages. Did not the first one who fell from the most elevated condition into the lowest hell, did not Satan know the Word of God?
- Lucifer is then known as: Satan, Devil, Misleaders, Makes false statements, Has false appearance, Manipulator, Liar, Cunning
- Satan attacks man due to his envy and leads to the man’s fall. (Genesis 3:1-5)
 - “Satan preys on human nature because it is infirm and easy to overcome. He is harsh, pitiless and unappeasable in heart. Christ’s might however places him under the feet of the saints.” - St. Cyril of Alexandria

+ The extent of Satan’s Power

- Satan is only limited by what God allows. Like the story of Job.
- God permitted Satan to strike Job with disease, kill his children, and take all his possessions. God did not permit Satan to take Job’s life.
- The devil may have authority in the world. But to a certain extent.
- Man sometimes will allow the devil to take control. One must be aware and ward off Satan’s deceptions.
 - “The one who was called Lucifer because of his radiance both became and is called darkness because of his pride and the rebellious powers under him, who are fashioners of evil through their flight from the good and the incite evil in us.” - St.

Gregory of Nazianzus

- “Therefore, we must first understand that the demons were not created demons, for God made nothing evil. They were created good, but, having fallen from heavenly wisdom, they have since then been continually flying about the earth.” - St. Athanasius, Life of Anthony 22.1

+ Satan’s attempts of deception

- Satan's Temptations in our life are pride, lust of the flesh and material possessions
- Same temptations Satan attacked Adam and Christ on the Mount
- Satan's Techniques To accomplish this is deception, temptation and accusation
 - “Hell Can't be made attractive so the devil makes attractive the road that leads there.” - St. Basil the Great
 - “He does not overcome by force, nor by tyranny, nor through compulsion, nor through violence. Since this was so, he would have destroyed all men.” - St. John Chrysostom
 - “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
- Our Solution (knowing the Truth, self control and the Mysteries)
 - “Repentance saves and releases those whom the devil captured. Many years of the devil’s hard work is lost in one moment of repentance.” - St. John Saba

+ How can we defend against the deceiver?

- To be armed with the word of God. Read the Holy Bible. Learning Psalms, Hymns and praises.
- Praying, reciting Hymns and praises give strength and focus to drive away the deceiver like many of the saints such as St. Anthony the Great and St. Marina the martyr.
- Humble oneself. Satan will play on one’s pride.
- Christianity is always under attack. Arm oneself with the Truth. When faced with a conundrum, ask the father of confession for answers.
- The priest prays in the litany of the congregation “Grant that they may be unto us without obstacle or hindrance, that we may hold them according to Your holy and blessed will...”
- Crucifixion gives us victory and to trample on Satan. Colossians 2:14-15
 - “You have given us the authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy.” - Thanksgiving prayer
 - “There is no need for us to fear the things they throw at us, because through prayer, fasting and faith in the Lord, the demons immediately fall.” - St. Athanasius
- Do not blindly follow or believe. Satan in the end of the world being released and utilizing the Antichrist to attack the Church.
- Satan's end is eternal hell along with the other evil people (against the teaching of Apocatastasis Origins teaching)
- In the Kiakh Melody of Amen Alleluia, it is written: “Lucifer after the fall became Satan because he ceased to pray Amen Alleluia. Pitiful is the one who hears it and does not sing with it in the midst of the Congregation Amen Alleluia.” Kiakh pg 42

+ Devil Defeated

- When he tempted Christ after He had fasted 40 days and 40 nights. Matthew 4:1-11
- When Jesus was crucified. Christ's crucifixion and defeat of Satan binding him in Hades.
- In John 3:26-35 The devil tried to create enmity in St. John the Baptist heart by having his disciples tell him about Jesus baptizing. But St. John the Baptist was not shaken.
- Joseph the Patriarch refused his master’s wife proposition. Genesis 39:1-10



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 5.8: The Life I - Reasons for not Obeying the Commandments

Building Block 5:
The Way, The Truth
and the Life



Objective

To understand the danger of the sin of pride which is the mother of all sins.

Application

Ask yourself: Why is it sometimes difficult to do what God says? Self examine the real reason for not obeying

Practice humility more and avoid taking credit for things but give all credit to God who gave you all your gifts

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 3](#), [Exodus 5:2](#), [Acts 12:22-23](#), [Acts 14:8-15](#), [Matthew 25:14-23](#), [Luke 19:17](#), [Luke 18:9-14](#)



Liturgy: ["Holy, Holy, Holy" St. Basil pg 86](#)



Patristics: [St. Anthony the Great](#), [The Deserts Fathers](#), [St. John Cassian](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#), [St. Augustine](#), [Isaac the Syrian](#).



Story: [Moses the Arch Prophet Exodus 5](#), [St. Mary the Theotokos Luke 1:38](#), [Sts. Paul & Barnabas](#), [The woman of Canaan Matthew 15:22-28](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Why did God give man the commandments?

- God loves man. He wants everyone to have eternal life.
- The commandments are a covenant with God.
- God Himself wrote the commandments, which should prove their importance.
- When the commandments are disobeyed, it is a rejection of God. It is considered breaking the covenant.
- Adam and Eve were disobedient. God gave them a commandment and they broke it, which led to their ejection from paradise. Genesis 3.
- The priest prays in the Liturgy "When we disobeyed Your commandment by the guile of the serpent, we fell from eternal life, and were exiled from the Paradise of joy. You have not abandoned us to the end, but have always visited us through Your holy prophets, and in the last days, You did manifest Yourself to us, who were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, through Your Only-Begotten Son, our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who of The Holy Spirit and of the Holy Virgin Mary." St. Basil pg 86

+ Why does man disobey the commandments?

- Lack of self-control/discipline, Lack of satisfaction/happiness, Not wanting to conform, Not recognizing that God is in control, Reliance on oneself and not on God, Man's pride, pride puts oneself in the center of everything instead of God, Weakness.
- "The truly intelligent man pursues one sole objective: to obey and to conform to the God of all. With this single aim in view, he disciplines his soul, and whatever he may encounter in the course of his life, he gives thanks to God for the compass and depth of His providential ordering of all things." St. Anthony the Great
- The Desert Fathers warned, "Better is the person who has sinned, if he knows he has sinned and repents, than the person who has not sinned and thinks himself righteous."

+ Why did Satan fall?

- Satan wanted to be God's equal. His fall was due to Pride. Satan disobeyed God and persuaded other angels to disobey God. He believes that what he achieves comes from his own abilities. He is never satisfied.
 - "The pride of heart was enough to cast from heaven such a great and capable power. The fall of the great devil, warns us to be cautious." - St. John Cassian
 - "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

- “He imagined that what was made could ascend to the nature of its Maker and that he would be enthroned with God, Who has power over all things.” - St. Cyril of Alexandria

+ Breaking a covenant & promise with God

- Pharaoh's pride blinded him from seeing the true God. He disobeyed God no matter all the proof that Moses showed him.
- His heart was hardened.
- “An Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go.”” Exodus 5:2
- The story of Moses and Pharaoh illustrates how pride kept one from following or seeing God, and continuous rejection of God, and death.
- Similarly the story of Herod in Acts 12. Herod's pride led to his death. When he was giving an oration to the people, they shouted “”The voice of a god and not of a man!” Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.” Acts 12:22-23
- Herod thought of himself as a god. He was disobedient to the commandments.

+ How to learn to be obedient to God’s commandments?

- Learn to be humble. Read Luke 18:9-14 (The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector) and discuss:

What do we see in this parable? What did the Pharisee do wrong? It can be very tempting to compare yourself to others. Who in here hasn't looked at someone else and thought “I am glad I am not that person”. What did the tax collector do right? The tax collector knew that he needed God and humbled himself before God. Pride is sin and sin always destroys (Rom. 6:16). Pride causes us to think and act like we know better than God.

- We see the epitome of humility when we see the divine God coming in ultimate humility being born in a manger.
- Likewise, St. Mary is an icon and example of Humility. As a young girl, she obeyed her parents, the priest in the temple and when Archangel Gabriel appeared to her. “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” Luke 1:38
- She knew that Jesus would die for our salvation. She obeyed God.
- Story of Sts. Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14:8-18. When the people perceived St. Paul and St. Barnabas as gods, they wanted to offer sacrifices to them. Then St. Paul and St. Barnabas tore their clothes and ran among the multitude persuading them not to do so. They knew that they healed the crippled man through God. They gave glory to God.
- The truly humble person is the one who, confessing his sins, is “faithful over little,” and doing so, is exalted by the Lord and is “set over much.” Only such a person will “enter into the joy of his Master” (Matthew 25.14-23, Luke 19.17).
- “Run from pride, for it is a passion more treacherous than any other. If we cut off pride, the head of all evil, we would kill all the other members of wickedness with it. Therefore, if we want to earn glory we must flee from human glory and only desire glory from God. Then we will obtain and enjoy both through the grace and lovingkindness of our Lord Jesus Christ.” - St. John Chrysostom
- St. Augustine says: “Humility is the tree of life; those who eat of it will never die”
- Isaac the Syrian says: “It is born naturally in the soul through fulfilling the commandments. Because it is like the branches of a tree that sag downwards when they have abundant fruit on them. However, branches that have no fruit strive upwards and grow straight up. There are trees in existence that will not bear fruit unless their branches are bent downwards: if somebody attaches a stone to them so that they grow toward the ground, they yield fruit. Similarly with the soul, when it becomes humble, it brings forth fruit, and the more fruit it produces, the humbler it becomes. The closer the Saints get to God, the more they realize their sinfulness.”
- It was said of an ascetic man who delivered the demon- possessed that he once asked the demons, “By what will you come out? By fasting?” They answered, “We do not eat.” “By staying up?” They answered, “We do not sleep.” He then asked, “By deserting the world?” They answered, “We live in the wilderness and among ruins.” “By what then do you come out?” he asked. And they replied, “Nothing crushes us like humility.”
- In the Orthodox tradition, humility has often been called the “mother of all virtues,” and pride has been named “the cause of all sin.” The wise and honest person is the one who is humble.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 5: The Way, The Truth and the Life



Lesson 5.9: The Life 2 - Having and Losing

Objective

To instill a proper understanding of money and our duties towards it.

Application

Learn and practice the virtue of giving. Practice giving your everyday life to God, Romans 12:1. Examine your actions and intentions this week and be mindful of your intentions and your choices. Ask: Why am I doing what I'm doing? Am I willing to give up what I'm doing for others?"

References and Resources



Scripture: [1Corinthian 16:2](#), [Acts 20:35](#), [2Corinthians 9:7](#), [Luke 16:19-31](#), [Philippians 1:21](#), [Matthew 19:21](#), [Matthew 6:33](#)



Liturgy: [Matins pg 50-51](#)



Patristics: [On Wealth and Poverty, St. John Chrysostom](#), [Almsgiving St. John Chrysostom](#), [feeding the hungry St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Isaac the Syrian](#), [St. Nicolas of Myra](#), [Virtue of giving St. Chrysostom](#), [St. Gregory Nazianzen](#), [St. Basil the Great](#), [The widow - St. John Chrysostom](#)



Story: [The rich man and Lazarus](#), [Simon the sorcerer](#), [St. Barsoum the Naked](#), [St. Peter the Worshiper](#)



Other: [Charity, HG Bishop Raphael \(Arabic\)](#); [Giving, Fr. Daoud Lamei \(Arabic\)](#); [Almsgiving, HHP53 \(Arabic\)](#); [Giving Alms, HG Bishop Youssef \(Arabic\)](#); [LAcopts Article on Giving](#).



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Are possessions from God or man?

- Everything a person owns is given to them from God. It is not ours to use in an evil way.
- Wealth is not evil, but when it is used for evil it becomes evil. When it is used for good it is blessed.
- "our money is the Lord's, however we may have gathered it." "not for you to waste on prostitutes, drink, fancy food, expensive clothes, and all the other kinds of indolence, but for you to distribute to those in need." St. John Chrysostom implies that wealth is theft
- When someone takes credit for their wealth, that is considered theft. They are not considering that God gave them what they possess.
- But not just wealth, God gives us other things - talents, time—and we have the choice of what to do with those things. We can have an attitude that says it's all about us, and we can choose to hold tightly to everything we have, making sure we never give anything away. Or, we can choose to have a giving heart.
- Which one do you think will work out better for us in the end? Would you describe your attitude right now as one that has a giving heart, or one that is all about yourself? What are some things that you have that you can give? The Bible says, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Does it make sense to you that giving leads to getting more than you had in the first place?
- Giving is Greater Than Receiving: "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35)

+ What are some of the types of giving?

- Types of giving (tithe, donation, first fruits, time, knowledge, physical work, martyrdom, service, charity)
- Giving is not always about money. One should understand that giving oneself time, life (seclusion, martyrdom) and efforts are equally important.
- There are other ways you can begin to get in the habit of giving. One major thing you can do is to give time. More than likely your church could use you to volunteer.



- If you don't have any money to give, you don't need to feel bad. "Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.'" (Acts 3:6). Regardless of whether you have money or not, you have something you can give to the people around you. It may be as simple as giving a smile or listening to a friend that is down, but you like Peter have something to give.
- Charity is a means of worship. Litany of the Oblations is the only litany prayed on the Altar during Sunday Matins. The church emphasizes the importance of giving. Lent is considered one of the richest periods of wholehearted devotion demonstrated by practical offerings to the poor and the needy.
- In I Corinthians 16:2 St. Paul writes about the collection to help others and by doing so they will be blessed.
- Rewards of giving (strengthens your relationship with God as it's a means of worship, overcome Greed, investment for eternal life, forgiveness of sins, mercy on Judgment Day)
- To St. John Chrysostom Almsgiving is the queen of virtues: "almsgiving, our excellent counselor, the queen of virtues, who quickly raises human beings to the heavenly vaults." He also says, "Feeding the hungry is a greater work than raising the dead." - St. John Chrysostom
- "Whoever gives a hand to help his neighbor is helped by God's own hand." - St. Isaac the Syrian
- + What are some of the principles that should be applied when giving?
 - Giving should be cheerful, in secret, offer the best (first fruit) not the remains, giving God before self.
 - God looks at the depth not the amount.
 - "The Giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic His giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves." - St. Nicholas of Myra
 - "If money were common and available to all there would be no opportunity for generosity on the part of the rich and gratitude on the part of the poor." - St. John Chrysostom
 - "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." - 2 Corinthians 9:7
 - "Give something however small, to the one in need. For it is not small to the one who has nothing. Neither is it small to God, if we have given what we could." - St. Gregory of Nazianzus
 - "The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor." - St. Basil the Great
- + What are the consequences of not giving?
 - Prayers unanswered, lack of spiritual growth, stricter Judgment, lose out on blessings, lack of self-control
 - Luke 16:19-31 Story of the Rich man and Lazarus. The rich man was greedy. He worked toward an earthly life not toward eternal life. He did not realize his mistakes until it was too late to correct the wrong. He wanted earthly glory.
 - "He who gives to the poor will not lack, But he who hides his eyes will have many curses." (Proverbs 28:27)
 - It is considered as if we are robbing God. "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings." (Malachi 3:8). What happened when they robbed God? They came under God's chastening hand. God said, "You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, *Even* this whole nation." (Malachi 3:9)
 - Money does not provide that which matters most, which is life with Christ.
 - Discuss the heresy of Simon - Acts 8:14-24. Simon said "Give me this power also that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit. But St. Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!'" Matthew 8:19-20. Simon wanted to buy the gifts that the Apostles possessed. Not realizing that eternal life can't be bought but it is earned through faith and works.
- + What does giving the right way mean?
 - Trust in God
 - God will provide
 - "Almsgiving above all else requires money, but even this shines with a brighter luster when the alms are given from our poverty. The widow who paid in the two mites was poorer than any human, but she outdid them all." - St. John Chrysostom
 - "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" - Phil 1:21 St. Paul lived his life to serve Christ. His main goal is when he dies he wanted to have eternal life and be with Christ. He looked forward to his own death so he can enjoy eternal life.
 - Discuss how losing everything gains Christ and that by gaining Christ, we have everything. St. Anthony gave up all his wealth to live with Christ when he heard the reader in the church say "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have



treasure in Heaven; and come, follow me.” Matthew 19:21. It is better for a person to lose everything, which are nothing but material possessions. It is better to gain life with Christ.

- “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” - Matthew 6:33
- The story of St. Barsoum the Naked. His uncle took all his wealth after his parents died. He did not care about his earthly possessions. Instead he left and lived as a hermit like St. Paul.
- The story of St. Peter the worshiper. He was a tax collector. He was merciless, hence his nickname. One night he dreamed that he was on the judgment seat, which frightened him. When he woke up he was trembling and rebuked himself. From that moment on he left everything and went into the wilderness, became a monk and lived an ascetic life.



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Lesson 5.10: The Life 3 - Living in the Light VS. Living in Darkness

Building Block 5:
The Way, The Truth
and the Life



Objective

The Value of the Church in our lives (ecclesiology)

Application

Attend Church services more, follow the Church calendar and readings more, under the Church's stance on issues more as opposed to your own individual opinion.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 9:1-42](#), [John 8:12](#), [John 3:18](#), [Genesis 28:17](#), [1 Kings 8:27](#), [1 Timothy 3:15](#), [Ephesians 3:21](#), [Matthew 16:18](#), [Psalm 84:1-2,10](#), [Ephesians 5:25](#), [2 Chronicles 7:15-16](#), [Colossians 1:18](#), [Psalm 27:4](#), [Genesis 2:8](#), [Matthew 18:17](#), [John 9:1-42](#)



Liturgy: [3rd Hour Agpeya Litany](#); [Morning Doxology](#); [Sunday Theotokia \(Part B\)](#)



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



Story: [St. Demiana](#), [St. Mary of Egypt](#)



Theology Academy: [Moral Theology](#)



Other: On the Church by St. Cyprian; [The Church \(Arabic\)](#); [Icon of Heaven](#); [The Church is my Spirit and Life](#), HG Bishop Youssef; [Spiritual Death of Life](#), Fr. Daniel Habib; [The Church, Pillar of Truth \(Arabic\)](#), Fr. Daoud Lamej; [How do we love Church \(Arabic\)](#), HHPS3



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + What is living in the light?
 - God is first and foremost.
 - Living with Christ, continuous prayer, thanksgiving, Living in joy, Being happy, Being content, humble
 - Living in unity in the church.
 - Following God's commandments
 - Jesus said "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." John 8:12
- + What is living in darkness?
 - Unhappy, angry, ungrateful, complainer, full of hypocrisy
 - Deviating from God's commandments
 - Not relying on God
 - Jesus said "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God." John 3:18
- + What is Ecclesiology (study of churches)?
 - It is the study of the church's buildings and decorations.
 - Traditionally the Coptic church building is in the shape of a cross.

- The Coptic church is full of traditions, which goes back to Christ.
- The Coptic church is consistent. It did not change throughout the many generations.
- In the Coptic church the human senses are awakened; eyes (Altar, icons, candles), smell (incense), hearing (songs), taste (Eucharist)
- “Whenever we stand in Your holy sanctuary, we are considered standing in heaven.” - 3rd Hour Agpeya Litany

+ What are some of the definitions of Church in the Bible?

- A building, The body of Christ and Clergy
- Start with God placing humanity in Paradise to show that the Church is God dwelling with man in a place different than the rest of the world (ekklesia)
- Compare NT church with the Tabernacle and Heaven in the book of Revelation
 - The church can be anywhere. The Liturgy can be held anywhere. There was only one Tabernacle where the sacrifices can be offered.
 - In the NT Christ crucifixion is the only sacrifice needed for salvation. The OT sacrifices were continuous and temporary.
 - The NT church the altar is open and visible to the congregation. The Tabernacle altar is hidden from the people.
- Function of the Church (icon of Heaven)
 - The Coptic church is decorated with icons that remind the congregation of the joy of living with Christ.
 - It is a reminder of the sacrifices of its saints that without them the church would not be here today.
 - The icon of St. Demiana is an example. She was steadfast in the faith. She refused to live an earthly life. She chose to live and die for Christ. She defended the faith. Her icon depicts her humility and the crown of martyrdom, which she gladly received for the name of Christ.
 - “Hail to the Church, the house of Angels.” - Morning Doxology
- Church paves a road towards heaven, towards her bridegroom
 - “Through her prayers: and intercessions: O Lord open unto us: the gates of the Church. I entreat You: O Mother of God: keep the gates of the Church open to the faithful.” - Sunday Theotokia (Part 8)
 - “There is no salvation outside the Church.” - St. John Chrysostom
 - “Just as the will of God is an action and is called the world, so its intention is the salvation of men and is called the Church. The mother leads her little children and we seek for our mother the Church” - St. Clement of Alexandria

+ What are the components of the Orthodox Church?

- Oneness - One body and the head is Christ. Bring people closer to God.
- Holiness - (St. Mary of Egypt story when she couldn't get in due to her sins)
- Universal - serves everyone
- Apostolic (touch on succession) - Established by St. Mark
- Church of Joy - continuous and daily celebration
- Bride of Christ (where we find our salvation)
- “He cannot have God as his Father who does not have the Church as his mother.” - St. Cyprian
- “She watches over us for God, she seals her sons, to whom she has given birth, for the kingdom.” - St. Cyprian of Carthage

+ How to remain living in the light?

- Study and learn the word of God. Learn to recognize the false prophets
- Seek spiritual guidance from the father of confession
 - “What sacrifices do the imitators of the Priests believe that they themselves celebrate? Do they who are gathered together outside Christ's Church think that Christ is with them when they have thus gathered together?” - St. Cyprian of Carthage
- Give thanks continuously
 - “Seek therefore to come together more closely to give thanks to God and to glorify Him. For when you are each together closely the powers of Satan are cast down and his destructive power is brought low by your agreement in the faith.” - St. Ignatius of Antioch
- Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit within
 - “Bereft of the true knowledge of God and they did not have the light from God which is the illumination through the Spirit.” - St. Cyril of Alexandria



- Do not separate from the Church
 - “If someone outside Noah’s ark could escape, so could someone outside the Church.” - St. Cyprian
 - “Never separate yourself from the Church. For nothing is stronger than the Church. Your hope is the Church alone; your salvation is inside the Church only, your refuge is the Church.” - St. John Chrysostom

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 5:
The Way, The Truth
and the Life



Lesson 5.II: Trusting God - The Way, the Truth and The Life

Objective

Identify the obstacles preventing us from placing our full trust in God and identify the steps we must take in order to fully rely on Him.

Application

Seek persistence in prayer and bring God into presence in all moments. As a class, choose a psalm to memorize together to be recited several times a day in travel/breaks.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 12:4](#), [Genesis 21:5](#), [Proverbs 3:5-6](#), [Ecclesiastes 3:2-4](#), [Matthew 6:25](#), [Numbers 11:4-35](#), [Matthew 9:20-21](#), [Judges 4:6-22](#), [Romans 3:3-4](#), [Psalm 37:6](#), [Matthew 7:7](#), [1 John 5:14-15](#), [Matthew 6:33](#), [1 Corinthians 10:1-6](#), [1 John 5:14-15](#), [Psalm 37:1-11](#), [Matthew 7:7-11](#)



Liturgy: [“Oh Thou who does more than we ask or understand” St. Gregory Liturgy](#)



Patristics: [St. Marina the Nun](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Isaac the Syrian](#), [St. Paul the first hermit](#)



Story: [Woman who had been suffering from chronic bleeding for 12 years](#) [Matthew 9:20-21](#), [Deborah the prophetess](#)



Other: [Trust in God](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

- + What does it mean to trust God?
 - Choosing to face struggles with God.
 - Placing all the issues and tribulation in front of God.
 - Knowing that God will provide comfort and resolution.
 - Provide an example of putting trust in God when faced with a problem.
 - Abraham trusted God. He was 75 years old when he received the promise of a son from God (Genesis 12:4). He was 100 years old when Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5)
- + What are some of the obstacles that prevent someone from fully trusting God?
 - In daily life, it can be difficult to put our whole trust in God, but we must learn to do so and to identify the obstacles that stand in the way.
 - Sometimes a person may believe that they are capable of handling and controlling every situation. They may think they have a solution for every issue. They rely on their own strength not God's.
 - “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6
 - No one's life is without obstacles. There should be acceptance and welcoming of what life brings.
 - “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 kill, And a time to heal; 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;” (Ecclesiastes 3:2-4)
 - Yet not enough trust in God. Do we welcome all that life brings? Do we trust enough in God? Jesus said “Therefore I say to you do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?” Matthew 6:25

+ Were the children of Israel trusting in God to provide for them in the desert?

- No. The children of Israel complained continuously.
- The story of the Quail and the Plague (Numbers 11:4-35): The children of Israel forgot all the things that God did for them. He saved them from Pharaoh. Their clothes and sandals were not torn while in the desert. They complained about how much they ate when they were in bondage in Egypt. They complained about the manna that God sent to them from Heaven. They wanted meat. Their complaining angered God. Moses prayed and pleaded with God to give them meat to eat. God gave them quail. They gathered what they could and ate. "But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague." Numbers 11:33
- Contrast the faithfulness of God to the unfaithfulness of the Israelites and even Moses
 - God provided for both the Israelites' and Moses' needs (identify His providence in the story)
 - The source of Israel's unfaithfulness stemmed from envy of the Egyptians
- The example of the woman who had been suffering from chronic bleeding for 12 years. She trusted that by touching Christ she would be healed. "And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.'" Matthew 9:20-21.
- Deborah the prophetess courageously led her people into battle. She put her trust in God. She prophesied and told Barak that he will win the battle against Sisera. Barak asked her to accompany him into battle, she agreed because she trusted the Lord. Barak was victorious as the Lord said. (Judges 4:6-22)

+ Envy can get in the way of trusting in God. How can envy be conquered?

- Even when we are unfaithful, God is faithful and provides all things for us. "For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: 'That you may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when you are judged.'" (Romans 3:3-4)
- Envy is someone is a form of not trusting in God. One should know and believe that God's promise is real and true. God only provides the essentials and needs, not what is desired.
- The priest prays in the Liturgy of St. Gregory "O You Who does more than we ask or understand"
- "He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday." Psalm 37:6 Reasons why we should trust in God rather than envy others (sermon by HG Bishop Youssef)
 - God is faithful and will provide all things for us; envy is only for those things that are temporary.
 - God will vindicate us in the end, even if we suffer injustice on earth
 - St. Marina the Nun: St. Marina was falsely accused. She did not defend herself. She faced punishment which she did not deserve. She trusted in God. The truth of her innocence was revealed after her death.
- In order to trust in God, we must conquer the sin of envy.
 - Reading the Bible and learning the word of God will aid in conquering envy.
 - Envy is the work of the devil. The devil is always trying to steer the mind away from God and in trusting God.
 - Confession removes all the doubts from the mind, which are put there by the devil.
 - Learn self-control, self discipline, praying, fasting

+ What must one do to trust in God?

- Jesus said "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you find; knock and it will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7
- Ask through prayer and He will give us whatever we desire (1 John 5:14-15)
- "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" through a life of sacrifice and zeal for God "and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33)
- "At the door of Your compassion do I knock, Lord; send aid to my scattered impulses which are intoxicated with the multitude of the passions and the power of darkness. You can see my sores hidden within me: stir up contrition—though not corresponding to the weight of my sins, for if I receive full awareness of the extent of my sins, Lord, my soul would be consumed by the bitter pain from them." St. Isaac the Syrian
- "Knock" by being persistent in these things (quote by St. John Chrysostom)
- God would provide half a loaf of bread daily to St. Paul the first Hermit until the day St. Anthony visited him then He provided a full loaf. St. Paul the first hermit



- “Pray every minute of the day, and be neither fainthearted nor lazy in asking for God’s love toward mankind... Cease saying, ‘I prayed for many things and was not heard.’ For even this occurs often to your advantage. Since He realizes that you lose heart and are indolent, and that when you attain your need you depart and no longer pray, God protects you with the pretext of need so that you may converse with Him more closely and devote yourself to prayer... Therefore, God does this for your benefit, wanting you not to abandon prayer.” - St. John Chrysostom, *On Repentance and Almsgiving*



Building Block 6: Independence with God



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 6:
Independence with
God

Lesson 6.1: Spiritual Disciple

Objective

To understand the necessity of Orthodox Discipleship and the proper way it should be practiced.

Application

Begin to practice the life of discipleship and understand I cannot be truly called a Chrisitan without it by first starting with my Father of Confession.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 9:57-62](#), [1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#), [Luke 14:25-35](#), [Isaiah 50:4](#), [John 8:31](#), [2 Timothy 2:1-2](#), [John 13:34-35](#), [Matthew 28:19-20](#), [Deuteronomy 32:8](#), [Ecclesiastes 4:9-10](#), [John 8:31](#), [John 13:3](#)



Liturgy: [Basil Reconciliation Prayer](#), [Commemoration of the saints](#)



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



Story: [Elijah and Elisha](#), [Abba Paul of Tammoh and Ezekiel](#), [St. Shenouda the Archimandrite and Abba Besa](#), [St. Pachomius and St. Theodore his disciple](#)



Other: [Discipleship HHPSS](#); [Effective Discipleship](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#), [Discipleship](#), [HH Pope Tawadrous \(Arabic\)](#), [Elisha's Discipleship](#), [Fr. Daoud Lamei \(Arabic\)](#), [Orthodox Discipleship](#), [Fr. Daoud Lamei](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ History of man and discipleship

- The Fall and Adam and Eve depicts mankind following Satan instead of God's commandments.
- "She considers the devil more trustworthy than God, although God had proved His good will through His deeds." - St. John Chrysostom
- "When we disobeyed your commandment by the deception of the Serpent." - Basil Reconciliation Prayer
- Christ's incarnation showed the importance of following Christ and denying oneself - Jesus lists the necessary conditions of discipleship. "...If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple... So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:25-35). Christ was emphasizing the importance of leaving the world behind and being a servant of Christ.
- Consider discussing: Would you characterize all your decisions as either following God, or not? Even minor decisions such as what you eat, when you sleep? If I knew God wanted me to do something before I sleep, would I control my desire for sleep inorder to achieve it? Do I even ask Him whether He desires anything before I choose to sleep? How do I even distinguish such knowledge?
- Christ commanded the disciples to make disciples of their own and pass down the faith. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the ages." Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20)

+ What is the difference between student, pupil and disciple? (HG Bishop Youssef Sermon)

- They are different ways of learning. Elementary school kids are called pupils. Middle school and high school are called students. The followers of teachers like Christ and saints are disciples.
- Pupil is receiving the information passively without studying. They are fed the information.
- Student comes from the word study. They research and learn by studying.



- Disciple learns by discipline. They imitate the teacher. The apostles listened as pupils. Then Christ sent them out on their own and brought back a report. Christ disciplined them. As they were disciplined they became disciples.
 - How can we be disciples? (Luke 9:57-62) By being disciplined and not giving excuses. Reading books, broadening our knowledge.
 - What do we disciple? (nature, Father of confession, books - HHPS III book)
 - Learn from nature. There is order which holds together the sun, moon, earth.
 - Learn from animals. They only take what they need. They don't store away anything.
 - Learn from the church fathers. Observing their work, demeanor. How they speak, how they listen and deal with others.
- + What are some examples of the Saints who disciplined and were disciples?
- Elijah and Elisha his disciple. Elisha left everything and followed Elijah. Elisha would not leave Elijah's side. He witnessed him taken up into heaven. 2 Kings 2:9-11
 - Abba Paul of Tammoh and Ezekiel his disciple. Abba Paul was known for his fasting and worship. Ezekiel was a witness of his virtues.
 - St. Shenouda the Archimandrite and Abba Besa (Wisa) his faithful disciple. Abba Wisa wrote the biography of St. Shenouda.
 - St. Pachomius and St. Theodore his disciple. When St. Pachomius departed, St. Tadros replaced him. He was a good example of meekness and patience.
- + Who are we disciples of?
- We are disciples of Christ.
 - Some have Saint(s) who are their intercessor.
 - Our whole life should be a life of discipleship to Christ and his leaders (Church, Early Church Fathers, Spiritual Guides, Scripture, etc..)
 - Knowledge is power. By learning the truth one will not be led astray.
 - Carefulness in who we follow, what we listen to, what we see.
 - Being misled: People who followed the council of Nicea and Athanasius vs. those who followed a man, like Arius.
- + Being a disciple according to Scripture
- According to Scripture, being a Christian disciple involves personal growth characterized by the following:
 - 1. Putting Jesus first in all things (Mark 8:34-38). The disciple of Christ needs to be set apart from the world. Our focus should be on our Lord and pleasing Him in every area of our lives. We must put off self-centeredness and put on Christ-centeredness.
 - 2. Following Jesus' teachings (John 8:31-32). We must be obedient and doers of the Word. Obedience is the supreme test of faith in God (1 Samuel 28:18), and Jesus is the perfect example of obedience as He lived a life on earth of complete obedience to the Father even to the point of death (Philippians 2:6-8)
 - 3. Fruitfulness (John 15:5-8). Our job is to abide in Christ, and if we do, the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit, and this fruit is the result of our obedience. As we become more obedient to the Lord and learn to walk in His ways, our lives will change. The biggest change will take place in our hearts, and the overflow of this will be new conduct (thoughts, words, and actions) representative of that change. The change we seek is done from the inside out, through the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - 4. Love for other disciples (John 13:34-35). We are told that love of other believers is the evidence of our being a member of God's family (1 John 3:10).
 - 5. Evangelism - Making disciples of others (Matthew 28:18-20). We are to share our faith and tell nonbelievers the good news.
- + Benefits of Discipleship
- Discipleship should be a way of life. Converting what the teacher says into the principle of life.
 - Learning virtues, such as patience, calmness, obedience, respect, listen, silence, focus
 - "Being a disciple of the Lord needs steadfastness upon the way, with no turning back. It requires that a person be ready to endure for the sake of the Lord and His ministry, and that he should work hard for that purpose." HHP Shenouda III
 - Re-Summarize of being misled just like Adam and Eve (or Arians, or any heretic follower), history of discipleship is there to keep us led in the right direction. Anything, anyone who deviates us from Christ, is indoctrinating and mentoring us in the improper discipleship.
 - Choosing the proper avenue of discipleship protects us from such deviation.
 - Guidance of a spiritual father. He listens, gives guidance, teaches, prays, paves spiritual roads to salvation.
 - "When a new brother is allowed to join a group of monks, he is made the disciple of a spiritual father who disciplines ten monks teaching and training them. All the spiritual father's attention is focused on those in his charge and his concern is to lift them onto exceedingly high



mount of perfection, teaching them how to overcome their desires'. " - St. John Cassian

- "Our father Abba Paul of Tammoh and Ezekiel his disciple." - Commemoration of the Saints
- "Our father Abba Shenouda the archimandrite and Abba Besa his disciple." - Commemoration of the Saints
- "Our father Abba Pachom of the Koinonia and Theodore his disciple." - Commemoration of the Saints - humility - always learning "



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 6:
Independence with God

Lesson 6.2: Our Gifts and Talents

Objective

To recognize what Gifts we have received from the Holy Spirit and use these gifts for the benefit of the Church.

Application

Recognize our gifts knowing that everyone has at least one gift and use them for the edification of the Church knowing that God gave them to us so we should be humble.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 25:14-30](#), [1 Corinthians 12:4-11](#), [Romans 12:3-8](#), [Ephesians 4:7-16](#), [1 Peter 4:10-11](#), [2 Corinthians 13:14](#), [John 16:7](#), [Matthew 7:22-23](#), [1 Corinthians 13:1-3](#), [Genesis 11:1-9](#), [Isaiah 11:2](#), [1 Corinthians 14](#), [Galatians 5:22-23](#), [1 Corinthians 12:14](#)



Liturgy: [Concluding Benediction](#), [3rd Hour Litany](#)



Patristics: [St. John Chrysostom](#), [Tertullian the Scholar](#), [St. Cyril of Jerusalem](#), [St. Didymus the Blind](#), [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#),



Story: [Tower of Babel](#); [St. John the Baptist](#), [St. Athanasius](#), [St. Pope Kyrillos 6th](#), [St. Demetrius the Vinedresser](#)



Other: [Gifts of the Holy Spirit](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#), [Gift of the Holy Spirit](#), [Fr. Tadros Malaty](#), [Gifts of Fulfillment of the Holy Spirit](#), [Fr. Daoud Lamei \(Arabic\)](#), [From the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, HHPS3 \(Arabic\)](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What are talents?

Consider reading Matthew 25:14-30 and have the following discussion: What is the moral of parable? (use them or lose them) Are you ever afraid to use your talents? Why? Is it an option for Christians not to use their God-given talents? What are some good examples of how you or others use their talents? Are some people more talented than others? Does it matter?

- They are gifts given to us from God, such as the ability to teach, serve, caregiver, leader, singing... What are some other talents?
- The talents given by God are to be used for the glory of God. For example:
 - Teach the word of God and stand for the truth, like St. Athanasius defender of the faith.
 - Serve in the church and the needy, like St. Pope Kyrillos 6th served the church wholeheartedly.
 - Caregiver for someone in need.
 - Lead others to God, like St. John the Baptist was a great leader.
 - Singing: teach praises and hymns.
- St. Demetrius the Vinedresser used his talent to determine the date to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

+ What are some examples of someone believing that talents are their own and not from God?

- All the people of the earth had one language. They decided to build a city and a tower, Tower of Babel, that would reach the heavens and as a monument to their own greatness-to make a name for themselves rather than obeying God's commandment. They made the decision without God. This angered the Lord. "And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." Genesis 11: 6-7
- This is how the name the Tower of Babel came about. Men trying to accomplish great work without God.
- They got together and used their talents wrongly.
- Once reconciliation occurred between God and man through the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension the Holy Spirit was granted back to

humanity.

- "He could not come because the curse had not yet been taken away, sin had not yet been forgiven, and everything was still subject to the penalty for it. It is necessary then, Jesus says, that the enmity be put away, that we be reconciled to God and then receive that gift." - St. John Chrysostom
- "He receives again that Spirit of God which he had then first received from His divine inspiration but had afterward lost through sin." - Tertullian the Scholar

+ The Gift of the Holy Spirit

- God gives us all many gifts through the Holy Spirit indwelling in us in Chrismation.
- "It is no longer ordinary oil but the gift of Christ, and by the presence of His divinity it becomes the instrument through which we receive the Holy Spirit. By this anointing we have entered into fellowship with Christ and have received a share in His life. The Holy Spirit gives us a new divine life." - St. Cyril of Jerusalem
- The gift enables us to work with Him, as contrasted by the tower of Babel.

+ What is the difference between spiritual gifts, talents, and fruit of the Spirit?

- Spiritual gifts are not the same as natural talents
- Every human being—Christian and non-Christian alike—is created in God's own image, and, by virtue of being created in God's own image, we are born with natural talents
- But the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, giving, mercy, wisdom, faith, healing, and others that are listed in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28, are different from the natural talents we are born with.
- Gifts are to edify and to build. Worldly talents are to promote oneself.
- The fruit of the Spirit are virtues that are developed. It requires dedication, hard work and discipline. St. Paul wrote in Galatians 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), kindness, goodness (generosity), faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."
- Spiritual gifts are powerful for the building up of the Kingdom of God. But they can lose their effectiveness if we neglect to grow in the fruit of the Spirit, In Galatians 5:22-23
- "There is no way a person can attain any of God's gracious gifts unless he attains the Holy Spirit who has all God's gifts." - St. Didymus the Blind

+ What is the purpose of the gift?

- Our talents complement one another for the unity of the body of Christ.
- St. Paul wrote "For in fact the body is not one member but many." 1 Cor 12: 14
- Church's need for ALL the various gifts. When everyone's talents are combined (united), the church grows. All talents complement each other. No matter how minute the talent is, it is needed. The church relies on everyone to do God's work.
- Purpose of the gift is to edify the Body. It builds the body spiritually, morally, emotionally and intellectually by engaging with members of the body of Christ.
- "God does not give these great gifts to everyone but he gives small gifts to some while not giving them to others. He uses this to build much harmony and love between people so they feel need for each other and to try to get closer to one another." - St. John Chrysostom
- Never be prideful about your gifts as they are from God.
- "Even if the gift bestowed on you is less than the gift bestowed on someone else, the Giver is the same, and therefore you have equal honor with him. It is the same Fountain from which you draw refreshment." - St. John Chrysostom
- "You especially should be humbled because you have been trusted with more abundant gifts because God, having passed by others, noticed you." - St. John Chrysostom
- There is a critical importance of giving back to God through tithing and service. By giving back we receive blessings. We obtain satisfaction. There is a sense of belonging and happiness. We get back ten folds. One of the greatest gifts God gives all of us is time "God wants your availability more than your ability".
- You can have all these gifts, but if you have no love in them, then they are meaningless. It is for this purpose 1 Cor 13, is between the 2 chapters on talents and gifts. St. Paul wrote that without love I am nothing. I can have a lot of talents and gifts but without Love I am nothing. St. Paul wanted to emphasize the importance of love. Because of love, Christ was incarnated, beaten, scourged, crucified and died on the cross for our salvation.



+ How to discover our talents and gifts to serve Him?

- Ask yourself: What do you enjoy doing? What activities do you gravitate towards when you have free time? What character traits are you complimented on? What volunteer opportunities do you find yourself interested in and make you feel good about doing? What activities or responsibilities do you find unenjoyable?
- Sometimes God sends a messenger to open up our eyes to our talents. Listen and observe what someone might say or ask. Through trial and error eventually the talents are discovered. One must pursue and not be discouraged. It does take time. Always pray and ask for guidance. Eventually you will be shown.
- “O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is present in all places and fills all, the treasury of good things and the Life Giver, graciously come, and dwell in us and purify us from all defilement, O Good One, and save our souls.” - 3rd Hour litany

+ The parable of the Talents, Revisited

- A man gave his servants talents based on their ability. Two of them doubled their talents and one was lazy. He did not even try to do the work. He was selfish and did not want to produce. Matthew 25:14-30
- How God will judge us in the end for our lack of use of the gifts. Jesus said “When the Son of man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” Mathew 25:31-32
- When we use our talents in the name of God we are doing His will.
- Doesn't matter how many gifts you have, it's how you use them that matters and counts.
- “The Holy Spirit shall transform you and change the elements of your mind into willingness and an ability to despise the types of the Law, and rather to prefer the beauty of the spiritual service, and to honor the reality more than the shadow; then, He says, you will surely be able readily to understand the things concerning Me.” - St. Cyril of Alexandria
- “The Spirit illuminates those who have been cleansed from every stain and makes them spiritual by means of communion with Himself. The greatest sign of the Spirit's union with the Father and the Son is that He is said to be related to God as our spirit is to each of us.” - St. Basil

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 6: Independence with God



Lesson 6.3: Children of God

Objective

To understand that through the Mystery of Baptism we become Children of God

Application

Become a son of truth. Enact this objective by picking a spiritual book and reading it with the goal of discovering Him. Propose a Book such as "Jesus: A Dialogue with the Savior"

References and Resources



Scripture: [Genesis 3](#), [Titus 3:4-6](#), [Mark 16:16](#), [Ephesians 4:5](#), [1 Peter 3:20-21](#), [Romans 6:4-6](#), [23](#), [8:14-17](#), [Colossians 2:11-12](#), [Acts 2:38](#), [John 1:12-13](#), [3:1-7](#), [Luke 15:11-32](#), [1 John 3:1-2](#), [John 1:12](#), [Matthew 3:17](#), [7:9](#), [Matthew 22:36-28](#)



Liturgy: [St. Basil Anaphora](#), [Baptismal Prayer](#), [Lent Gospel Response](#), [1st Sunday of Toubra](#)



Patristics: [St. Athanasius](#), [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#), [St. Gregory of Nyssa](#), [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#), [St. Severus the Antioch](#), [St. Augustine](#)



Story: [St. Paul the 1st Hermit and half a loaf daily](#)



Other: [The Children of God](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#), [The True Bridegroom](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Created with Purpose

- We were created to be children of God and live in Joy and eternity with God "Who formed us, created us, and placed us in the Paradise of joy." - St. Basil Anaphora
- "He set them in His own paradise, and laid upon them a single prohibition. If they guarded the grace and retained the loveliness of their original innocence, then the life of paradise should be theirs, without sorrow, pain or care, and after it the assurance of immortality in heaven." - St. Athanasius
- Through the Fall and our expulsion from Paradise in Genesis 3, Man was expelled from Paradise because of Adam and Eve's sin. Ever since that moment the human race has been striving to go back to paradise and earn eternal life.
- Because of God's love, He sent His only begotten son Jesus Christ who was incarnated, crucified, died and rose from the dead to open for us the gates of heaven. So we can be with Him.

+ Christ's Birth from a Virgin by the Spirit (allows us to be reborn from the Holy Spirit)

- 2nd Adam who started another race of humanity in a spiritual way.
- Only Begotten Son of God (important because when we unite with Him then we can become adopted children of God as well.)
- Christ's Baptism in the Jordan instituted the Mystery of Baptism for us. "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. ""Matthew. 3:17
- "The holy Virgin did not bear from the emission of man's seed. What was the reason for this? Christ, Who is the first-fruits of all, the second Adam according to the Scriptures, was born of the Spirit, that he might transmit the grace of the spiritual birth to us also: for we too were intended, no longer to bear the name of sons of men, but of God rather, having obtained the new birth of Spirit in Christ first." - St. Cyril of Alexandria

+ What is rebirth?

- We are all born again in Christ in baptism.



- Christ and Nicodemus (John 3), Nicodemus believed Jesus was from God. But his faith was still weak, as he was afraid of his peers and so he came seeking Jesus by night. "Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you 'You must be born again.'" John 3:5-7
- "Baptism is a womb and tomb." - St. Cyril of Jerusalem
- "He granted us the birth from on high through water and Spirit." - St. Basil Anaphora
- Reconciling with God through confession, repentance and obeying God's commandments.
- One of the lawyers was testing Jesus asked "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" Matthew 22:36-38
- Through baptism and chrismation we were able to receive the Spirit and be sons of God again.
- "Those who shall be baptized therein may take off the old man that is corruptible according to the deceitful lusts and put on the new man which is renewed once again after the image of His Creator." - Baptismal Prayer
- + Salvation only comes by being a son of God
 - Jesus is the Bridegroom and only heir of the Father. When we unite with the Groom we become co-heirs.
 - "The Word of God has descended from heaven to become a Bridegroom of human nature. He took it as His dwelling place. He engaged it to humanity in order to lead it to Him." – St. Cyril of Alexandria
 - Inherit eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - "Fill them with the power of Your Holy Spirit unto oneness and union with Your Only-Begotten Son; that they be no more sons of the flesh but sons of the truth...May they be sons of Your heavenly bridal chamber and heirs of Your incorruptible and eternal kingdom." - Baptism Prayer
 - Let us then become sons of truth. Seek to know Him through spiritual readings. "know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- + Lent is all about the Journey into the Father's Bosom
 - When we fast and pray the main focus is on God. Getting closer to God. The body and mind is on Christ and what He endured for our salvation.
 - The Sunday Gospel readings are aligned by the church to help us live that journey.
 - St. Paul the hermit fasted every day of his life. God provided food for him daily. He spent his life in prayer. His focus was on God.
 - Now as we grow to recognize our sonship we must learn to live like children of God
 - "My beloved let us reflect on whose children we are. Let us walk worthy of being children to such a Great Father. See how He lowered Himself to become our Father! We have our Father in heaven, so let us heed to abide worthy of such an adoption so we may get the inheritance." - St. Augustine
 - "Someone who is born of God retains the grace of his new birth; he cannot sin in the way he behaves. And the reason for this is that God's seed dwells in him. What is this seed of God, which dwells in believers? What else but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by which we have been born again? These presences never leave us." - St. Severus the Antioch
 - Must have faith that if God is our Father He will provide for all our needs.
 - "My beloved let us reflect on whose children we are. Let us walk worthy of being children to such a Great Father. See how He lowered Himself to become our Father! We have our Father in heaven, so let us heed to abide worthy of such an adoption so we may get the inheritance." - St. Augustine



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 6:
Independence with
God

Lesson 6.4: The Beatitudes

Objective

To understand Jesus' teachings of how to behave with the world. It is the Constitution of Christianity

Application

The Beatitudes are the way we are to live right now, in our own world, wherever your world happens to be focused. And you know what? They work. And you know why? Because the Lord would never set down standards for us without giving us the way to make them work. Pick 8 aspects and try to apply them this week.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 5:1-11](#), [John 18:37](#), [Matthew 7:29](#), [Luke 19:48](#), [Luke 6:20-23](#), [Luke 6:24-26](#), [Luke 18:9-14](#)



Liturgy: [6th Hour Prayer](#)



Patristics: [St. Athanasius](#), [St. Augustine](#), [St. Ambrose of Milan](#), [Jerome](#), [Hilary of Poitiers](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Augustine of Hippo](#), [St. Augustine of Hippo](#), [St. Augustine of Hippo](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Philaret of Moscow](#)



Story: [St. Moses the Black](#), [St. Macarius the Great](#)



Other: [The 8 Beatitudes](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#), [Sermon on the Mount](#), [HHPS3](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Christ came to teach us as one of the main goals of His incarnation

Consider having this discussion: What are the first things you think of when you hear the word "power?" What is a meek person? What do you think it means to "mourn?" Who do you think of when you think of someone who's righteous? Why? What was Jesus trying to get through to us in these verses? What groundwork was He building for us? What did He mean by giving us these impossible standards?

- "The Christ has come, and has enlightened all men everywhere, and given them the true and divine teaching about His Father." - St. Athanasius
- "Was incarnate and became man, and taught us the ways of salvation." - St. Basil Anaphora
- As HHPS3 illustrates the power of the mountain, "It was fitting that these heavenly words should be delivered from the top of a high mountain in order that the audience, during their ascent, might elevate their souls to the standard with which they would be able to understand such instructions. Undoubtedly, he who sits on a mountain sees the things on earth as very small and tiny."
- "On this occasion, Jesus opened His own mouth because, on past occasions He used to open the mouth of the prophets in order that they might speak to the people." - St. Augustine
- The word Beatitude comes from the Latin beatitudo, meaning blessedness. The blessedness of those who have certain qualities or experiences peculiar to those belonging to the Kingdom of Heaven. The phrase "blessed are" in each beatitude implies a current state of happiness or well-being. This expression held a powerful meaning of "divine joy and perfect happiness". Matthew 5:1-11
- The church put the beatitudes Gospel according to St. Matthew 5:1-16 at the 6th hour of the Agpeya prayer, which is the hour of the crucifixion of Christ, to remind us that Christ died for our salvation so we can enter the kingdom of heaven and of the blessedness we have been granted.

+ Overview of each Beatitudes as a constitution and guide

- These teachings seem almost upside-down at times. It's a study in contrasts - the poor inheriting the kingdom of heaven, the meek inheriting the earth, being merciful and pure in heart, seeking peace --all seeming to go against what the world values today. But these standards aren't just theories or suggestions. These studies of the Beatitudes will get us thinking about values and the Lord's part in how we choose our values.
- "He unveils the heavenly mystery by which it pleased God to reveal His grace, rather to the little ones than the wise of the world." - St.



Ambrose of Milan

- 1) POOR IN SPIRIT: "Poor in spirit is the first in order and both author and generation of virtues because he who despises the worldly will deserve the eternal. Nor can anyone who is possessed by desire for the world, lacking the ability to break clear, acquire the merit of the Heavenly Kingdom." - St. Ambrose of Milan
- Poor in spirit is he who has spiritual virtues in their life, who realizes they need Jesus in their life and can't do it by oneself. That person is not arrogant unlike the Pharisee while praying thinking to himself that he is better than the tax collector. Luke 18:9-14
- 2) THOSE WHO MOURN: "The mourning discussed here does not concern the common natural law of the dead but rather their sins and vices. Thus Samuel grieved over Saul, and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel. Also Paul the apostle says that he wept and mourned over those who, after committing fornication and impure deeds, did not feel the need of repentance." - Jerome
- Did the Lord Jesus ever mourn? When? Why?

Name a time when you've felt the most sorrow. How did it get better? What do you think it means to be comforted? Have you ever comforted anyone? How? Why does the Lord Jesus teach that those who mourn are blessed because they'll be comforted? What does he mean?

- 3) MEEK: Free from human ambition - The Lord taught by way of example that the glory of human ambition must be left behind when he said, "The Lord your God shall you adore and him only shall you serve." And when he announced through the prophets that he would choose a people humble and in awe of his words,⁶ he introduced the perfect Beatitude as humility of spirit. Therefore he defines those who are inspired as people aware that they are in possession of the heavenly kingdom. - Hilary of Poitiers
- To be meek is to be humbled for God, someone who realizes their sins and overcomes them. Not prideful. They will inherit the earth because they will be loved.

Think of the meekest person you know. What makes them so meek? Was the Lord Jesus meek? When? How? Why should we want to be meek? Doesn't that mean we have to be weak? How can we best be meek for the Lord?

- 4) HUNGER AND THIRST: hungry and thirsty for the righteousness of God. filled with spiritual ambition - "Note how drastically he expresses it. For Jesus does not say, "Blessed are those who cling to righteousness," but "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness"—not in a superficial way but pursuing it with their entire desire. By contrast, the most characteristic feature of covetousness is a strong desire with which we are not so hungry for food and drink as for more and more things. Jesus urged us to transfer this desire to a new object, freedom from covetousness." - St. John Chrysostom

How can we be righteous? Can we do it on our own? Why not? How can we make this work in our lives every day? Why would we want to obey the Lord in this verse?

- 5) MERCIFUL: "As you treat your beggar, so will God treat his. You who are empty are being filled. Out of your fullness fill an empty person in need, so that your own emptiness may be again filled by the fullness of God." - St. Augustine
- When we experience the mercy of God we become merciful to others. Like St. Moses the Black who tasted the mercy of God, he refused to judge one of the monks. He was looking at the magnitude of his own sins so that he couldn't judge anyone.
- Does merciful mean to show mercy to everyone?
- 6) PURE IN HEART: "It refers to those who have been made clean within, for they shall see God. To behold God is the end and purpose of all our loving activity. But it is the end by which we are to be perfected, not the end by which we come to nothing. Note that food is finished in a different way than a garment is finished. Food is finished when it is consumed in the eating. A garment is finished when it is completed in the weaving. Both are finished, but the former's finish means destruction; the latter's, perfection. Whatever we do, whatever good deeds we perform, whatever we strive to accomplish, whatever we laudably yearn for, whatever we blamelessly desire, we shall no longer be seeking any of those things when we reach the vision of God. 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." - St. Augustine
- Pure in heart is forgiving others. With this purity we can see (experience) God in our life.
- All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23) so how can we be pure in heart? How can we see God?
- 7) PEACEMAKERS: "There is in the inner person a kind of daily quarrel; a praiseworthy battle acts to keep what is better from being overcome by what is worse. The struggle is to keep desire from conquering the mind and to keep lust from conquering wisdom. This is the steadfast peace that you ought to develop in yourself, that what is better in you may be in charge of what is worse. The better part in you, moreover, is that part in which God's image is found. This is called the mind, the intellect." - St. Augustine
- God is the king of peace. We become peacemakers and reconcile people with God. Taste and see that the Lord is good.
- 8) PERSECUTION: But to keep you from supposing that being slandered of itself makes people blessed, he has added two qualifications: first, that it happens for Christ's sake, and second, that what is said be false. Do not expect to be blessed if you are being reviled for something



evil, and what is being said is true.” - St. John Chrysostom

- Persecution is not shaken by Satan's evil. Accept the persecution for righteousness sake.

+ Living in Blessedness: The Beatitudes

- St. Macarius the Great tasted and saw the goodness of God. When he was accused of fathering a child, he did not defend himself but relied on God's mercy to reveal the truth, which He did. He defended the faith. He was humble. Satan couldn't overcome his humbleness until his last breath.
- “Every Christian should find for himself the imperative and incentive to become holy. If you live without struggle and without hope of becoming holy, then you are Christians only in name and not in essence. But without holiness, no one shall see the Lord, that is to say they will not attain eternal blessedness. It is a trustworthy saying that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners”. St. Philaret of Moscow

+ How can we summarize the Beatitudes?

- The 8 Beatitudes are steps in our journey toward the kingdom of Heaven
- 1) discover and realize the poverty of one's spirit
- 2) develop Godly sorrow
- 3) humble oneself for God
- 4) be hungry and thirsty seek for righteousness, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness
- 5) be merciful if asking God to be merciful and forgive one's sins be merciful toward others
- 6) then you will develop a pure heart, you will be able to see God
- 7) and you will preach peace between God and people, you will be peacemaker a true son of God
- 8) when Satan persecutes you for righteousness sake you will be exceedingly glad this will be your reward in Heaven.



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 6:
Independence with
God

Lesson 6.5: Life of Sanctification

Objective

To understand how to pursue and live a life of sanctification

Application

Live my life as a Temple of God. Start with sanctifying certain times of your day to be specifically dedicated to the Lord; ideally the first 10 min, 30 min or an hour) with the goal in mind that the whole day and your whole life becomes His. How about you set the goal to sanctify your music choices? Download apps that have the agepeya readily available to listen to. Sanctify your pass-time with listening to sermons instead of scrolling on social media.

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 Thessalonians 4](#); [Ephesians 1:4, 5:25-27](#); [Hebrews 12:14](#); [Romans 6:19-22](#); [2 Peter 1](#); [Philippians 3:13-14](#); [1 Corinthians 6:13](#)



Liturgy: [Confirmation](#).



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



Story: [St. Mary of Egypt](#).



Other: [Bishop Youssef Bible Study](#); [Purity](#); [Sanctify My Life](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Sanctification:

Consider having this discussion: What is sanctification? How can it be experienced? Is Sanctification a one-time gift or an on-going process? Read Ephesians 1:4, 5:25-27, and Hebrews 12:14. What is God's purpose for all His people and for the church? Holiness means setting apart someone or something for God. God created us to be holy as He is holy. He calls us to live holy lives; and the life of holiness has always been a part of His divine plan for our salvation. Sanctification has always been associated with the specific operations of the Holy Spirit since the time of the Church Fathers

- This term simply means "being set apart" to God. The Holy Books of 1 Peter chapter 1, Romans 6:22, Romans 15:16 are Holy Scriptures which address this term specifically. Sanctification is a process of growth in the Lord Jesus Christ in which the believer is made holy, as God is Holy, through the Holy Spirit.
- In sanctification, the Holy Spirit "works in you, both to will and to work" according to God's purpose, enabling His people to fulfill their new, godly desires (Phil. 2:12, 13). Christians become increasingly Christlike, as the moral profile of Jesus (the "fruit of the Spirit") is progressively formed in them (2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; 5:22-25).
- Sanctification is an ongoing process, dependent on God's continuing action in the believer, and consisting of the believer's continuous struggle against sin. God's method of sanctification is human effort dependent on God (2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 3:10-14; Heb. 12:14).
- Our sanctification is accomplished by faith (Heb. 11:6) through the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Thess. 2:13, 1 Pet. 1:2).

+ Pursuing Holiness/Sanctification

- Holiness is the **precondition** for enjoying the happiness of fellowship with God.
- St. Paul writes, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord *is* the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit." (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)
- He commands Christians to "present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness." (Rom 6:19). Because believers have been set free from their slavery to sin, "you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." (Rom 6:22).
- When the Holy Spirit has filled our hearts, we will no doubt be active for God. But too often we forget that it is God who sanctifies us and who will finish the good work that He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6).
- Holiness is both God's gift and His command. Hence we should pray for it and seek to manifest it daily. Holiness is the fruit of the Spirit

displayed in our lives as we walk by the Spirit with Christ every day (Gal. 5:16, 22, 25).

- There is a battle going on in every believer. The tension we all face stems from the fact that sin dwells in us (Rom. 7:20). The apostle Paul knew about this battle when he declared toward the end of his life: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing / do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14)

+ The Struggle of Holiness & The Holy Temple of God:

The question may be asked: What about the natural instincts of the body that it is created with? Faith and life in Christ do not negate the reality that we are in the flesh. They do not negate the natural instincts, but sanctify, purify, and raise them up to Heaven. “The body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” (1 Cor. 6:13). Therefore, my Christian faith causes me to look at my body as something that is precious, holy, and valuable. It is a vessel of the Holy Spirit and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

- We must not submit to the lusts of the flesh that bring the body down to the dust “for if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Romans 8:13).
- Saint Macarius the Great placed the matter in a simple, living, and practical way. He said, “The soul (mind) is between the body and the spirit. When the soul is aligned to the spirit, the body submits because the mind has become spiritual. But, if the mind aligns itself to the body, it will bring the spirit down because it will become a fleshly and lustful mind.”
- The matter, then, is dependent on occupying the mind with what is of the spirit. “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).
- Constantly occupy yourself with the spiritual.
- Force your mind to dwell on holy matters through reading a lot and meditating deeply on what you read. Increase your reading of the lives of the pure saints and emulate their faith.

+ The Work of the Holy Spirit

Who is the Holy Spirit? How is He described? What is His role? (Helper, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, guiding us into all truth) Which of the major feasts celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit? (Pentecost)

- “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 the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4
- Now that we have the Holy Spirit we should live a sanctified life as a Temple of God. Routinely go to confession. Attend Liturgy and receive the Holy Eucharist. Pray in the morning and before going to bed. Read the Holy Bible and approved spiritual books. Choose friends with the same values.
- In the liturgy, the priest prays, The Holy for the Holies, ..., The sanctification is by the Holy Spirit”. We are called to be holy in order to partake, the priest then reminds us, the sanctification is by the Holy Spirit.
- We are sanctified: sanctification is the outcome and inseparable consequence of being born again through baptism and Chrismation. When we are born again, we are made a new creature, we receive a new nature and a new principle, and always live a new life.
- Sanctification is absolutely necessary, in order to prepare us for heaven. It is the only certain evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- God’s purpose in our sanctification is to transform us more and more into the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29)
- St. Mary of Egypt was a harlot. She repented and went to live in the desert. She suffered from cold, heat, hunger, thirst, temptations, longing for company and comfort; and yet her determination to live out her repentance in a manner suitable to her sins. She had attained a degree of sanctity.
- Because of this free gift of grace that we have through baptism and chrismation – The Holy Spirit is able to lead us to the knowledge of our Lord and Savior. We can choose to abide in Him daily. As we grow in that knowledge, we start to replace what is of this world with what is of God. From the music, movies, social media that we intake to the places, the people and activities we choose to be a part of. “For this is the will of God, your sanctification:” 1 Thessalonians 4:3



- In addition to empowering us by his Spirit, God has given us other tools to grow in our sanctification: Reading and studying scripture enables us to better understand who God is, what He has done for us, and how He calls us to live.
- “Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, maybe holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I may love what is holy. Strengthen me O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy.”
 - St. Augustine



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 6:
Independence with
God

Lesson 6.6: Life of Purity

Objective

To understand the significance of the mystery of repentance and confession and the need to continually cleanse ourselves.

Application

Schedule a monthly meeting with your father of confession and practice this Mystery often

References and Resources



Scripture: [1 John 1:9](#), [John 20:22-23](#), [Acts 19:18](#), [Joshua 7](#), [James 5:14-16](#), [Proverbs 28:13](#), [Sirach 4:31](#), [Matthew 18:18](#), [Genesis 3:1-5,24](#), [Luke 15:11-32](#), [Song of Solomon 6:5](#), [Sirach 5:8](#), [Matthew 16:19](#), [Leviticus 1](#), [Leviticus 6:8-13](#), [Psalm 32](#), [Matthew 27:51-54](#)



Liturgy: [St. Basil liturgy reconciliation and Absolution](#)



Patristics: [St. Basil the Great](#), [St. Ambrose](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [Didache](#), [St. Basil](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Jerome](#), [St. Athanasius](#), [St. Isaac the Syrian](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Cyprian](#), [St. Basil the Great](#)



Story: [St. Moses the Strong](#) and [St. Isidore](#), [St. John the Short](#) and [St. Paesa](#)



Other: [Be the Bee/Confession](#); [H.G. Bishop Youssef](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ A quick review of the seven sacraments of the church and their purpose:

Consider this discussion: What is repentance? (A change, turning our lives back toward Christ.) How do we repent? (By admitting that we have separated ourselves from Christ and desiring to reunite with him.) What happens during confession? (accept all answers and reflect back)

You may share Be the Bee video on confession before or after the lesson. [Be the Bee/Confession](#)

- 1. Baptism - Rebirth in Christ. Removing the old and putting on the new.
- 2. Chistmation - Receiving the Holy Spirit. It guides and protects us.
- 3. Confession/Repentance - Purification of the soul. Receiving the absolution for our sins and learning repentance.
- 4. Eucharist (Communion) - Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. He abides in us and us in Him.
- 5. Unction of the sick - The blessing of the sick.
- 6. Marriage - The union of man and woman in holy matrimony. The two become one.
- 7. Ordination - Christ breathed on the disciples and gave them the priesthood. They are spreading the word of God all over the world. John 20:22-23

+ The Need for Death

- Due to the Fall and our disobedience of God's commandment and following Satan, death became a penalty to man.
- "Death, which entered into the world by the envy of the devil" - Basilian Prayer of Reconciliation
- Sin brings forth a need for death.
- Satan is continuously working to keep us from eternal life. He puts many obstacles in our daily lives to lead us away from God.
- Our Lord Jesus Christ when giving the priesthood to the disciples He gave them the authority to loosen our bondage from sin.

+ What was the sacrificial system in the Old Testament?

- The Holy Book of Leviticus deals extensively with this issue. In it we come across the terms: offering, sacrifice, and oblation (Korban). There

are 5 types of offerings referenced. Refer to “The Cross Revealed in the Old Testament Offerings” by HG Bishop Youssef

1. The burnt offering: offered with an animal, a male without blemish. This offering symbolizes the divine aspect of the Cross Offering
2. The peace offering: offered with an animal also, either male or female. This offering symbolizes the human aspect of the Cross in the sense that the Cross accomplished peace between God and humanity. That is why the offering could be either male or female.
3. The sin offering: offered with an animal, either male or female.
4. The trespass offering: offered with an animal either male or female. This offering is assigned for those who have sinned unintentionally or out of ignorance; or anyone who felt was in such a situation that required a sacrifice of that kind.
5. The meal offering: offered with grain or wheat.

- This was the sacrificial system needed for forgiveness to be granted in the Old Testament (Leviticus 1-7)
- Achan, the son of Carmi in Joshua 7, confessed his sins to Joshua. Achan’s sin angered the Lord because he took what was not permitted by the Lord. The Lord said to Joshua “There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.” Joshua 7:13
- The enemies are our sins. Removing the accursed things from among us is by repentance.
- Christ died on the cross because of man’s sins. Christ on the Cross and the veil tearing. The real God of Israel was revealed when Christ yielded up His spirit. “Then behold the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,...So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, “Truly this was the son of God!”” Matthew 27:51-54

+ The Need and benefit of Confession

- After the Resurrection, prior to Pentecost, He breathed into the face of His disciples the Holy Spirit. Giving them authority to bind and loosen sins (John 20:22)
- Verses from the book of Acts and Epistles showing this was done in the early church.
- Saint story showing the beauty and necessity of a Father of Confession and church father quotes showing the necessity of confession (St. Isidore and St. Moses the Strong) The story of St. Moses says “He exploded in tears, and had to find relief in kneeling before his guide, St. Isidore, and confessing his sins. When the time for his baptism came, St. Moses confessed all his past evil deeds publicly in the church.”
- Unlike St. Moses we confess our sins to our confessional father privately. And should be done regularly.
- “The Lord grants sevenfold to us sinners the remission of our debts, if here we propitiate him through confession and repentance.” - St. Basil the Great
- Benefits of Confession - With confession comes joy and happiness. “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!” (Psalm 32:11)
- Forgiveness, covering - “I acknowledge my sin to you and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgression to the Lord. “ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”” (Psalm 32:5) God forgives. When we confess our sins they are covered (private). They are hidden with the Lord. Our confessional father recites the absolution prayer. The Absolution means the forgiveness of sins. The Priest gives the absolution to the other Priest(s), the deacons, Congregation and himself by the authority he has been granted by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- "We are bidden to confer grace of the heavenly mystery on those guilty even of the greatest sins, if they with open confession bear the penance due to their sin." - St. Ambrose of Milan
- Confession grants great joy
- "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
- "Every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure." - Didache

+ The need for a Priest for this Mystery

- “St Paesa after the death of her parents opened her house to care for the needy and the strangers. She was so generous that her wealth was entirely spent and, not finding money to survive, she fell gradually into a disorderly life.” St. John the short saved her from Satan’s bondage and she received salvation. “During the prayer of midnight, Saint John saw the soul of Paesa going up to Heaven carried by angels and heard a voice telling him that her penitence was perfect before God.”
- "It is necessary to confess our sins to those to whom the dispensation of God’s mysteries is entrusted." - St. Basil
- "Priests have received a power which God has given neither to angels nor to archangels. It was said to them: "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose, shall be loosed." Temporal rulers have indeed the power of binding; but they



can only bind the body. Priests, in contrast, can bind with a bond which pertains to the soul itself and transcends the very heavens. Did [God] not give them all the powers of heaven? "Whose sins you shall forgive," he says, "they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." The Father has given all judgment to the Son. And now I see the Son placing all this power in the hands of men. They are raised to this dignity as if they were already gathered up to heaven." - St. John Chrysostom

- "Just as in the Old Testament the priest makes the leper clean or unclean, so in the New Testament the bishop and presbyter binds or looses not those who are innocent or guilty, but by reason of their office, when they have heard various kinds of sins, they know who is to be bound and who loosed." - St. Jerome
- "Just as a man is enlightened by the Holy Spirit when he is baptized by a priest, so he who confesses his sins with a repentant heart obtains their remission from the priest." - St. Athanasius

+ Judgment Day we will be judged for the sins we did not confess

- "The words of the One coming to judge the living and the dead, I learn in them great necessity of ready obedience to God in all things. For there is no pardon for those who fail to repent of their disobedience." - St. Basil the Great
- "But do not sin, O man, expecting that you will repent; and do not succumb [to sin] being confident of forgiveness! Remember that death will not delay." St. Isaac the Syrian
- "If we prevail upon the Judge before the appointed Day to forgive our sins, then we need not enter the Court. If not, He will hear us publicly in the presence of all and we shall no longer have any hope of pardon." - St. John Chrysostom
- "I beseech you, brethren; let everyone who has sinned confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession is still admissible, while the satisfaction and remission made through the priests are still pleasing before the Lord." - St. Cyprian



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 6:
Independence with
God

Lesson 6.7: Life of Prayers

Objective

To understand the importance of prayer in our relationship with God

Application

Form a prayer life and canon for your Agpeya with your Father of Confession

References and Resources



Scripture: [Psalm 16:11](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#), [1 John 5:14-15](#), [Jeremiah 29:12](#), [Job 22:27](#), [Matthew 6:5-8](#), [15:21-28](#), [14:23](#), [27:51](#), [Luke 5:16](#), [6:12](#), [11:1](#), [18:1-8](#), [22:39-46](#), [Genesis 2:8](#), [3:22-24](#), [Hebrews 5:7](#), [Matthew 27:51](#).



Liturgy: [St. Basil Liturgy](#), [Lord's Prayer](#)



Patristics: [Elder Thaddeus](#), [St. Nectarios of Aegina](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. John Kronstadt](#), [St. Anthony](#), [Abba Agathon](#), [St. Athanasius](#), [St. Athanasius](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Ephraim the Syrian](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. John Climacus](#)



Story: [St. Anthony the Great](#), [Anba Bishoy tying his hair to not fall asleep](#), [Pope Kyrillos](#).



Other: [Life of Prayer](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#); [Pope Kyrillos VI](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Why do we pray?

Consider having this discussion: When and why do you pray? Why do people sometimes feel inadequate to pray? Or why do some people feel like they need someone else to do it for them? Why do we feel like we need to say the right words when we pray? When Jesus said "Pray like this," what did He want us to learn about prayer?

- Prayer gets us closer to God. Prayer makes our relationship with God stronger. Prayer is seeking God and His direction for our lives. Praying also helps keep us out of trouble.
- Jesus told us to pray, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." (Matthew 26:41)
- To include and allocate a portion of the day spent in unity with God.
- Prayer provides blessing in everything we do. Prayer helps ward off evil thoughts and behavior. Prayer gives strength to overcome trials and tribulations. Prayer brings the family closer and strengthens the bond between its members.
- "It is of great significance if there is a person who truly prays in a family. Prayer attracts God's Grace and all the members of the family feel it, even those whose hearts have grown cold. Pray always." Elder Thaddeus

+ Disconnected: Created for union with God

- Start with life in Paradise and the unity between God and man. "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed." (Genesis 2:8)
- Prayer unites one with God, being a divine conversation and spiritual communion with the Being that is most beautiful and highest. Prayer is forgetting earthly things, an ascent to heaven. Through prayer we flee to God. "Nectarios of Aegina
- "Angels trembled, the Cherubim and Seraphim did not dare to stare directly at God, whereas Adam conversed with him as with a friend" St. John Chrysostom.
- "We fell from eternal life and were exiled from the Paradise of joy." - Anaphora St. Basil Liturgy
- Disconnected with God throughout the OT (faced west). The fall caused a struggle to maintain or connect with God.



+ Given a reconnection potential: Through the incarnation

- Christ prayed and showed us the example of how to do the same. "So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed" (Luke 5:16)
- Jesus taught us how to pray. He gave us the Lord's prayer. Matthew 6:9-13
- Christ was crucified and tore the veil reconciling us with the Father. "Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,," (Matthew 27:51)
- "The means to confirm and strengthen Christian hope are prayer, especially frequent and sincere prayer, confession of our sins, frequent reading of the Word of God, and, above all, frequent communion of the holy and life-giving sacraments of the Body and Blood of Christ." St John of Kronstadt

+ Examples of Parables of Prayer & Persistence

- What to do when my prayer isn't answered?
- Persistent Widow, Story of the Caanite Woman. This widow was persistent and did not give up. We should do the same. We should not give up the faith. God will answer our prayers in due time. Luke 18:1-8
- "Never lose heart or be lazy in crying to the Lord night and day that you may force the Father's benevolence to grant you aid from above." - St. Anthony
- "Let it be our concern to persevere constantly in prayer and far from being depressed by a slow response, let us give every sign of longsuffering. He postpones response to our requests not to deny us but with the intention of instructing us in the way of entreaty and out of a wish to draw us to him uninterruptedly." - St. John Chrysostom
- "There is no labor greater than that of prayer to God." - Abba Agathon
- Sainly examples of steadfast prayer (St. Anthony / St. Pishoy / HHPK6)
- An Angel appeared to St. Anthony showed him that if he is ever bored that he should stop what he is doing, pray then continue with his task.
- St. Pishoy the Great wanted to pray continuously. He used to tie his hair so he would not fall asleep while praying.
- His Holiness Pope Kyrillos the 6th prayed liturgy everyday. When he was faced with tribulations, he went into seclusion to the monastery of St. Mena and prayed. He placed all his issues on God.
- St. Anthony - "When the enemy saw himself to be too weak for Anthony's determination...overthrown by his great faith and falling through Anthony's constant prayers...he attacked the young man, disturbing him by night and harassing by day, so even the onlookers saw the struggle which was going on between them." - St. Athanasius
- "He kept vigil to such an extent that he often continued the whole night without sleep and this not once but often to the marvel of others." - St. Athanasius
- The church is a model for prayer.

+ How to improve my prayer life?

- In the Lord's prayer, Jesus gave us the model for a thriving prayer life which consists of: praise, submission to His Will, petition for daily needs, request for forgiveness and protection.
- Have a habit of praying. Set time everyday to pray, at the start of the day and the end of the day.
- Pray before the start of anything such as eating, doing homework, working on a project, reaching a decision, resolving any issues etc.
- Why is prayer necessary for my spiritual life?
- "Prayer is a great good: someone conversing with a virtuous person gains no little advantage from the experience so how much good will the one communing with God be granted? Prayer after all is conversing with God." - St. John Chrysostom
- "You can set up an altar to God in your mind by means of prayer. So it is fitting to pray at your work, on a journey, standing at a counter or sitting at your handicraft." - St. John Chrysostom
- "Whether you are in church, or in your house, or in the country; whether you are guarding sheep, or constructing buildings, or present at drinking parties, do not stop praying. When you are able, bend your knees, when you cannot, make intercession in your mind, 'at evening and at morning and at midday'. If prayer precedes your work and if, when you rise from your bed, your first movements are accompanied by prayer, sin can find no entrance to attack your soul." — St. Ephraim the Syrian
- "Do not say, after spending a long time in prayer, that nothing has been gained; for you have already gained something. And what higher good is there than to cling to the Lord and persevere in unceasing union with Him?" St. John Climacus

+ Danger of not praying/ Benefits of Prayer



- Not praying means loss of the relationship with God. Not praying gives way to the devil to enter our hearts.
- Prayer is the clear path to God and our salvation. Prayer liberates us from anger. Prayer puts peace in our hearts.
- Train oneself to pray the book of prayer the Agpeya. It is a tool and a language of speaking to God.
- "Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness and a protection against sadness." - St. John Chrysostom
- "Prayer moves the Hands of the One whose Hands move the Universe." - HHPK6



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 6:
Independence with
God

Lesson 6.8: Life of Faithfulness

Objective

To understand what it means to live and practice a life of faithfulness

Application

The importance of living a life in faith and being faithful even during hard times. How to be faithful and how to practice and live a life of faithfulness

References and Resources



Scripture: [Luke 16:1-13](#), [Psalm 78:2](#), [Matthew 13:10-17](#), [John 18:37](#), [Proverbs 28:20](#), [Matthew 25:23](#), [Hosea 2:20](#), [Revelation 2:8-11](#), [Luke 12:42-44](#), [2 Corinthians 5:7](#), [2 Timothy 2:13](#), [Deuteronomy 7:9](#), [Psalm 33:4](#), [2 Thessalonians 3:3](#), [John 14:6](#)



Liturgy: [St. Basil Anaphora](#), [Litany of the Gospel](#)



Patristics: [St. Athanasius](#),



Story: [St. Polycarp \(86 years\)](#)



Other: [Parable of the unjust steward \(Arabic\)](#), [Parable of the unjust steward and the Rich man \(Arabic\)](#), [Principles of Faithfulness](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#), [Many Years with people's question](#), [HHPS3](#), [Wealth and Friendship](#)

➔ Body Overview Bullet Points

+ Why is it always so serious?

Consider having this discussion: have you ever said, why does it have to be so serious all the time? God knows I love Him, I tell Him all the time, why do I have to devote my entire life to Him as well? Christ that said, "If you love me, keep My commandments"? (John 14:15)

- Today in a world which preaches the need to serve yourself, a society that whispers 'go on, indulge, you deserve it', it's a bit easier to see why we're so unfaithful to His word.
- But the Bible wasn't written yesterday, God describes the faithlessness of His people from years past.
- Israel failed repeatedly even though we heard, 'Today you have proclaimed the Lord to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice. Also today the Lord has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He has promised you, that you should keep all His commandments, and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made'. (Deuteronomy 26:17-19).
- Despite this promise Israel still "played the harlot" (Hosea 2:5) betraying the Lord multiple times.

+ Faithfulness:

- In the Holy Bible, in both Testaments (Revised Standard Version), the word faithful was mentioned ninety-seven times, twenty-six of which described God as being faithful, while the word faithfulness appears seventy-seven times.

+ Christ, the Teacher

- One of the main purposes of Christ's incarnation was to Teach us. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people." (Matthew 4:23); "Then He opened His mouth and taught them." (Matthew 5:2); "And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34)
- "The Christ has come, and has enlightened all men everywhere, and given them the true and divine teaching about His Father." - St. Athanasius



- “Was incarnate and became man, and taught us the ways of salvation.” - St. Basil Anaphora
- One of His main methods of teaching were Parables (Psalm 78:2)

+ Through Parables

- A parable is a simple story told by Jesus Christ used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson.
- The word parable in Greek, *parabole*, means “comparison”
- The Lord's parables draw memorable details from nature, human, social, economic, or religious life of His time.
- Purpose of why Christ used Parables. The parables Christ spoke provide an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.
- “He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given...”” Matthew 13:10-17
- “He will preserve the words of renowned men, and he will enter with them into the subtleties of parables. He will search for the hidden meanings of proverbs, and he will become familiar with the mysteries of parables.” Sirach 39:2-3
- “Blessed are your eyes, for they see and your ears, for they hear.” - Litany of the Gospel

+ Jesus’ teaching on faithfulness through the Parable of the Unrighteous Steward (Luke 16:1-13)

Read Luke 16:1-13 then discuss symbols of the Parable. (Stewardship, unfaithfulness, Redemption, Salvation)

Discuss: What is the purpose of wealth in this parable? Is money evil?

- A steward is a person who manages the resources of another. The steward had authority over all of the master’s resources and could transact business in his name. This requires the utmost level of trust in the steward.
- Our Savior is here pressing us to, by reminding us that we are but stewards of the manifold grace of God; and since we have in diers instances been unfaithful, and have forfeited the favor of our Lord. It is our wisdom to think how we may, some other way, make what we have in the world turn into a good account.
- We must lay out what we have in works of piety and charity so that we may meet it again with comfort on the other side of death and the grave.
- We are all stewards of what we have in this world, which all are the property of God. God entrusts us with gifts like time, talents, and treasures. We are to use them as instructed and to honor God. He wants us to use these things wisely and expects us to give them back to His control. God also wants to make sure nothing comes between us and Him.
- Death comes and we are discharged from this world. Death will deprive us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good and redeeming ourselves. Our discharge at death is just and deserved, for we have wasted the Lord’s goods. We will have to account for our stewardship on judgment day.
- Discuss what Christ praised vs what wasn't praised. The Lord was pleased with his ingenuity and policy for himself. And how to improve a present opportunity, and how to provide for a future necessity. The Lord does not commend him because he had done falsely to his master, but because he had done wisely for himself.
- Jesus is teaching us that we must use our wealth, however it is obtained, for the alleviation of those who are in need, for good works.^[1] Matthew 6:24, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”
- Even if we are not faithful God will always remain faithful. “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” 2 Timothy 2:13

+ What are ways to live a faithful life?

- Just the majority of virtues, faithfulness is a virtue in which we grow through our lifetime. Through learning faithfulness in all the smallest details, we establish within ourselves the potential to be faithful in everything. As Christ reminds us in Luke 16:
- “He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much.” - Luke 16:10
- By reading the promises of God, by reading His desires (the commandments) and not simply reading, but memorizing them. Not mentally, but having inscribed in our hearts. As it is written in Hebrews:
- “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” - Hebrews 8:10
- Pray for the grace of faithfulness. Practice being faithful in the little first. Be faithful in continuous prayer. Do not waver. Keep promises. Do not promise what can’t be delivered. Love and service to others. Humble oneself.
- Example of faithfulness St. Polycarp. You may use his life as a means to exemplify the latter. St. Polycarp attracted many souls to the Lord



with his life-giving teaching. He wrote many articles. When St. Polycarp was asked to curse Christ, he said “I have served my Lord Christ for 86 years and He never harmed me so how can I blaspheme against my King Who saved me?” He endured many tortures and his faith was not shaken. He was faithful until his death.



Building Block 7: Becoming Radiant

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 7:
Becoming Radiant



Lesson 7.1: Christ is the Source of Light

Objective

To understand what it means to live in the light instead of darkness, and to understand that Christ is the light we need to transform our lives.

Application

Christ being our light means He enlightens our mind and allows us to live a life focused on divine things so we need to keep enlightening sources a daily part of our lives so we can maintain an enlightened way of thinking.

References and Resources



Scripture: [John 8:12](#), [John 12:35-50](#), [Psalm 119:105, 130](#), [John 1:4](#), [Isaiah 42:16](#), [Genesis 3:1-7](#), [1 Corinthians 2:16](#), [John 9:1-41](#), [Exodus 13:21-22](#), [Romans 1:21](#), [Matthew 6:23](#), [John 3:19-20](#), [Romans 13:12](#), [2 Corinthians 6:14](#), [1 John 1:5-6](#), [2 Corinthians 4:4](#), [Psalm 82:5](#), [Ephesians 4:18](#), [2 Corinthians 4:6](#).



Liturgy: [Gregorian Liturgy](#), [Baptismal prayer](#)



Patristics: [St. Basil](#), [St. Anthony the Great](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Gregory of Nyssa](#), [St. Augustine](#), [St. Cyril of Alexandria](#), [St. Gregory of Nazianza](#), [Origen the Scholar](#), [St. Macarius of Egypt](#), [Against the Heathens by St. Athanasius](#)



Story: [St. Augustine](#), [St. Moses the Strong](#), [St. Demetrius the Vinedresser](#)



Other: [Christ is our Light](#), [HG Bishop Youssef \(Arabic\)](#), [4th Week of Pentecost](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#), [Mind of Christ](#), [I am the light of the World](#), [Fr. Daoud Lamei \(Arabic\)](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What does it mean “Christ is the Source of Light”?

Consider having this discussion: What do you consider darkness to be? Look for: evil, uncertainty, things that are unfamiliar, despair, things without God. In what ways are we in darkness? Look for: when we are depressed and feel bad/sorry for ourselves, trying to hide something, when we don't know what to expect... Are you a light?

- The Gospel according to St. John 1:4 “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Christ is the true life. Christ is the light of the world. He is life.
- Christ is the source of knowledge, strength, overcoming the power of the devil.
- Christ is the lighted path to salvation and eternal life.
- Christ is the true source of light; we are a reflection of that light.
- The Holy Bible is the word of God. It is the light. It gives peace, strength, perseverance, drive, encouragement. When the deacon reads the Gospel during the Liturgy, 2 candles are lit one on his right and one on his left as symbol that the word of God is the light to all men.
- At Baptism and Chrismation, we were given light, both figuratively and literally. How? Through the priest's prayer.
- In the Sacrament of Baptism the priest prays “We also ask perseveringly...God to open their hearts and enlighten them by the light of knowledge.”
- When praying facing the East represents light.

+ Purpose of the mind

- Start with the creation of man and the gift of the mind given so that man can focus on God and contemplate His goodness.
- In creating men and women God has done an even more marvelous thing. He has planted His light at the center of our being and has declared “The light of the world”. God is the source of that light.



- "The primary function of our mind is to know God as much as the very small can know the infinitely great. The mind's judgment is good because it has been given to us for a good purpose to perceive God." - St. Basil
- "The mind is not the soul, but is rather a divine gift, saving the soul. The mind pleasing to God goes before the soul and advises it to despise that which is within time, material, and perishable, but to love that which is eternal, imperishable, and immaterial goodness, so that man, finding himself within a body, might think with the mind and contemplate that which is heavenly and divine. The God-loving mind is the benefactor and salvation of the human soul." - St. Anthony the Great
- "You have given to me the learning of Your knowledge." - Gregorian Anaphora

+ Darkening of the mind (Problem)

- The Fall then affected our minds which the fathers call a "darkening" making it incapable of having a "simple and unified vision" of the memory of God, but instead reaches out for the outside world. Man immerses himself in the knowledge of his surroundings and the multitude of subjects more, while the knowledge of God grows dim. The condition in which the mind / nous finds itself after the Fall is called "suspension" (meteōrizmos, μετεωρίζμός). In this condition, the mind / nous is not capable of concentration, prayer, or mystical experiences, but floats along, distracted by various thoughts and images. Having lost its original wholeness, it is as if the mind / nous divided itself into two parts
- Read Genesis 3:1-7
- "There are two minds within me: one is good, and it follows all that is wonderful, but the other is bad, and it follows after evil; one mind / nous goes to the light and is ready to submit itself to Christ, but the other mind / nous is of flesh and blood, and it covers itself in darkness and agrees to give itself as a captive of Belial." - St. Gregory of Nazianza
- "The mind / nous is distinguished from the nous. There is a mind / nous, embracing and flowing toward heaven and embarking on the path of purifying its thoughts and reaching for its paths and trails, preparing itself for holiness in the heavens. There is another mind / nous, groveling along the earth and creeping on the paths of the flesh. There is a fleshly mind / nous and there is a spiritual mind / nous, and the spiritual mind / nous is distinguished from the fleshly one." - St. Macarius of Egypt
- "The general worldly mind / nous, is driven both to good and to evil, fickle, and inclined toward material things, and the other is the God-loving / mind nous, which fights against evil." - St. Anthony the Great
- The eyes we have been given to perceive light have atrophied for lack of use. We are afraid. The light will hurt our eyes and burn our skin. We do not dare to identify ourselves with light. We identify ourselves instead with the cozy darkness. As St. John wrote in 3:19, "men loved darkness more than the light."
- We should not look at ourselves in negativity, judging and torturing ourselves needlessly. We need to let go of this negativity, believing in God's truth rather than our own delusions, in order to come to our senses and return to the light.

+ Incarnation and the mind

- Christ's incarnation then recreated our mind and healed our corruption, restoring us to our original state.
- God's rescue mission in Christ was meant to return us to consciousness and sanity. His life, death and resurrection accomplished this for us. We are invited to participate. The darkness in us must die, or rather, be transformed into light.
- "As a true light, You have shone upon the lost and the ignorant." - Gregorian Liturgy
- "The Savior shines on creatures which have intellect and sovereign reason, that their minds may behold their proper objects of vision, and so He is the Light of the intellectual world, that is to say of the reasonable souls which are in the sensible world, and if there be any beings beyond these in the world from which He declares Himself to be our Savior." - Origen the Scholar
- "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.'" John 8:12.
- Sin darkens our lives. Evil company and bad influences negatively shape our mentalities to darkened ones (Pharisees)
- As indicated by Christ in John 12:35-50, He is warning of the darkness overtaking us and taking us in the opposite direction from eternal life.
- "He called Himself Light because He delivers from error and dissolves mental darkness." - St. John Chrysostom
- "He is called the light when He disperses the gloom of ignorance." - St. Gregory of Nyssa
- Exodus 13:21-22 God lit the way for the Israelites at night in the desert.
- Baptism is the Mystery of Enlightenment
- Story of the Blind Man John 9:1-41 (4th Sunday of Touba)
- "Christ likens them to the man blind from birth because they're having been made in error and that they are from their first age as it were bereft of the true knowledge of God, and that they have not the light from God i.e. the illumination through the Spirit." - St. Cyril of

Alexandria

- How baptism gives us spiritual vision and new enlightened mind
- "For the holy day of lights, to which we have come and which we are celebrating today has for its origin the baptism of Christ and assists that light which we received from the beginning from Him from above but which we darkened and confused by sin." - St. Gregory of Nazianza
- "The Lord gives light to the blind therefore we, having the eye-salve of faith, are now enlightened. We too have been born blind of Adam and need Him to enlighten us." - St. Augustine

+ How to achieve an enlightened mind (Solution)

- Psalm 119:105, 130 (word of God)
- Story of St. Augustine and his conversion from hearing Romans 13:13-14 and life of St. Anthony. St. Augustine was enlightened by reading sermons and learning about the true faith. He became convinced that Christianity is the true faith. He heard a voice telling him to pick up and read. He remembered that Saint Anthony was converted from the world by hearing a single verse. He took up St. Paul's epistles to the Romans and read the first chapter that met his eyes (Romans 13:13-14) He was 32 years old when he converted.
- Strong relationship with God so we can have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16)
- Story of St. Moses the Strong and his battle with thoughts and St. Isidore guiding him through it. St. Isidore comforted St. Moses the Black and taught him how to overcome the snares of the devil. St. Moses worked tirelessly serving the other monks. When the devil struck him with sickness, St. Moses increased in his asceticism and worship.
- Fasting
- Mysteries of the Church. Confession/repentance and receiving the Holy Eucharist take us away from darkness and guide us back to the light.
- "There was no other way possible for the Gentiles to thrust off the blindness which affected them, and to behold the divine and holy light, that is to receive the knowledge of the Holy Trinity, except by being partakers of His holy Body and washing away their gloom producing sin in holy baptism." - St. Cyril of Alexandria
- "If demons have hurt the mind, it will be guilty of idolatry or will be perverted to some other form of wickedness but if it has yielded itself to the Spirit's help, it will understand the truth and will know God." - St. Basil
- "Who made the darkness of error in us to become light through the coming in the flesh of Your only-begotten Son. Now You also, O our Master, enlighten the eyes of our hearts." - Fraction to the Father (Begetter of Light)
- Story of St. Demetrius the Vinedresser and his enlightenment after his enthronement as Patriarch. He established the reckoning of the Epacts, by which the dates of fasting were determined on a fixed basis. Christians used to fast the holy 40 days, Lent, right after the feast of Epiphany, as the Lord Christ fasted after His baptism. Then they fasted the Passion week separately, celebrating the Christian Passover on the Sunday that followed the Jewish Passover.

Consider these questions to wrap up the lesson: How can one "blow out" his spiritual lights? Look for: we don't protect ourselves, or our light, by what we see, do, or hear. What are some everyday behaviors that keep us in the dark? What do we do that make it look as though Jesus weren't always with us, or that God is not our Father? Look for: Lie about things, disobey/disrespect our parents, treat others poorly... How can we be a light to our family, friends and to the world? Look for: act more like Jesus, be kind, be people of prayer, help others to have hope and see that they are not alone. What actions can we take to help people see God's love for us? Look for: let them see that we are not alone, love them, care for them...



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 7:
Becoming Radiant



Lesson 7.2: Light of the World

Objective

To understand our role in reflecting the Light of Christ and glorifying God by bringing others to God

Application

Discuss with your father of confession how can you be the Light of the World and how can you set examples and allow the Light of Christ to shine through you

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 5:14-19](#), [1 John 1:7](#), [Ephesians 5:8](#), [Daniel 12:3](#), [John 12:35-36](#), [Genesis 3:1-7](#), [1 Corinthians 15:35-49](#), [1 Corinthians 15:33](#), [1 Peter 2:9](#), [1 John 1:5](#), [Isaiah 60:1-3](#), [Acts 13:47](#), [Philippians 2:15](#), [Isaiah 42:16](#), [Romans 13:12](#), [Ephesians 5:11](#), [Isaiah 42:6](#), [Micah 7](#), [Psalm 36:9](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:58](#), [1 John 1:7](#), [Ecclesiastes 2:13](#), [Proverbs 6:23](#), [2 Corinthians 4:6](#), [Matthew 6:22-23](#), [Revelation 21:23](#), [Matthew 17:2](#).



Liturgy: [Midnight Praises](#)



Patristics: [St. Augustine of Hippo](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Cyprian](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Augustine](#), [St. Gregory of Nyssa](#),



Story: [St. John the Baptist and Forerunner](#)



Other: [You are the Light of World](#), [HG Bishop Youssef](#), [You Are The Salt Of The Earth](#), [HG Bishop Raphael \(Arabic\)](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What did Christ mean when He said to His Disciples “You are the light of the World”?

Consider this discussion: What does it look like to reflect the very nature of Jesus in everything we do? When is it most difficult for you to reflect Jesus? When do you feel you reflect Jesus the most?

An example: Any flashlight would not work if it were missing its power source. Without the battery the flashlight is not usable. Simply having a bulb, a fixture and some wire does not automatically mean that a light will shine. There must be a connection to a source of power. We are the same. In order for us to shine, we must be connected to a source of power. As believers, Jesus is our source of power, and our source of power never runs out.

What are some ways that we can stay connected to Jesus and receive the power we need to shine our lights?

- God has planted His light at the center of our being and has declared, this is what you are “the light of the world”. God is the Source of this light. He made us an extension of Him. [Matthew 5:14-19](#), [Ephesians 5:8](#), [Psalm 36:9](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:5](#),
- Being the light of the world is the beginning of our eternal life. It requires continuous spiritual attainment.
- This is not a goal to be reached for, but a truth to be remembered. Although to be the light of the world sounds like a very high level of spiritual attainment, it is merely the first level, the place where we must begin.
- It illustrates our role in society. Because of its preservative powers, it is a necessity for life. Light is necessary for both clear vision and life itself. Faith relies on this divine light, and believers become sons of light who shine in a perverse world.
- God is the true and uncreated Light. In the Old Testament light is symbolic of God. “Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth. And deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.” ([Isaiah 60:1-3](#)).

+ The power of bad influences



- Bad influences such as peer pressure cause sin or deviating from God altogether. Anything that starts small, if not stopped/controlled will become bigger and out of control.
- One should not use the light to glorify oneself instead of God. Such behavior pushes the focus away from the True light.
- "Just as those who are deprived of light cannot walk straight, so also those who do not behold the ray of the Holy Scriptures must necessarily sin, since they walk in the deepest darkness." – St. John Chrysostom
- "Suppose someone desires that his good work be seen by others. Suppose he regards his glory and profit according to the estimation of others and seeks to be elevated in the sight of others. By doing so he fulfills neither of the commands that the Lord has given in this text." St. Augustine of Hippo
- "God is our Leader and the devil is our destroyer; a leader presents a commandment while the destroyer would suggest a trick. Shall we then listen to the commandment or to the deceit?!" - St. Augustine
- "Live in a way that won't blaspheme the name of God. On the one hand, don't care about human reputation. On the other hand, don't give reason for others to speak poorly of you but be moderate on both issues. For Christ left us here to be lights. We are here to teach others and be like leaven in dough. We should speak with others like angels, with children like adults, with natural people that may profit like they are spiritual so through us. We then will be like seeds and bear much fruit. There is no need to speak if we shine through our lives. There would be no unbelievers if we were the Christians we should be. Everyone would convert to godliness if we generally kept the commandments of Christ, suffered through insults, allowed others to take advantage of us, blessed when we are cursed at and did good when treated poorly." - St. John Chrysostom
- + Christ called us to be lights as a reflection of His true Light as children of the Light.
 - Jesus in declaring Himself to be the Light of the world, was claiming that He is the exclusive source of spiritual light. No other source of spiritual truth is available to mankind.
 - The glory of the very presence of God in the pillar of fire led the nation of Israel to the Promised Land and protected them from those who would destroy them. The recipients of the "light of the world" and the love of God are "anyone" (everyone).
 - When there is light, there's revelation. When Jesus comes into our lives, we see ourselves as we really are and not as what we think we might be. To walk in the light world means you will never walk in darkness.
 - To walk in the light is to become His light – we are the light in this world.
 - "Arise O Children of the light." - Midnight Praises
 - "You alone are a reflection of eternal beauty, a receptacle of happiness, an image of the true light and if you look to Him, you will become what He is, imitating Him who shines within you, whose glory is reflected in your purity. Nothing in the entire creation can equal your grandeur." - St. Gregory of Nyssa
 - "Your character should provoke everyone to imitate your life and conduct. Your good works are indeed the greatest part of you." - St. Cyprian
- + What does it mean to be a light in the world?
 - How does that work? How can we avoid darkness and have the light of life?
 - First, we need to be followers of Jesus. He IS light. He is the One who can show us the right way to go. The world or our own great ideas cannot guide us. His presence can guide us away from darkness and into the light.
 - Our demeanor, behavior, what we wear, what we say, loving one another tells the world we are the children of Christ.
 - When we convey happiness and content, others would want to have that life. Our behavior will direct others to be children of Christ. We should be emitting the light of God with all that we do.
 - 1 John 1:7 (fellowship with another): "Let us then use every means that our neighbor be not offended. For a life, though it be very upright, if it offends others it has lost everything. For as those who show forth a right life glorify God, so those who do the contrary cause Him to be blasphemed." - St. John Chrysostom
 - Daniel 12:3 (turning others back to God), 1 John 1:5, 1 Peter 2:9, Acts 13:47, Phillippians 2:15, Isaiah 42:16, Romans 13:12, Ephesians 5:11, Isaiah 42:6, Micah 7:8
 - Story of St. John the Baptist and bringing people to Christ (Luke 3:7-20). St. John the Baptist is the forerunner. He was humble. St. John was the light of the world. He preached about Christ. He wanted everyone to know about the savior of the world. He said "But one mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to lose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." At one point St. John's disciples reported to him about all the miracles that Christ was performing to trap him into jealousy. He was not moved. He sent two of his disciples to confirm if Jesus is the Christ. He also wanted his disciples to witness Jesus' work and believe that He is the Christ.
 - Believe in the Light (John 12:35-36, Ecclesiastes 2:13, Proverbs 6:23, 2 Corinthians 4:6)



- Our eyes have to be healthy (Matthew 6:22-23)
- + Live so we may be worthy of the resurrected glorious luminous body and in the city of Light in Heaven
 - It is very important that Christ is the center of every decision made, steps taken, words spoken, every place entered...Pray. Read the Bible. Learn from the characters and stories in the Bible. Learn from the stories of the saints and how they dealt with difficult situations. Seek an intercessor. Christ is our light and without the light we stumble.
 - What should we do with our sin so we walk in the light and not in darkness? Don't deny or ignore it. Instead, confess it, receive forgiveness, and be purified.
 - The Holy Spirit is in us. He guides us and talks to us. He tells us to pray, confess, repent and He reminds us of judgment day to be ready always. Listening to our inner. 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, Revelation 21:23,
 - Story of the Transfiguration as a pledge of our future luminous body. (Matthew 17:2)



Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 7:
Becoming Radiant



Lesson 7.3: Do What Jesus Wants Us to Do

Objective

This lesson addresses God's will in our lives to live a life of obedience and service

Application

Serving is not about what people can do for you; it's all about what you can do for others. God calls us to love Him through loving others, and we can do this in small ways everyday. When we start serving and loving others well, this is when we start to make an impact. Jesus can take the simple acts of kindness that we do for others, and change lives

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 25:31-46](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#), [1 Thessalonians 4:3-6](#), [Genesis 6-7](#), [1 Corinthians 9:22](#), [Proverbs 11:30](#), [Colossians 1:28](#), [Matthew 20:28](#), [Genesis 3:21-24](#), [Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#), [John 13:1-17](#), [Luke 4:43-44](#), [James 4:17](#), [Acts 1:8](#), [Matthew 23:11](#), [Isaiah 58:10](#), [Galatians 5:13](#), [1 John 3:18](#), [1 Peter 4:9-11](#), [Ephesians 4:11-16](#), [Romans 12:3-8](#), [Philippians 2:4](#), [Acts 20:35](#)



Liturgy: [The Lord's Prayer](#)



Patristics: [St. Cyprian](#), [St. Cyprian](#), [St. Cyprian](#), [St. Justin the Martyr](#),



Story: [Noah the Prophet](#), [St. Paul the Apostle](#), [Jonah the Prophet](#)



Body Overview Jonah the Prophet Bullet Points

Consider having this discussion: The Bible talks a lot about how we should strive to be more like Jesus. If that's our goal, how does serving fit into that? How can a young person make a difference in the world? What are things in everyday life we can start to do to love and serve others? What's one difference between the way you serve in your life now (doing chores, etc.) and the way you would serve if Jesus asked you to do something? How can you let your light shine in your family, at school, with your friends, with your neighbors, and at church?

+ Story of Noah

- Genesis 6-7 Man multiplied and the earth was full of violence, corruption and evil. The Lord was sorry that He created man. He saw that the wickedness of man was great. He sought to destroy the earth with its inhabitants. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord for his obedience. The Lord wanted to save Noah and his family. He gave him instruction to build an ark for his family and some animals. When the rain came, the whole world was flooded and all its habitat vanished except for Noah and all who are in the ark.
- Noah was trying to convince people to enter the Ark and those who listened were saved (his family) and those who did not perished.
- Noah is a great example of someone who does what God wants him to do. He did not follow the crowd. He did what is right and is expected from him according to God's will.
- "There is no salvation outside the Church." -St. Cyprian
- "If someone outside Noah's ark could escape, so could someone outside the Church." - St. Cyprian

+ Christ in His Incarnation as the ultimate Servant

- Matthew 20:28, John 13:1-17, Luke 4:43-44
- Story of Christ washing the disciples feet (Lakkan service, Apostles Feast)
 - Not only did Jesus Christ serve the Disciples by washing their feet, He displayed humility and love for them. As such, we should be doing the same when we serve others. Serve with humility and love.
- "We say your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven not so that God will do what He wills but that we may be able to do what God wills. However, since the Devil hinders us from always obeying God's will with our thoughts and actions, we pray and ask that God's will be done. This is the will of God which Christ both did and taught: humility in conversation; steadfastness in faith; modesty in words; justice in deeds;

mercy in works; discipline in morals; inability to do wrong, and ability to bear a wrong done; to keep peace with the brethren; to love God with all one's heart; to love Him as a Father; to fear Him as God; to prefer nothing above Christ because He did not prefer anything above us; to adhere inseparably to His love; and to stand by His cross bravely and faithfully." - St. Cyprian

- It's hard to imagine coming into this world, knowing that you are not here just for your personal benefit, but that you came to be a servant of others. This is exactly what Jesus came to do. Often we think of people who are leaders as people who are here to be served due to their position and status. Jesus was God in the flesh, and he didn't expect special treatment. Instead, he came to show us a different way. He set an example that we should follow

+ Service in our lives as a necessity to be Christian and a source of great spiritual benefit

- Acts 1:8, Matthew 23:11, Isaiah 58:10, Galatians 5:13
- Service is necessary to give back to the Church to edify the believers. It is not restrictive to a few but to all. "Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." James 4:17
- Sins are not only what is negative in one's actions, but the lack of doing good is considered a sin. Therefore the spiritual person is the one who always does good, as an image of God who is the Beneficent.
- The spiritual person does not live for himself. One must get out and spread love among all. The message in life is to do good to all those whom God sends in our way.
- Serving others brings great joy. When you help someone, the recipient of your good deed is so grateful, and this positive feedback can give you a deep sense of joy.
- Serving others forces you to take your focus off of yourself. The more you take your eyes off of yourself, the more you'll see others and the more you'll see God all around you
- The more experience is gained in life and broadness in the heart, the circle of service will get bigger. It would not be limited to one's house and family, and not only to relatives, neighbors, friends and colleagues, but it will reach a range that is wider and wider.
- The service, in its essence, is an expression of love that is stored in the heart towards God and people. In 1 John 3:18 he writes "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."
- Practical love shows in the service. Because of the love of God, love is expressed for Him by spreading the word about His Kingdom, by serving the church and serving the Word. And because of the love of people, serving them by all means that are available and useful for them.
- 1 Peter 4:9-11, Ephesians 4:11-16, Romans 12:3-8

+ Excuses for not serving

- Story of Jonah the Prophet. He tried to escape from doing God's will. He did not put his faith in God. He was looking at his abilities and weaknesses that he could not do God's will. When he knew he couldn't escape, he prayed for forgiveness. God had compassion on Noah and saved him from the belly of the fish.
- St. Paul in his letter in Philippians 2:4 "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." He was leading by example. He wrote in Acts 20:35 "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this that you must support the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"
- Moses' excuse that he was slow of speech (Exodus 4:10). He relied on God and he became one of the greatest leaders. He led the Israelites for 40 years in the desert.
- Jeremiah 1:4-10 (his excuse was he was too young) He had faith in God. The Lord said to him "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, To root out and to pull down, To destroy and to throw down, To build and to plant."

+ Rewards of Service and punishment of those who serve unfaithfully

- "If we persuade even a few, our gain will be very great; for, as good husbandmen, we shall receive the reward from the Master." - St. Justin the Martyr
- The greatest honor and authority is reserved for the one with the heart of a servant. (Matthew 20:25-28)
- Matthew 19:29, Colossians 3:23-25, Matthew 25:32-46 (judgment based on our service and works)
- St. Mark the Apostle had many excuses but he persevered and established one of the greatest churches ever
- The important thing is that the element of sacrifice and giving is present in everyone's life.
- Service gives a spiritual virtue, that is love, giving and sacrificing, which is beneficial. By serving the poor one might find that due to their need, some of them turn to lying, stealing or cheating to obtain what they need. Do not get weary of them or give up. Do not get annoyed and



do not react and do not treat them badly. Maybe God allowed the meeting of those people to learn patience and long-suffering and also wisdom in the way of acting. Or maybe to serve them spiritually and help them to get rid of such bad behavior. Then one would have gained spiritual virtues while serving them.

Theme: Self-Control & Independence

Building Block 7:
Becoming Radiant



Lesson 7.4: Make a Difference

Objective

To understand the orthodox concept of Evangelism and how we can practice it.

Application

Be an image of Christ and spread the Christian way of life whether by your actions or words. Make a plan for how you will share your faith and discuss it with your father of confession.

References and Resources



Scripture: [Matthew 28:19](#), [Galatians 6:1-2](#), [2 Corinthians 3:2-3](#), [Acts 1:8](#), [Isaiah 43:10](#), [Genesis 3:1-5](#), [Matthew 4:17](#), [Galatians 5:13](#), [Matthew 4:17](#), [Ephesians 2:8-22](#), [Matthew 2:13-23](#), [Mark 16:15-16](#), [1 Peter 3:15](#), [Isaiah 6:8](#), [2 Timothy 4:5](#), [Matthew 12:30](#), [1 Corinthians 9:16](#), [Romans 15:12](#), [1 John 4:15](#), [1 John 4:7-11](#), [1 Corinthians 9:16](#), [Philemon 6](#), [Ephesians 4:11](#), [Matthew 9:37-38](#), [Psalm 116](#), [Ezekiel 3:17-19](#), [James 5:19-20](#), [2 Corinthians 5:20](#)



Liturgy: [St. Basil Liturgy](#), [Vespers Praises Ni-ethnos-teero](#)



Patristics: [St. Justin the Martyr](#), [St. John Chrysostom](#), [St. Gregory of Nizianzen](#), [St. Ignatius of Antioch](#), [St. Irenaeus](#)



Story: [St. Pachomius](#), [St. Anthony](#), [Samaritan Woman](#), [St. Mark the Evangelist](#)



Other: [Styles of Evangelism](#), [HG Bishop Yousef](#), [Evangelism](#), [HG Bishop Suriel](#), [Theology of Mission](#)



Body Overview Bullet Points

+ What is meant by making a difference?

Consider having this discussion: What things can you tell your friends about the Orthodox Church? Why is it so hard to believe that we can influence our culture for Christ? How should we live our lives so that we can serve as an example to those who are not Orthodox? Think of someone who has made an impact on your spiritual life. What did that person do to positively affect you?

- There are small things in our life that we may disregard, but make a huge difference in our life and the life of others if we were more attentive. They're simple matters, but the effects are evident.
- It is important to have the faith to be able to lead others to Christ. To enlighten others, to demonstrate the love, strength and happiness that are the result of the faith.
- Be a role model to others. It may not be in words but in actions, behavior, demeanor and attire. The outward and the inward are identical.
- Developing good habits, praying daily, praying before meals, putting others ahead of ourselves.
- A small act of kindness will make a big difference, no matter how small. St. Paul wrote in Galatians 5:13 "For you, brethren, have been called to livery; only do not use livery as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

+ Making a difference starts with me

- Being diligent about praying before we leave our homes in the morning, will make a big difference in our day.
- Reading the Bible every day. Contemplating listening to God's voice and discovering His love for us will make a huge difference in our lives. In the short-term and long-term.
- Avoid idle time. Listening to a sermon or a simple contemplation makes a difference.
- Being careful in choosing what words we use to convey what we want to say.



- Expressing a kind word in a loving manner, showing appreciation, encouraging others, being a source of quelling, and being an inviting, welcoming person. All these make a material difference.
- A small act of kindness, helping out around the church, a service we do that we keep confidential to a person in need, all these things make a difference. They grow the spirit of giving that's inside us and moves the love of God within our heart. It spreads inclusiveness inside the church.

+ Christ's Incarnation and His preaching to the Gentiles during His ministry to bring them to the Light

- Matthew 4:17, Ephesians 2:8-22
- Story of His Entry to Egypt (1st Sunday of Touba right after Nativity gospel to show Christ came for the Jews and Gentiles)
- Read Matthew 2:13-23 (1st Missionary Journey)
- Christ then left this authority to the Apostles who were responsible to spread the Word to the whole world
- Our responsibility to preach the Gospel which is based from our love of others for them to repent and be saved
- "He has exhorted us to lead all men, by patience and gentleness, from shame and the love of evil. And this indeed is proved in the case of many who once were of your way of thinking, but have changed their violent and tyrannical disposition, being overcome either by the constancy which they have witnessed in their neighbors' lives, or by the extraordinary forbearance they have observed in their fellow travelers when defrauded, or by the honesty of those with whom they have transacted business." - St. Justin the Martyr
- Mark 16:15, 1 Peter 3:15, Isaiah 6:8, 2 Timothy 4:5, Matthew 12:30, 1 Corinthians 9:16, Romans 15:12, 1 John 4:15, 1 John 4:7-11, 1 Corinthians 9:16, Philemon 6, Ephesians 4:11, Matthew 9:37-38
- Different styles of preaching (preaching with our words, with our actions, martyrdom etc)
- Story of St. Mark preaching, Story of St. Pachomius being inspired by people's kind actions
- St. Pachomius was born to pagan parents who forced him to worship idols. He wanted to worship the true God. He became a monk and became the father to many monks. He established for the monk a system of manual labor, the times of prayers, and eating. He made a difference in the life of others and his own.
- After the ascension of the Lord Christ, St. Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas to preach the Gospel in Antioch, Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, and Perga Pamphylia where he left them and returned to Jerusalem. After the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, he went with Barnabas to Cyprus. He also preached in Afrika, Berka, and the Five Western cities. He wrote the Gospel of St. Mark. He is the patriarch of the Coptic church.
- Romans 10:14

+ Why is making a difference beneficial to our spiritual lives?

- When we strive to make a difference in others, we make a difference in our own lives. The learning and work is continuous, it is never done.
- The work that is done on earth is rewarded in Heaven. Christ said in Mark 16:15-16 "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."
- Christ's love was evident on the cross. He wants everyone to be saved. It is up to each one of us to do the work.
- The Samaritan woman made a difference in her life and the life of the people of Samaria.
- St. Anthony left everything when he heard the word of God. He was captured and tortured. He was ready to be martyred. But God preserved him, according to His will, for the benefit of many, and so the Governor left him alone. Then the saint went back to his monastery according to God's will, and many came to visit him and to hear his teachings.
- Story of St. Gregory of Nyssa who was a Bishop with only 13 families in his diocese when he was ordained but by the time he died there were only 13 pagan families in his diocese instead
- "What is the profit of a lamp without light and what is the profit of a Christian without love of the salvation of their brethren." - St. John Chrysostom
- "Passing through this world to persuade all others to the best of my power to worship the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit." - St. Gregory of Nazianza
- "Pray without ceasing on behalf of everyone. For in them there is hope of repentance so that they may attain 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 find their brothers in all true kindness." - St. Ignatius of Antioch
- Revelation 7:9, By making a difference the vision of St. John of a multitude that no one could number was standing before the Lord will be fulfilled.



- Matthew 10:7-14 - Jesus instructed His disciple to preach to everyone and if they don't believe it will be their own condemnation.
- "Praise the Lord, all you nations; praise Him all you peoples." - Psalm 116 (Vespers Praises Niethnostero)
- "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" - Offering Deacon Chant
- "Let us be trustworthy witnesses by the life we lead. We are witnesses from God but He has sent us to testify of Him. Let us testify and persuade those who need to decide who He is. If we do not testify then we also need to answer for their mistake." - St. John Chrysostom
- We will be judged based on how well we spread God's word and brought others to the repentance or not
- Ezekiel 3:17-19, James 5:19-20, 2 Corinthians 5:20
- "He promised to confess before His Father those who confess His name before men. He also announced that He would those who would deny Him and would be ashamed of those who were ashamed to confess allegiance to Him." - St. Irenaeus





ARCHIVE



Version I lessons are being redeveloped.

Access to ALL Lessons available in Version I found in the archive.
Redeveloped lessons will be delivered every 6 to 8 weeks.

PK-G12: VERSION 1, 2020-2021 – [DRIVE ARCHIVE](#)