

# Unit Three\* Following Jesus Leaders\* St. Gregory



## We Speak to God

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for the enlighteners of our church, St. Thaddeus, St. Bartholomew and, in particular, St. Gregory the Enlightener. Help us to be enlighteners for you, too! +Hanoon Hor yev Vortvo yev Hokvooyn Srpo. Amen.

## Let's Talk

Not all the people believed what the apostles were telling them. Why? At that time, the Armenian kings were pagans. They did not believe in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and the people were forced to believe in what their kings believed.



Many people in Armenia had the courage to follow the teachings of the apostles. They would meet secretly to pray and worship together.

For nearly three hundred years after the arrival of Thaddeus and Bartholomew, the Armenian kings were against Christianity. One of these was King Khosrov, and later his son, King Drtad.



## Listen to This

Imagine that you are one of those early Christians in Armenia...

Your family and a few other families in your village are Christians.

*Who are you with?*

To attend church services, you have to leave your house secretly and walk quietly to a cave a distance away from your village. *What is the weather like that day? Do you feel the sun on your face? Or rain? Or?*

You meet other families along the way. You enter the cave. *Is it cool inside or hot?*

The priest has already begun the service. *What do you hear?*

You pray and sing together. You receive Holy Communion.

After the service ends, families share a little time talking with each other. *Whom do you meet after worship?*

Then you begin the walk home. *How do you feel? Are you tired? Hungry? Happy?*

On the way, you and your friend walk together. You think about what you heard and saw. You wonder why Christians have to meet in secret.



## God Speaks to Us

Saul was a man who was totally against Jesus and his followers. One day while he was walking on the road to Damascus, a bright light shone all around him. Saul fell to the ground. He heard a voice asking, "Saul, Saul, why are you so cruel to me?"

Saul asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Jesus. Why are you cruel to me? Get up and go to the city where you will be told what to do." When Saul stood up, he realized that he could not see. Someone helped him and walked with him to Damascus to a certain house.





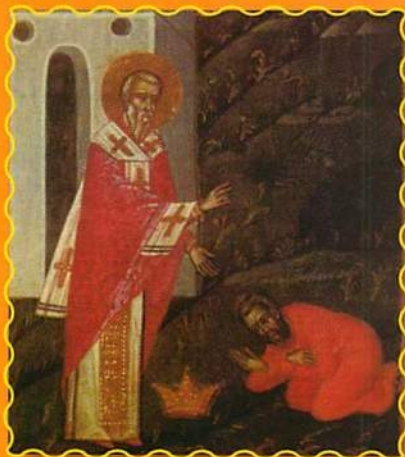
A man named Ananias lived in Damascus. He was one of Jesus' followers. Jesus said to him: "Go to Saul and help him." Ananias knew about Saul and the terrible things he had done to the Christians, but he obeyed Jesus.

"Saul, Jesus sent me to you. He wants you to see and to be filled with the Holy Spirit." Ananias put his hands on Saul. Suddenly he could see! Saul was baptized; and from that day on, Saul was called Paul. He spent the rest of his life traveling from place to place, preaching the words of Jesus.

*Acts 9:1-19*

## We Learn About God

When Jesus asked his followers if they were willing to carry on his work, they promised they would. Even people, like St. Paul, who were against Jesus at first.



When St. **Gregory** was ordered by King Drtad to worship a statue, he said, "I do not worship statues of gold, iron or stone. I am your servant, but I am first loyal to Jesus Christ." As punishment, he was placed in a pit (*khor virab*) and remained there for many years. He never stopped believing in Jesus; and when he was released from the pit, he continued to do good works in Jesus' name.

Jesus told **Ananias** to find Saul and put his hands on him so that his blindness could be cured. Annaias knew about Saul and his cruel treatment of Christians. In his heart, he wondered why Jesus was sending him to do this; but he did what Jesus asked him to do.

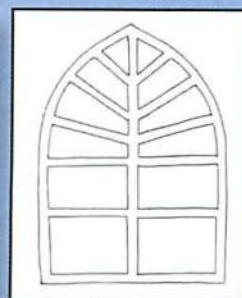


Like the apostles, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, St. Paul, St. Gregory and Ananias, you, too, will be called upon to make choices. Like the early Christians, you have to be strong in your faith, ready to

remain true to Jesus Christ.

## Hearts and Hands

Armenia, First Christian Nation





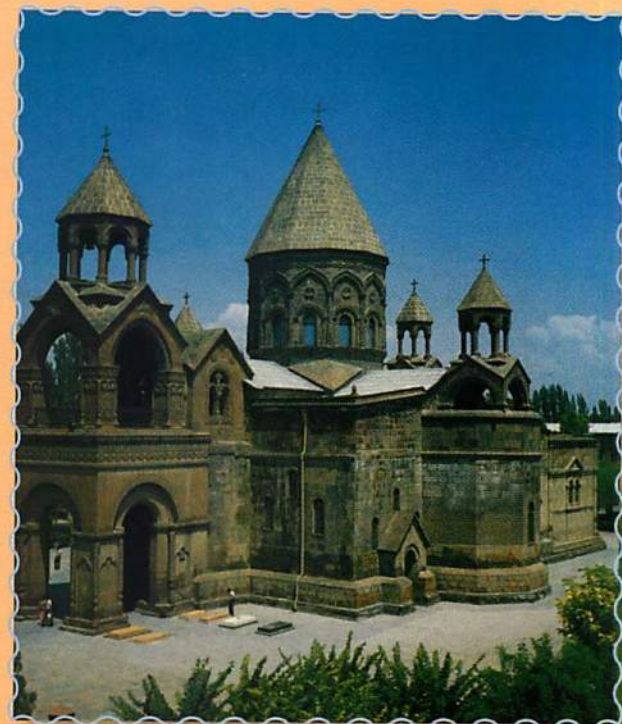
# Our Armenian Way

King Drtad became very ill. His sister, Princess Khosrovitoukht, knew that Gregory was still alive in the pit. She felt very strongly that he would be able to cure her brother. She sent for Gregory, and he cured the king. King Drtad was grateful to Gregory. He knew that it was Gregory's belief in Jesus that cured him. He asked Gregory to baptize him and his family. The king wanted Armenia to be a Christian country.

One night while Gregory was praying, he saw a vision. The heavens opened up, and a man with a radiant face spoke to him. "Gregory!" Gregory recognized the Only-Begotten Son of God (Miadzin), holding a golden hammer in his hand. Jesus struck the ground with the hammer.

When he woke up, Gregory knew that Jesus wanted him to build a church in that place. King Drtad and his family joined the people. Together they helped build the church at Holy Etchmiadzin, the place where the Only-Begotten came down.

The church was big and beautiful. Gregory was the first Catholicos, of Armenia, the first Christian nation.



## For My Family



### Sharing Our Faith

Today we learned about some of the early followers of Jesus Christ; the choices they had to make; and the difficulties they faced while remaining true to their faith. We also discussed how we are called upon to make good choices in our lives.

For nearly three hundred years after Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew went to Armenia, the nation still remained a pagan one, although there were many converts. King Khosrov was a pagan as was his son, King Drtad; both of these men played a part in the Armenian nation becoming the first to accept Christianity.

### Living Our Faith

1. Recall with your child the lives of two of the early fathers of the church.
  - St. Paul.
  - St. Gregory the Enlightener
2. Be strong in your faith like St. Gregory and St. Paul. Say, "I will follow you, Jesus."



us be good disciples, faithful and true. Give us the courage and vision of St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew and all the disciples who followed you without question and changed the hearts of millions of people. Amen.”

20 min.

## **Unit Three\* Following Jesus**

### **Leaders\* St. Gregory**

## **Lesson**

# **5**

### **Key Concepts**

1. The disciples of Jesus were committed to him and his teachings despite great challenges.
2. Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity. It was declared the state religion in the year 301 A.D.
3. Holy Etchmiadzin was the first church built in Armenia. It is known as the Mother Church.

### **Objectives**

During this session, students will

1. Explore the stories of Sts. Paul and Gregory.
2. Take part in a retelling of how Armenia became a Christian nation and the building of Holy Etchmiadzin.
3. Read “Jesus Is Welcomed Like a King” in *Jesus: Bible Stories for Children*. (Read this story on Palm Sunday also.)
4. Create a stained glass window of St. Gregory.

### **Materials Needed**

1. Make copies of the figure of St. Gregory found at the end of the Teacher Manual. Trace the window frames on black construction paper and cut them out prior to class. Be sure to cut out the shapes within the frame so that the tissue pieces can be added.
2. Sheets of colored tissue paper
3. A sample of a finished window

### **Note to the Teacher**

In church today, direct children’s attention to the stained glass windows.

### **Procedure**

1. Greet the children as they enter and then have them stand in place or in a circle to pray. Ask the children if they know what “enlightener” means (someone who brings a light to our understanding, makes us see something more clearly).
2. Once children are seated, distribute lessons and read **Let’s Talk**. After reading, ask: “Who can tell me what ‘pagan’ means? Why did some of the early Armenians, especially the kings, remain pagan?” Answers might include: it’s hard to change old beliefs; it was scary for kings to think of a powerful God – after all, they thought themselves to be god-like; they wanted the people to follow them, not Jesus.
3. Say: “Close your eyes. I am going to take you back in time. Use your imaginations to think

about life back in the early days of Christianity.” Read **Listen to This** as animatedly as you can. Pause to discuss their answers. 15 min.

4. Read or teach **God Speaks to Us** and **We Learn About God**. Review information by later asking: “Who can remember one fact about St. Paul? Who can remember one fact about St. Gregory?” Etc. 10 min.
5. Direct students to the picture of Holy Etchmiadzin. “Do you know what Etchmiadzin means? Listen to this amazing story.” Read the story in **Our Armenian Way**. As a fun way to review, have the students take turns telling the story. Let each student stand and provide one sentence, then sit down for the next child to stand and continue the story. If you feel the children need “to move,” call them up one at a time to do this. Prompt them with missing details. In this way you can review all they learned together today. 10 min.
6. Read “Jesus Is Welcomed Like a King” in *Jesus: Bible Stories for Children*. Distribute snack and discuss questions.
7. Ask a student to distribute copies of the window and the St. Gregory figure (**Hearts and Hands**). Show them your own sample. Have them color the figure of St. Gregory, then glue different colored pieces of tissue paper to the back of the window frame. The St. Gregory figure can then be glued on top. 20 min.
8. Conclude by having children share their finished work. Pray together: “Lord, thank us for this chance today to learn about more of your saintly enlighteners St. Paul and St. Gregory. Help us shine your light on the world, too, just like the stained glass window we made today. Amen.” 5 min.

## Unit Three\* *Following Jesus* *Easter*

### Lesson

# 6

#### Key Concepts

1. Christ’s resurrection is remembered on Easter, the holiest day of the Church year.
2. Christ’s resurrection is a sign of hope for all of us.
3. God’s message of love and forgiveness is that everyone who turns (or returns) to God can live forever with him.

#### Objectives

During this session, students will

1. Read a story about the joy of Easter in our lives today.
2. Restate God’s message of hope.
3. Review the events at the tomb of Christ on Easter morning and the meeting of Jesus with his disciples in Galilee.
4. Read “The End...and The Beginning” from *Jesus: Bible Stories for Children*.
5. Memorize the Easter greeting in Armenian and English.