

Looking At Life

Lesson 4

Unit One

It's All About Relationship

Here I Am, Lord

Remember, Father, your servants, our parents, our teachers, our brothers and sisters, our friends, those who provide for us, the pilgrims, the travelers, those who give us rest, those who work hard, those who profess your name, those who are in penance, those who are enslaved, those who are sick, those who are afflicted, those who rule over us, those who do evil, those who do good, our enemies, those who hate us, and those who ask us in faith to pray for them.

from the Armenian Matins service



So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. Gen 1:27

1. What do you think it means to be made in God's image?

2. What do you think is the best way to know God as he wants us to know him?



Photo Play

Write three interesting things you learned about classmates today.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Tracing Our Ancestry

Our family history is a wonderful way for us to better understand who we are, where we came from and where we are going...we are especially blessed if we have a 'story-teller' in the family!

The Book of Genesis is also a book of wonderful memories for the family of God. It's a story that begins with how God created the world, how evil crept into Paradise, and how God handled the problem. The story continues to record the history of God's people—who were sometimes obedient and faithful and sometimes just downright sinful. Genesis is a wonderful love story between God and each one of us. God creates each person with special and unique qualities. He takes the time to know us, and to appreciate our differences. The truth is that God created us to be happy and live in perfect harmony with him, each other and all creation—so we know that God desires a relationship with us. But how can we fully develop a relationship with God—we can't see him, we can't touch him, we can't have a one-on-one conversation with him, we can't actually hear his voice. Or can we?



God knows each of us by name—and that name is all about relationship!

There is great significance in a name. When an Armenian priest is ordained, he is given a new name. The Bishop takes into account the talents and characteristics that the priest possesses and offers a name of a saint who has similar characteristics with the hope that the newly-ordained priest will follow in the footsteps and perhaps

be guided by the saint whose name he bears. This is biblical—Saul came to be called Paul, Simon became Peter, Sarai was renamed Sarah.

The Hebrew word for 'man' is *Adam*, a name that represents both maleness and femaleness—in other words 'humankind.' *Eve* in Hebrew means 'living,' *Cain* in Hebrew means 'I have produced,' *Abel* in Hebrew means 'breath.'

Family Issues...

We are the family of God!

We've already explored the Creation story and how peaceful and harmonious the first human relationships were. It was, sadly, not going to last. God created us as social beings, designed to be most fully human when we



interacted. In a real way we need other human beings to be able to grow and experience love and sacrifice. We didn't have to wait long to get into trouble. Shortly after Adam and Eve had to leave Paradise, their son Cain introduced the sin of "envy" (considered one of the 7 deadly sins) to the world - envy in the form of sibling rivalry. Let's see how Cain and his brother Abel dealt with this problem and how God settled the score. Read Genesis 4:1-16.

An Either/Or Activity

1. Do you think Cain was guilty of wrongdoing?
2. Do you think God was unfair in his response to what Cain did?

Hmmm...

What verses might help you understand God's judgment better? _____



Our Armenian Way

Kiss of Peace

Kresdos ee mech mer haydnetsav

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The relationship that God has with his creation is fully expressed in the relationship that Christ has with the Church. The Church is called to embody the living Spirit of love that unites all, so together we can leave Christ's mark on the world. This example of love is expressed in every action that takes place during Divine Liturgy as well as the living mission of the Church.

Our church is a family, made up of all of our families—together we are the 'Body of Christ.' Our relationship with God has everything to do with how we interact with compassion and love with our fellow human beings.

We are called to live in harmony with one another and we are reminded of that fact each and every Sunday just prior to the preparation of the bread and wine that we are about to receive in Holy Communion.

*Krisdos ee mech mer Haydnetsav...*The Kiss of Peace leads us to the reality that Christ is here revealed to his people—the people that he loved and died for. We must understand that before we can be worthy of God we must reconcile ourselves with one another. We cannot in good conscience ask God to forgive us, if we cannot forgive one another. "How can we say we love God whom we cannot see, if we do not love our brother, whom we can see?"

We know from the letters of St. Paul that greeting each other "with a holy kiss" is a sign of unity and love in Christ. In the Eucharist, Christ comes to unite his people to each other and to himself in the gift of his Body and Blood.



This kiss is the sign that our souls are united and that we banish all remembrance of injury. In other words...forgive and forget!

Use your Divine Liturgy Books to find where the Kiss of Peace is in the Divine Liturgy.

1. *Krisdos ee mech mer haydnetsav* means: _____

2. "Blessed is the revelation of Christ" in Armenian is: _____

As we bid one another farewell today...let's take a moment to thank God for the time that we have shared—for the Body which we are a part of—for the family and friends that make us understand how great our God is...He gave us each other to love and care for. Amen.

Please remain open-minded, and allow them to talk freely. Remember that an accepting spirit helps students know that their opinions are valuable. Give them opportunity to share their doubts; when we discount their doubts we can push them further away from God rather than encouraging them to seek understanding in faith as they seek answers. 5 min.

7. Continue with **Testing the Waters...Science versus Faith**. (See **Extending the Lesson** for an additional activity, time permitting.)
8. Refer back to procedure #5; ask students if they were to go back and stand on the line would their position be different because they now feel different? If yes, ask them to share the most important factor that they discovered in today's lesson that led to their change of mind 10 min.
9. Read or teach **Our Armenian Way**. Below are the items that the priest brings to the *Dnorhnek*.
 - ❖ Incense-an ancient symbol of prayers rising up to God – also symbolizing our souls burning with love for God.
 - ❖ *Nushkhar*-the round wafer of blessed bread stamped with the crucifix or plain cross and designs of grapes and wheat. The *nushkhar* can be kept in flour, salt, sugar, rice or wheat as a symbol of the presence of God's blessings.
 - ❖ Bible - during the *Dnorhnek*, Scripture is read.
 - ❖ Armenian Cross
10. Conclude with a progressive prayer. Ask everyone to think of something in God's world for which they are thankful, then start: "God you are indeed the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end that is forever. We are so thankful for..." (you begin and have students add to the list). End with "Amen." Remind students to bring their photos next week (see this lesson's **Note to the Teacher**). 10 min.

Extending the Lesson

1. Have students look up three New Testament references about Creation: Mark 13:19 (written c. 65 AD by a non-Jewish Christian probably in Rome); Matthew 19:4 (written c. 85 AD to a Christian-Jewish community); Acts 17:26 (author identified as Luke, written c.80 AD, for Greek Christians throughout the world) Commonality: They all make reference to the creation and/or Adam and Eve.
2. Teach "Amen. Alleluia."

Unit One: Looking at Life Session 4: It's All About Relationship

Key Concepts

1. God created us to know and love him and one another.
2. It is in that relationship and the ones we have with others that our humanity is most fully realized.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Reflect on the meaning of "image of God" in Genesis 1:27.
2. Share their photos and family memories with one another.
3. Explore the meaning of their names.
4. Review the concept of family and relationship in the Bible.
5. Participate in a theater exercise and "either/or" continuum about Cain and Abel and the first relationship conflict.
6. Learn the Scriptural foundation for the "Kiss of Peace" and its place in the Armenian liturgy where it restores a congregation through the healing power of reconciliation.

Materials Needed

Poster board (or oak tag) See Procedure #3.

Movable glue (non-permanent)

Personal photos

Book of Names and their meanings <http://www.babynames.com/> *

Armenian names: <http://www.behindthename.com/names/usage/armenian>*

*Make sure you have acquired the meaning of every student's name

Divine Liturgy Books (have these scattered around the room so time won't be needed later to distribute them)

CD/tape of Kreesdos ee mech (optional)

Note to the Teacher

Next week, you might choose to show a You Tube rendering of "We Are Many Parts" (see Session 5, **Materials Needed**). If so, you will need to bring a laptop computer and be prepared with the specific version you pre-selected.

Procedure

1. If possible, have chairs set up in a circle. If that is not possible, have students turn chairs and desks to face each other once they are seated. As the children enter collect their photos and have them take a seat. Begin with the opening prayer.
2. In advance select a student to read: Genesis 1:27. Open with the comment: "We did not have the opportunity to actually *meet* Adam and Eve, but we know about them and the relationship they had with God. Let's listen to a description of the moment God created humankind. The verse is in your book, but close your eyes and listen." After the reading, ask them what they think about when they hear the word 'image.' Have students read the verse in their texts and answer the two questions. Discuss. Guideline to answers: 1. Because we are made in God's image, we alone of all Creation are able to know and love him and one another. 2. To love and care for one another and the world around us; to grow closer to God, as well, through others, the Church, prayer, Scripture, etc. 10 min.
3. Continue with: "We're going to play a little game called "Photo Play." One by one I will pass your photographs around the group until you each have one. (Be sure that a student does not get his or her own photo.) Each of you will have the opportunity to guess who the person is. Once the person is identified, he or she will have the opportunity to talk about the photo (if the answer is too brief, ask questions so the class can learn enough to fill in **Photo Play**). If you listen carefully to your classmates, you're sure to find out something that you did not know about them. Listening is key in building strong personal relationships. You know, our own relationships are built step by step through knowledge and experience. Our relationship with God is actually realized in the same way." Have students fill in the three things they learned and share briefly. Then ask students to glue their photographs on the poster board and write their names under their photo (promise them that photos will be returned in a few weeks). 20 min.
4. Read or teach **Tracing Our Ancestry**. Note that the Old Testament stories of Creation and the relationship that God desires with his people are also a part of our family history. Open the book of names (or the list you have from the Internet) and take a few minutes to look up each student's name and share the information with them. Have children write the meaning of their name and its origin on the poster board. Remind them of their readings of Genesis 1 and 2 last session and how important "naming" is. God knows each of us by name. 5 min.
5. Continue by reading **Family Issues... We are the family of God!** and briefly discuss the question (answers might include patience, trust, tolerance, love, empathy, understanding, etc.). Read Genesis 4:1-16 by assigning 4 parts: Narrator, God, Cain, and Abel (who doesn't speak but can simply act out his part along with Cain and God). Have them come to the front of the room. After they perform the story, discuss questions with the use of an "Either/Or" line.

For both questions, point to 2 opposite sides of the room, one for a “yes” answer, one for “no.” Have students go to the corner that matches their answer. Discuss their reasons. Question 2: God punished Cain for his *response* to God’s judgment but has love and compassion enough to protect him. For **Hmmmm**: Direct students to verses 3,4 and 5 where we read that Cain gave “some” of his harvest, but Abel gave his best, out of love and respect. And then Cain sulked and was angry. Verse 7 suggests we need to master our sinful tendencies. 15 min.

6. Continue: “Loving and caring for one another is such an important part of the Christian path, that we have a specific place during the Divine Liturgy where we make sure our hearts are clear and open to one another. Anyone know the name of the ritual kiss we share at every Badarak? Yes, the “Kiss of Peace.” Read **Our Armenian Way**. If you have it, play the CD of the hymn sung during the exchange: “Kreesdos ee Mech.” Use your Divine Liturgy books to identify where the Kiss of Peace is located in the Liturgy (p. 27). Answers : 1. Christ is revealed among us. 2. Orhnyal eh haydnootyoonun Krisdosi. Ask students to pay particular attention to the 5th and 6th lines in which we see that the Church has become one with the kiss as a bond.

7. Conclude with the prayer in the student text and the Kiss of Peace greeting in Armenian and English. 10 min.

Unit One: Looking At Life

Session 5: God’s Shining Light

Key Concepts

1. God endows all people with gifts of ability and service.
2. It is an important Christian task to discern and use these gifts.
3. Extraordinary events and people in Armenian history have exemplified God’s bounty.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Identify their place in the Christian community in a football-themed activity.
2. Read Romans 12:1-8 and hear/see/reenact a song version.
3. Define and participate in a litany of gratitude for God’s creation.
4. Review the gifts and contributions of Armenians via T/F and matching games.
5. Reflect upon their own gifts and those they would want to cultivate.
6. Conclude with a litany of thanks for God’s abundant gifts.

Materials Needed

Props for a football game: ball, pom-pom, clipboard, stadium-type blanket, and poster board or oak tag for signs (see Procedure #1)

For the singing (or watching/listening) of “We Are Many Parts,” select a You Tube version to play in class. Take your laptop to class or arrange for one.

Prior to your class session have the room set up for a football game. Move the students desks/chairs to clear the center of the room - use them to represent the football stadium. To create the experience of a football game, put these four props around the room with a sign under each that explains its significance: a ball = player, a pom-pom=cheerleader, clipboard=coach, stadium-type blanket=fan in the stands.

Procedure

1. Open the session by asking the students to think about ways sports and Christian life are alike. Ask one student to read **A Great Team** and another to read Romans 12:1-8 aloud to the class. Point out that everyone has a unique role to play in the image of Christianity portrayed in the readings. Explain your football stadium setup to the students and suggest that they think about the experience of a football game parallel to Christian life. Have the students chose their location in the stadium representing where they might fit into Christian life.