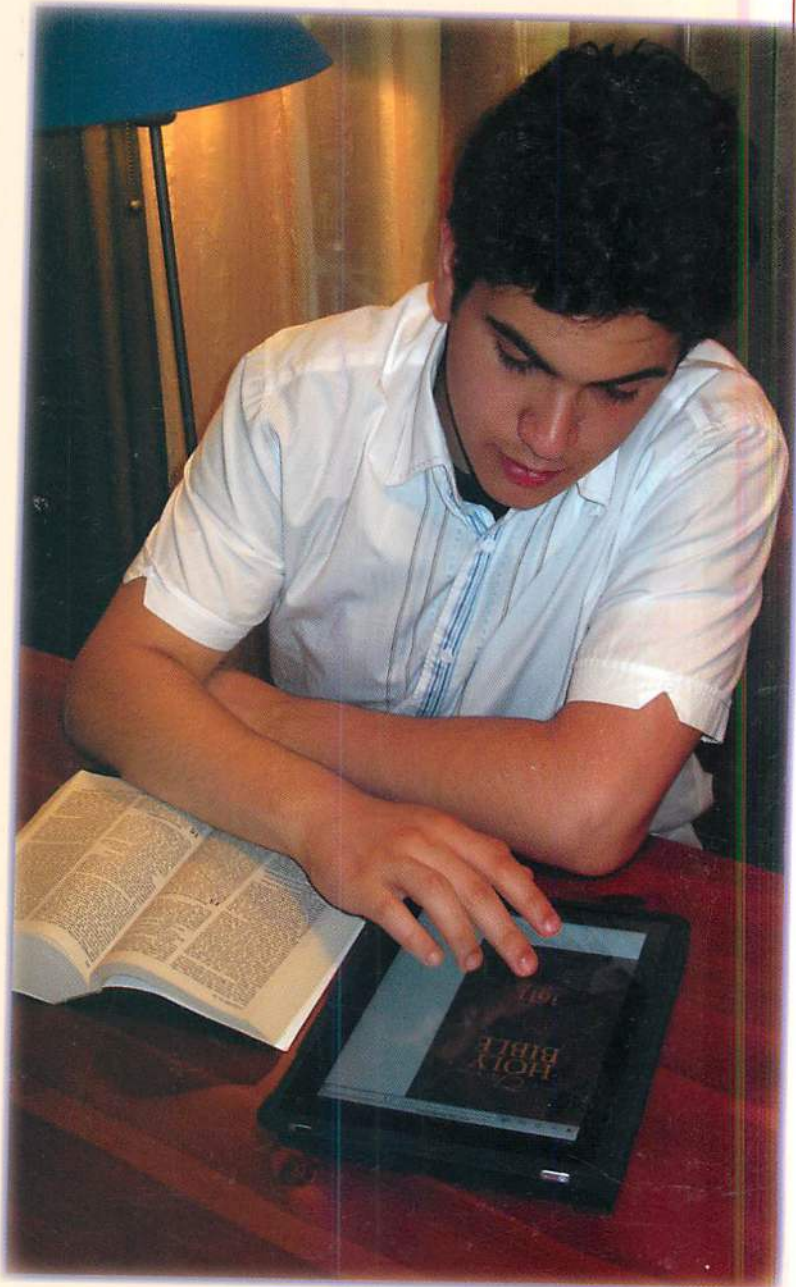


Grade Eight

The Heart of the Matter

Who Am I? What Do I Believe?



We Believe Curriculum
Student Text

Grade Eight
We Believe Curriculum
Student Text

The Heart of the Matter
Who Am I? What Do I Believe?

Elise Antreassian Bayizian

By order of
Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate

We Believe Curriculum
A Publication of the Department of Youth and Education
Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)
Copyright © 2011

Design
Armen Edgarian

Series Editor
Elise Antreassian Bayizian

Clergy reader
Fr. Garabed Kochakian

With appreciation for photographs contributed by the following Sunday Schools:

St. John's Southfield, MI

St. Mary, Hollywood, FL

Holy Martyrs, Bayside, NY

St. Mesrob, Racine, WI

Center illustration, p 63: Nishan Akgulian

Table of Contents

Unit One: Who Am I? Who Are We?

1. We Are Orthodox Christians	2
2. On This Rock: The Roman Catholic Church	7
3. Many Out of One: The Protestant Churches	11
4. A Sunday Visit	15
5. Roots and Branches: Judaism	16
6. Islam	20
7. Looking East: Hinduism and Buddhism	24

Unit Two: What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

1. We're in This Together: The Nicene Creed	30
2. Who's the Lord of <i>My</i> Life?	33
3. True God and the Source of Everything	36
4. Help!	39
5. God Knows How I Feel	42
6. Why Did God Have to Die?	44
7. Uh Oh... Judgment Day	47
8. The Ultimate Motivational Speaker	50
9. Once Again: We're in This Together	52
10. Living Stones	55
11. Dunked!	57
12. Act Two: Life After Life	60
13. Amen!	62
14. A Summing Up	64

Unit Three: I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

1. Living a Life That Matters	66
2. Using the Manual: The Bible	69
3. A Community of Disciples: The Circles of the Cross	72
4. The Holiness of Time	74
5. The Living Word/The Bread of Life	76
6. The Heart of the Matter	78
7. Review and Celebration	80

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 1

We Are Orthodox Christians

heart to Heart

Lord, thank you for your gift of the beautiful season of summer and for all we enjoyed with the hearts and minds and souls you created.

We are all grateful for... _____

Create in us, Lord, a grateful heart to always be aware of life's blessings. Amen.



Believing Is Seeing

You've probably heard the expression "seeing is believing." Well, if you turn that phrase around you have a great way of imagining how belief affects our lives. Seeing with the eyes of faith is like having a special pair of glasses that allows you to see more clearly, to see what is there

that you couldn't see otherwise. Think of a microscope, which makes it possible to see all the tiny organisms that you can't see by just looking with your eyes alone. Faith is like that – knowing that God is the origin and center of all things means understanding the spiritual nature of the universe. Believing that Jesus Christ, Son of God, sacrificed himself on the cross for us gives us added insight into human nature and the value of living God's way.

There is a very touching (no pun intended!) story in **Mark 8: 22-25** about seeing. Open your Bibles and read it together.

This has often been considered a beautiful example of how faith impacts upon the way we see the world. Consider these questions together:

1. How did the man come to see Jesus?
2. What did the man need before he could see?
3. Were his eyes opened at once?
4. What would be a good title for this story (one that would sum up its message)? Write it here:



Verse Master

"Give thanks in all circumstances."

1 Thessalonians 5: 18



What Do I Believe?

Circle your answer in each pair and think about why you chose the answer you did.

1. What is your faith more like?
2. What do you think of when you think of Jesus?
3. Holy Communion is more like
4. Praying is more like
5. What do you think is most important to God?

A balloon or a bowling ball?

Human or divine?

Command or promise?

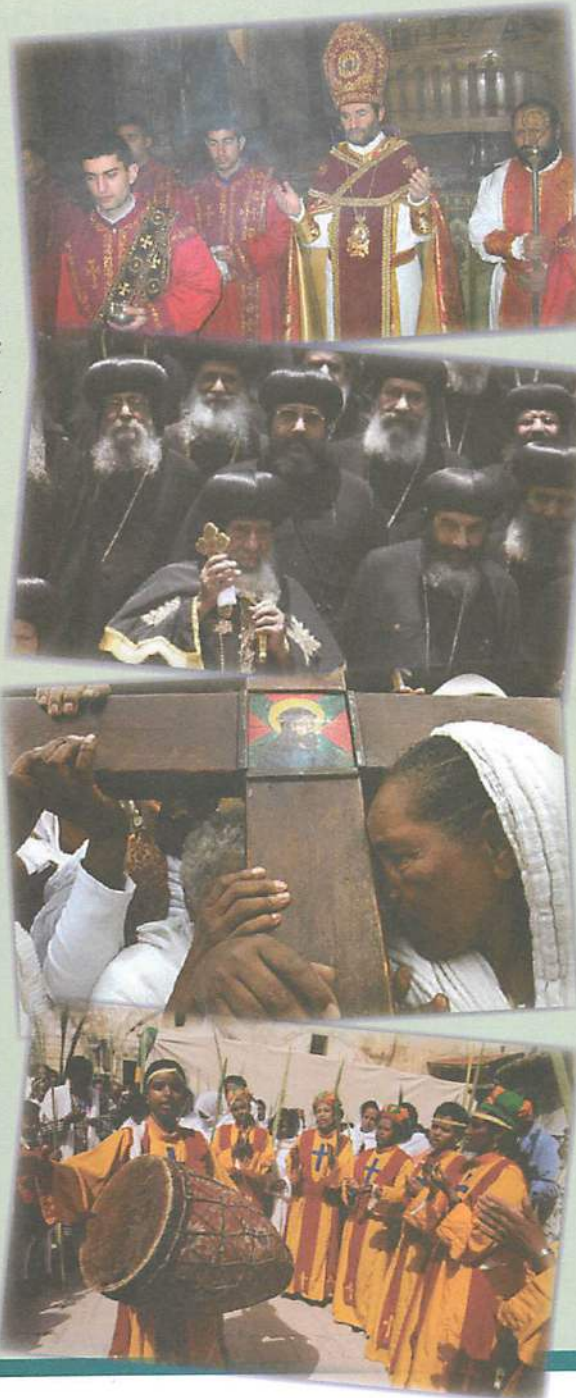
Stumbling in the dark or walking in the light?

The beliefs we hold or the life we live?

We Are Orthodox Christians

Why are there different “families” of Christians? This unfortunate reality is simple to explain, for even though there is one Lord Jesus Christ and a canon of Holy Scripture that all churches accepted in the early centuries, people eventually began to differ in their *understandings and traditions*. Sometimes compromise proved impossible and over time the Christian Church began to evolve into three major divisions, Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant. Of course, this was not our Lord’s wish when he left his earthly ministry in the care of “His Body” – the Church. Today, churches continue to work together to establish common ground through such large ecumenical bodies as the National Council of Churches or even smaller cooperative groups.

But despite this variety of Christian understandings, we



all share a common faith in Jesus Christ, in the fellowship of the church, and in some sort of sacramental life (although the extent of that life varies widely). And so, happily, our faith can indeed thrive and we can grow closer to God in the teaching and fellowship of our own small, specific church.

The Armenian Church belongs to the large Orthodox family. The Orthodox (which literally means “correct thinking”) trace their origins to the apostles and their beliefs to the earliest traditions and creeds of the Church. These teachings are considered the most faithful to the ancient understandings of the church. There are two groups within the Orthodox family known as “greater” and “lesser.” These terms are not about importance; they simply refer to the fact that the Eastern Orthodox are greater in number. “Oriental” simply refers to the fact that these churches are to the east geographically. Here’s a simple look:

The Eastern or Greater Orthodox Churches

Greek
Russian
Ukrainian
Antiochian
Romanian
Bulgarian
American and
others



The Oriental or Lesser Orthodox Churches

Armenian
Coptic
(Egyptian)
Syriac
Ethiopian
Malankara
(Indian)
Eritrean



Differences

The Eastern or Greater Orthodox

Accept the teachings and canons of seven councils as ecumenical (accepted by the universal church).

The 4th church council (Chalcedon) defined Jesus Christ as being two in natures (human and divine but one in substance).

Local traditions in worship, sacraments, prayers, feast day customs, of course, developed differently (Armenians bless grapes on the Feast of Assumption, for example, while Greeks, Russians, and Romanians bless fruit on the Feast of the Transfiguration).

The Oriental Orthodox

Accept the teachings and canons of only the first three ancient councils as truly ecumenical.

They believe the nature of Jesus Christ is fully human and divine, united in him together as one substance.

They Share

Theology, governance, and understanding of Holy Tradition and the Bible are generally the same.

As a result of the one difference in their theological understanding of Christ's nature, these two orthodox families are not "in communion" with each other, which means they cannot receive Holy Communion in each other's churches.

We Are Members of the Armenian Church

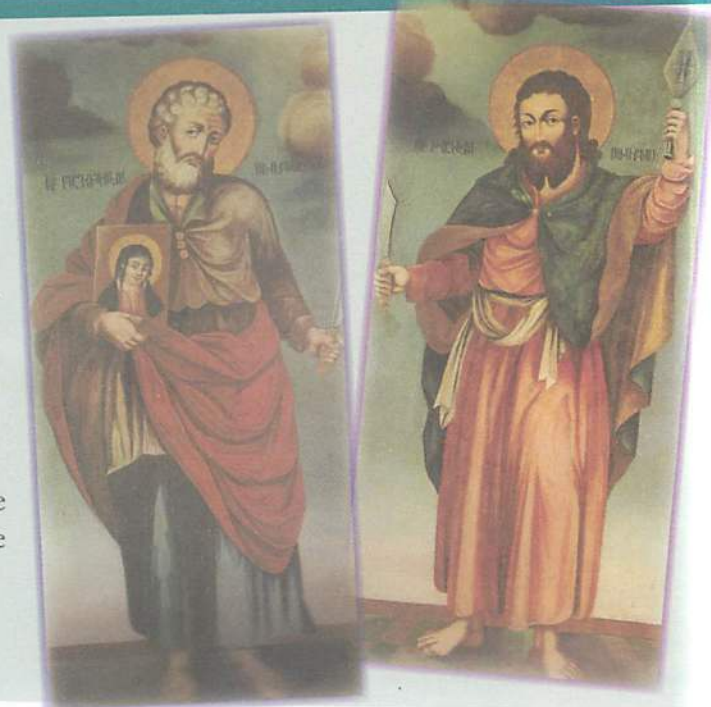
The birth of the Armenian Church can be traced to two of Jesus' apostles, Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew, who went to Armenia at different times to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ. In what century would this have taken place?

Write it here: _____.

They are referred to as the "First Enlighteners" of Armenia.

Do you remember the event that gifted the disciples with the knowledge of languages and enabled them to go out into the world as "apostles" (literally: "sent out")?

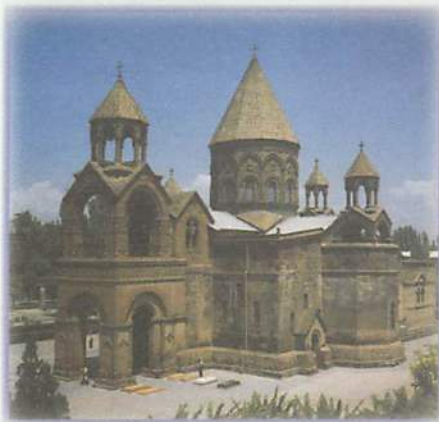
Write it here: _____.





So the faith was slowly spreading, even though Armenia remained essentially a pagan nation. Finally, it was St. Gregory the Enlightener in the early 4th century who made the inevitable happen. Fate brought him to Armenia and to King Drtad's court and after a long series of events, including his imprisonment for 13 years, he baptized King Drtad, Queen Ashkhen, Princess Khosrovitookht (his sister and Gregory's protector), and the royal court and army in 301 A.D. Then he began the work of Christianizing the nation, the first in the world. He is referred to as the "Third Enlightener of Armenia."

How does being a member of the first Christian nation make you feel?



The first Armenian Cathedral, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, was built in 303 A.D. in Etchmiadzin, and was founded by St. Gregory - inspired by Gregory's famous dream in which Jesus came down and struck the ground with

a golden hammer (sound familiar?). He himself became the first Catholicos. And the rest is a rich and complex history during which the church grew and spread, sometimes over vast territories, often oppressed and persecuted, and out to other continents where Armenians eventually lived, including North America. And so here we are!

Basic Beliefs of the Armenian Church

1. Jesus Christ, Son of God, who made it possible for us to share in eternal life through his sacrifice on the cross.
2. The Holy Trinity: three persons in one Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Son and Spirit proceed only from the Father.
3. The first three ecumenical councils and the Nicene Creed. You'll be learning more about that later. Additional local councils continued the process of defining the faith.
- 4 A life of sacrament when God is especially present and bestows a special grace. Those sacraments begin with baptism, which is the spiritual birth that follows our physical birth. Since we are all born with the tendency to do the wrong thing ("original sin"), baptism cleanses us of this sin and makes it possible for us to receive God's grace. The Armenian Church baptizes infants because we believe that children need to be full participants in the life of the church; the commitment to faith can be made on their behalf by the community, through their godparents. We have formalized seven sacraments: baptism, chrismation, penance, holy communion, ordination, marriage, and prayers for the sick (extreme unction - the final anointing - is reserved only for clergy).
5. Holy Communion, the most important sacrament, received at our Divine Liturgy or *badarak*. It is this gift of Jesus himself, bread and wine that becomes his body and blood, which feeds our souls.
6. The Church, the heart and hearth of our faith, a place where we worship, pray, serve, and learn together with the rest of our extended Christian family.
7. We are led in our worship and sacramental life by an ordained ministry, currently reserved for men, in three basic ranks: deacon, priest and bishop. We have both married and unmarried priests; these are distinct vocational choices. Only unmarried priests may be elevated to higher positions of authority as bishops.



Remember

The Armenian Church is a member of the Orthodox family of churches, specifically the "Oriental Orthodox."



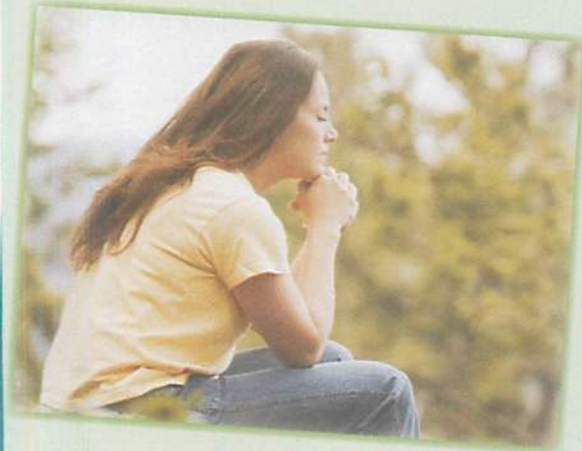


Scenic Overlook

The 4th world church council of Chalcedon took place in 451 A.D. Armenians couldn't send representatives because, under the generalship of Vartan Mamigonian, they were at war with the Persians (the Battle of Avarayr). The Armenians did not consider the Council of Chalcedon as truly ecumenical and so could not adhere to its decisions, especially concerning the nature of Christ.



8. A hierarchical leadership at the apex of which is the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians who lives in the international headquarters of the Armenian Church – in Etchmiadzin, Armenia. The two other important Patriarchal centers are in Jerusalem and Constantinople.



9. The Holy Bible as the foundation and main source of a rich Holy Tradition that includes our sacraments, feasts, saints, canon law, music, art and much more. All of these inform our faith. Since the Bible came about through an inspired process *within* the church, we need to read it regularly; it is best understood as we read it with the guidance of the church through its trained leaders. We also read it privately for ongoing spiritual support and enlightenment.
10. Prayer is our means of growing closer to God and his will for us. We pray with the community and through our own ongoing personal conversations. We believe that God fills us with his answers, slowly, over time.

Highlights

1. **Holy Day:** Sunday, The Lord's Day, in Armenian: *Giragi*, which comes from the word for "Lord."
2. **Holy Days:** Feast days commemorating the events related to the life of Christ, the church, and the saints.
3. **Holy Book:** The Bible (Old and New Testaments)
4. **Membership Rites:** Rites of initiation are celebrated at baptism and include baptism itself (immersion in water), chrismation (anointing with oil, being "sealed" with the Holy Spirit), and the baby's (or adult's) first Holy Communion.
5. **Leadership:** The Catholicos, first of all bishops; Council of Bishops; Primate, Diocesan Council and Diocesan Assembly (delegates elected and sent by the parish); priests, parish councils, and parish assemblies (consisting of all parish members) in the local parish.
6. **Most Basic Belief:** Jesus Christ, Son of God and God himself incarnate, who made it possible for us to share in eternal life through his sacrifice on the cross. God as understood as Holy Trinity: three persons in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 2

On This Rock: The Roman Catholic Church

heart to Heart

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.....

St. Francis of Assisi

Here I Am, Lord, p. 29



A Backward Glance

1. The story in Mark 8:22-25 of Jesus healing a blind man, reminds us above all that

- a. Eyesight is a gift of God b. Having the right friends can put you in the right place
 c. We need God for 20/20 spiritual vision d. Faith comes late in your life

2. The Armenian Church can best be described as

- a. Eastern Orthodox b. Universal Apostolic
 c. Greater Orthodox d. Oriental Orthodox

3. The Armenians could not attend or approve the decisions made in this council:

- a. The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) b. The Council of Constantinople (381 AD)
 c. The Council of Ephesus (431 AD) d. The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD)

4. Milestone events when God is especially present and bestows a special grace are called:

- a. Eucharistic celebrations b. Sacraments
 c. Rites of initiation d. Rites of passage

5. The foundation of our Holy Tradition is

- a. The priesthood b. The Bible
 c. Canon law d. The Divine Liturgy

Verse Master

“So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

Galatians 6:10



A Concise Guide to the...Roman Catholic Church

A Brief History

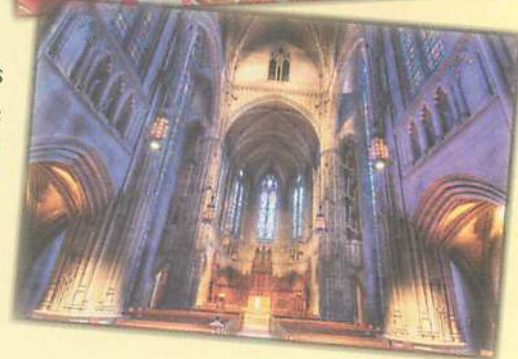
On one level, the variety of Christian churches is easy to understand. Imagine an organization—devoted, let's say, to the love and study of nature—begins in one city and then develops chapters all over the world. It would be easy to see how different agendas and approaches would arise. Group A in the American Northwest might decide to protest the cutting down of forests and become political activists and feel sure that activism is most important to their mission. Group B in the Northeast might think it wiser to create activities for people who use urban public parks. A fanatical Group C in another place might decide to immediately imprison anyone trespassing on a nature preserve! It would not be unlikely that each group finds the other's agendas wrong and misdirected. And sometimes they are. Groups A and B could easily come to terms with each other's approaches, but it is questionable whether Group C's belief would find any reasonable followers.

The Roman Catholic Church began as the same community of believers that gathered around Jesus and then spread to the four corners of the world, including Rome. By the fifth century, when the Western Roman Empire finally fell, the Roman (also known as the Latin) Church had become a political as well as a spiritual power.

“Catholic” actually means “universal” but became the specific “tag” of the western church to differentiate it from

the Eastern Orthodox Church when they separated from each other in what is called the Great Schism, brought about by the “filioque” (fee-lee-oh-kweh) controversy (see Scenic Overlook for more on that one!).

Prior to that schism, the Roman Catholic Church, centered in Rome, participated in seven Councils it considered Ecumenical with the Eastern Orthodox (but not the Armenian Church, if you remember). After 1054, it continued its own governance through the leadership of its bishops and councils, developing specific liturgical and pious traditions.



Basic Beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church

What do Roman Catholics believe and how have they organized themselves *differently* from the Armenian Church? Here's the same list of basic beliefs of the Armenian Church from Chapter One. *Differences* appear in italics.

1. Jesus Christ, Son of God, who made it possible for us to share in eternal life through his sacrifice on the cross.



2. The Holy Trinity: three persons in one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. *While the Orthodox Church believes that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, the Catholic Church believes that He proceeds from both Father and Son, the definition that was a major cause of the Great Schism of 1054.*

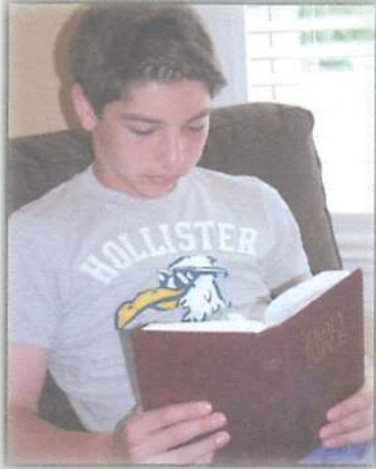
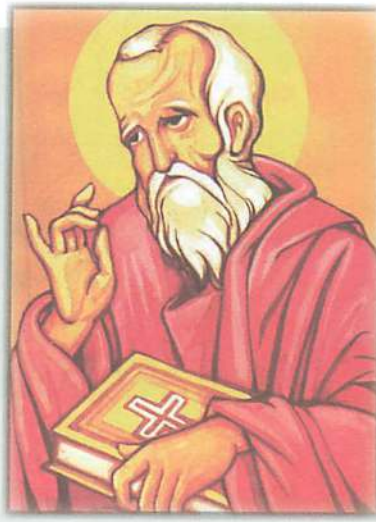
3. Participated in seven "Ecumenical" Councils. Additional local councils continued the process of defining the faith.

4. A sacramental life and milestone events when God is especially present and confers special grace. Those sacraments begin with baptism (*with a sprinkling of water rather than immersion*) which is the spiritual birth that follows our physical birth. *Infants are baptized but not confirmed until they are considered nominally adults (approximately at age 12). First communion is given at age seven, considered to be the age of reason.* There are seven sacraments: baptism and chrismation, *confirmation (anointing with simple oil, not Holy Muron, as an affirmation of faith), penance (also done for the first time at age seven) and Holy Communion, ordination, marriage (the priest only offers a prayer of blessing for the marriage, but it is the couple themselves who are giving the sacrament to each other) and anointing for the sick and dying, for all people.*

5. Holy Communion, the most important sacrament, dispensed during our Divine Liturgy or *badarak*. It is this gift of Jesus himself, bread and wine that become body and blood, which feeds our souls. At liturgy, we join all our separate selves and voices to become One Church, to which we were grafted at baptism.

6. The Church; this is the heart and hearth of our faith, a place where we worship, pray, serve, and learn together with the other members of our extended Christian family.

7. We are led in our worship and sacramental life by an ordained ministry, currently restricted to men, in three basic ranks: deacon, priest and bishop. *All ordained religious orders—priests, as well as the teaching and service ministries of nuns and monks—are unmarried.*



8. *A hierarchical leadership at the apex of which is the Pope, considered the successor to St. Peter whom Roman Catholics consider to be the first Pope (an interpretation of Jesus' words to Peter (Matthew 16: 18-19.) The Pope lives in the center of the international headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church—the small city-state of Vatican City in Rome. He is advised by a council of archbishops known as the College of Cardinals.*

9. The Holy Bible as the foundation and main source of a rich Holy Tradition that comprises our sacraments, feasts, saints, canon law, music, art and much more. All of these inform our faith. Since the Bible came to be through an inspired process *within* the church, it is best understood as we read it with the guidance of the church through its trained leaders. We also read it privately for ongoing spiritual support and enlightenment.

10. Prayer is our means of growing closer to God and his will for us, so we use it both formally through the formal prayers of the community and through our own ongoing very personal conversations. We believe that God fills us with his wisdom, slowly, over time.

11. *There is considerable definition and reflection on the character of God, the judgment and eternal life and other mysteries. For example, sins have been defined in various degrees (venal, etc.) and penance must match accordingly. Such specific concepts as limbo, an intermediate stage for the unbaptized, or purgatory, where souls remain as their sins are prayed for by the living.*

12. *Mission work is carried out to spread the faith and convert non-believers to Christianity. The bishops of the Church act as the voice of Christian conscience to governmental leaders in order to protect life and ensure justices to all people.*

Remember

The Roman Catholic Church shares most of the basic beliefs of the Armenian Church.

Scenic Overlook

The "Great Schism" (*skih-zum* means a separation or division) refers to the formal split that took place between the Eastern Church and the Western Church in 1054. Following many years of theological disputes, often bitter, the split was finalized over such issues as the question of the Pope's universal authority and the understanding of Spirit. The Catholics believe that the Holy Spirit came forth from both the Father and Son rather than only from the Father. The Latin word for "and the Son" is *filioque* and this was how the controversy came to be known.



Digging Deeper

Find out the definitions of these distinctly Roman Catholic practices/beliefs:

1. Stations of the Cross
2. Rosary
3. First communion
4. Ash Wednesday
5. Venial sin
6. Purgatory
7. Limbo

Armenian/
Roman
Catholic

Distinctly
Armenian

Distinctly
Roman
Catholic

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 3

Many Out of One: The Protestant Churches

heart to Heart

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer



A Backward Glance

- The disciple of Jesus most associated with the Catholic Church is*
 - a. St. James
 - b. St. Thomas
 - c. St. Peter
 - d. St. John
- The Roman Catholic Church, centered in Rome, began as*
 - a. A sub-group of the early church
 - b. A break-away protest group in the 12th century
 - c. Part of the one universal church
 - d. Oriental Orthodox
- The Catholic "rites of initiation" differ from those in the Armenian Church because*
 - a. The Catholics do not believe in infant baptism
 - b. They have separated them into three distinct events
 - c. They can all be done at home
 - d. A priest is not necessary for their realization
- A fundamental difference between the Armenian priesthood and the Roman Catholic priesthood is that*
 - a. All priests in the Catholic church must know Latin
 - b. The vocation of the Catholic priest is unmarried (celibate)
 - c. Catholic priests cannot be ordained before the age of 30
 - d. Armenian priests wear ornate vestments and Catholics do not
- Check the two differences between the Catholic Mass and our Divine Liturgy:*
 - a. The Catholic Mass can be in a variety of languages
 - b. The Mass can take place without a priest
 - c. Holy Communion is not necessary for Catholic believers
 - d. The Catholic priest generally faces the congregation during the Mass

Verse Master

"Do not merely listen to the word of God, and so deceive yourselves.
Do what it says."

James 1:22



As Concise a Guide as Possible to the Protestant Church

It would be very hard to summarize the variety of denominations that have come to be called “Protestant” in one short chapter of one short book! But here goes....



It began simply enough – as things are always thought to have begun when you look back and reflect – as a protest by the Catholic priest Martin Luther against some of the corrupt and questionable practices of the church of his time (there *had* been earlier protest movements). He

eventually nailed his famous “95 Theses” on a church door in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1521.

Above all, he was protesting the idea that a person could “earn” his or her salvation by certain good works and prayers (“indulgences”) which dispensed forgiveness. Seeing that these were being sold for profit, Luther vehemently objected, proclaiming that salvation is a gift of God’s freely given (“grace”) and that the church can in no way provide, let alone sell, God’s grace. It was God’s gift of faith alone (*sola fide*) that would save us.

Luther also believed that the canon of Scripture should reflect the earliest collection of books, so he removed what the church had begun to call the “Second Canon” or “Deuterocanonical” books (some refer to these books as the “apocrypha” meaning “hidden”). These were books such as I and II Maccabees, or Psalm 151 (found in the Orthodox Bible) that the Church thought were important but not as important as the original canon.

So Protestant Bibles do not include these; Orthodox and Roman Catholics do.

An interesting footnote: The Armenian historian Yeghishe, who wrote about St. Vartan and the Battle of Avarayr, was profoundly inspired by the beautiful imagery of the holy war depicted in I and II Maccabees.



This and other protests and reforms launched what came to be known as the *Protestant Reformation*. Luther was ultimately excommunicated by the Pope of Rome for his questioning. But he had won many followers in northern Europe where princes were eager to be free of the political influence of the Pope and people were attracted to a more “democratic” church.

Lutherans accept only two sacraments: baptism (not immersion but by a symbolic sprinkling of water) of infants and adults and Holy Communion (offered in adolescence). Other rites of the Roman Catholic Church – from which Martin Luther broke away – were retained as services of blessings but not necessarily sacraments, including confession, confirmation, ordination of ministers, and marriage.

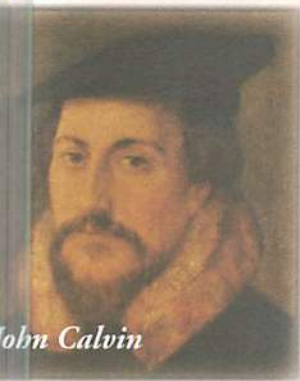


Like Lutherans, *The Church of England (Episcopal or Anglican)* once recognized the Pope as their spiritual leader. The Reformation was well under way at the time of Henry VIII of England and when the Pope refused to undo the king’s first marriage so that he could marry Anne Boleyn, he ordered the Archbishop of Canterbury to reject papal authority. King Henry himself became the head of the Church of England. While Catholic sacraments, creeds, and orders were kept for a time, once the Reformation was in full swing, changes continued. The Bible was translated from Latin into English, a *very* daring move since in those early centuries, the western church had considered it inappropriate for people to read and understand on their own.

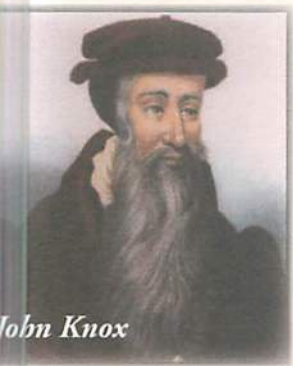


Of all the Protestant denominations, the Episcopalians have outwardly maintained many similarities to both the Catholic and Orthodox churches in form and community living, retaining seven sacraments, a similar ranking of ministry (deacon, priest, bishop), the importance of the Eucharist or Holy Communion – consecrated and distributed at every Divine Liturgy.

Another Protestant denomination, the *Presbyterian Church*, was founded by John Calvin (1509-1564). His teachings were inspired by Martin Luther and the Reformation. Calvin fled France for Switzerland and established his own religious community in Geneva. His devoted student, John Knox, a former Roman Catholic priest, returned to his native Scotland to evangelize this new form of the “protestant” faith. The Scottish Parliament abolished Roman Catholicism and declared Presbyterianism the state religion. Baptism (of infants and adults) and Holy Communion are considered sacraments, although the Eucharist is more a meal of remembrance and fellowship.



John Calvin



John Knox

The *Methodist* church originated in the teachings of John Wesley (1703-1791), an Anglican minister. A student at Oxford University, he and his prayer group were called “Methodists” because of their methodical study and prayer habits. Shocking the

more aristocratic Anglican Church (Church of England) with his work of preaching to and praying with the poor, the growing number of his followers eventually formed an independent church. Baptism and Holy Communion are sacraments, with Christ symbolically – not actually – present in the Eucharist. This denomination is strong in North America, with three large groups: the United Methodist Church, and two black churches: the African Episcopal Church, and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.



John Wesley

The *Baptists*, trace their roots to the Anabaptists (who practiced re-baptism of already baptized Christians) of the early 16th century Europe. Founded on the belief that only adults should be baptized, the church was established in Amsterdam in 1609 by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, both English preachers living in Holland to avoid persecution. Helwys returned to England and there founded the first Baptist church in England.



Persecuted in England, many Baptists fled to the new American colonies. One of the most famous of these was Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island in 1639.

The Southern Baptists are the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. and together with the world-wide Baptists form the largest Protestant denomination in the world.

There are no sacraments; only adults are baptized, and the Lord’s Supper is offered only as a remembrance. Like the Methodists, grape juice and not wine is used for this service. The Bible is the most important, almost exclusive guiding document and there are, therefore, no creeds. Individual interpretation of Scripture is encouraged. Local congregations are independent and self-governing.



Scenic Overlook

The Armenian Church, in a very inspired and visionary move, had translated the Bible into vernacular Armenian in the 5th century! This was the first translation in the new Armenian alphabet that started a "Golden Age" of translations and other writings.



Remember

The Protestant Church was born in the 16th century as a protest against perceived corruptions in the established church. It has diversified into a number of communions including Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists and Baptists among many others.

In Summary...

As you review the information in the history and general approach to these churches, do you see some basic principles you can define as "Protestant"? Name three:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

There are *many* other denominations you could look up and learn more about: i.e., the United Church of Christ, the Quakers, the Amish, etc. But there is a clear pattern to the development of all the communions we can label as Protestant. Leaders arose who developed a significantly different understanding – sometimes in defiance of authority and sometimes in opposition to legitimate corruptions. What may have seemed as minor differences slowly evolved into unbridgeable ones – all leading to the formation of distinctively new and different understandings and, therefore, new communities.

Do you think it's a healthy development or a regrettable one that so many Christian groups – often bitterly opposed to each other's understanding of Jesus Christ and the Church – developed?

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 4

A Sunday Visit

Visitor's Journal

In thinking of your worship experience at another church, what was *similar* to the Armenian liturgy?

What was *different*?

How did you *feel* worshipping in this church?

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

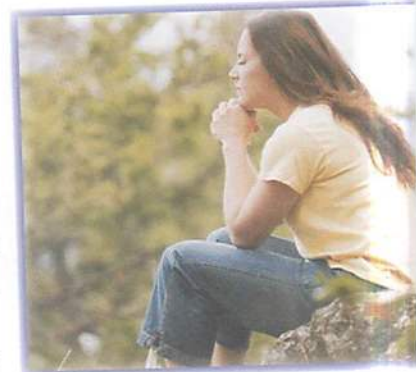
Lesson 5

Roots and Branches: Judaism

heart to Heart

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9



The Jewish Path

Judaism derives its name from Judah, the great-grandson of the patriarch Abraham, Judah was also the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel and the name of the southern Kingdom (the northern was Israel) where Jerusalem was capital. The story of the origins of the Jewish faith is found in the Old Testament. We know it well as the founding patriarch Abraham is an important person in not only our story but for the Muslims as well.



You can read about the story of the founding patriarchs in the Book of Genesis, and Abraham's especially in Genesis 12 – 50.

Abram and Sarai (they were renamed later by God) were inhabitants of Haran, a city in ancient Mesopotamia, in the land of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is now Iraq.

- Read Genesis 12: 1-5 to see how it all began.

1. *What command and promises does God give Abraham?*
2. *Would you rather be blessed or be a blessing?*

So Abram doesn't fool around. He leaves immediately, taking everything with him. And he's no youngster, is he? At 75, even in the era of legendary long lives (he lives to be 175-Genesis 25:7), Abram faced an arduous journey in a caravan of camels and donkeys, carting all his worldly possessions and taking all the people of his household. When Abram reaches his destination, God made a covenant (sacred agreement) with him, renaming him Abraham, which literally means "father of all nations." God foresees descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and makes circumcision the mark of all who will be considered his "chosen nation or people." Abraham, his son Isaac, grandson Jacob and great grandson Joseph and their families undergo many trials and adventures – they are some of



the most well-known stories in the Bible. Eventually the great patriarch Moses is called to free the Jews from their masters in Egypt, and the Jews are led into the Promised Land by Joshua. Now in Canaan, the settlers were led first by a series of Judges and then by kings: Saul, Solomon and, finally, David. After the death of Solomon, the kingdom split into two, the larger and more powerful Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The northern kingdom was destroyed in 722 BC by the Assyrians. In 586 BC, Judah was attacked by the Babylonians, destroying the Temple in Jerusalem and deporting most of Judah's inhabitants. It was during this exile that the Jewish religion took shape, as the exiles had to define their national religion without a nation.

In 539, the Babylonian Empire fell to the Persians, and the exiles returned home. The Temple was rebuilt only to be disrespected by the Romans who installed an altar of Zeus, inspiring the Maccabean rebellion in 167 BC led by Matthias Maccabee and his son Judah. This was crushed by Rome in 63 BC after which Jewish life shifted beyond Jerusalem. Like Armenians, the Jews were frequently victims of persecution. Ultimately, in response to the horrific Holocaust perpetrated by the Germans in WWII, a Jewish homeland was established in the State of Israel in 1948.



Judaism has branched into far fewer subdivisions than Christianity, so it's a lot easier to learn the differences (*easier*, not *easy*!). The three main branches of Judaism in North America are the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform.

The Orthodox follow the ancient Jewish traditions the closest. In worship, men and women are separated. The men wear a yarmulke or skull cap, prayer shawl, and the tefillin – the small leather pouches of Scripture that are worn on the forehead and arms. Kosher dietary laws are strictly adhered to. On the Sabbath, no work is permitted—to such an extent that, for example, light switches cannot be turned on. The Torah is extremely important and its study obligatory. All of the Hebrew Bible, as well as Jewish commentaries such as the Talmud are also held in high esteem. They believe a divine emissary in the person of a messiah will eventually come to redeem the world.



Conservative Jews have modified strict Orthodoxy; men and women sit together during worship and are more flexible in applying modern circumstances to traditional laws and practices. They do follow kosher dietary laws.

The Reform branch is the most liberal, looking to the Torah as authoritative but flexible in applying modern life to traditional understandings. Rather than a personal Messiah, they believe in a messianic age to come when God's total rule will be realized. They do not generally follow kosher dietary laws.



Highlights

Holy Day: Saturday, Shabbat – related to the Armenian word “Shapat” for Saturday. A day of rest commemorating the day God rested after the creation of the world, (Genesis 2:2). Its observance is one of the Ten Commandments. A brief candle-lighting and prayer ceremony ushers in the Sabbath on Friday night.



Holy Days: **Passover.** Perhaps the best known Jewish feast for Christians, this is a week-long spring festival that occurs around Eastertime, recalling how Hebrew homes were “passed over” by the angel of death during the last plague sent upon the Egyptians by God that took the life of first-born boys. The commemorative meal or “seder” (meaning “order” of what will be eaten) recalls their hasty escape from Egypt during the Exodus. The meal therefore includes unleavened bread (matzoh), bitter herbs, eggs, lamb, and wine. Jesus was said to be celebrating the Passover when he held his Last Supper with the disciples. The yearly date to celebrate Easter is connected with Passover. **Rosh Hoshanah.** The Jewish new year which ushers in a period of repentance ending ten days later in Yom Kippur.



On this day, a ram’s horn or shofar is sounded (a symbol of the one Abraham sacrificed in place of his son Isaac). **Yom Kippur.** The most important holy day, the “Day of Atonement” spent in reflection and repentance for sins committed. The shofar is again blown at the close of the day. **Channukah.** Also called “the Festival of Lights” in December. This commemorates the defeat of the Syrian Greeks by the Maccabees in 165 BC and the rededication of the Temple in which a tiny container of oil burned miraculously for 8 days. An 8-branched candleholder menorah is used and lit by a 9th for each day of Channukah. Children receive gifts and play a traditional game of top-spinning with the dreidel.

Holy Book: Tanakh (the Bible), in reference to its three major sections, the Torah (or law, the first five books we call the Pentateuch), the Nevi’im (the prophets) and the Ketuvim (the writings). Christians have arranged what they call the “Old Testament” differently, with prophets coming last. The **Mishnah** were rabbinic decisions and Scripture interpretations circulating orally which were eventually compiled, along with extensive commentary, in a collection called the **Talmud**. Among the

Orthodox, these commentaries are almost as important as the Bible.

Remember

Judaism was the first monotheistic faith. Jesus, his earthly family and all of his initial followers were Jews. The Christian faith has its roots in the faith and traditions of Judaism.

Membership Rites: Naming ceremony/circumcision: generally eight days after birth a boy is circumcised in a religious ceremony and given a name; the circumcision is a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham; girls are named at the synagogue on the Saturday or Sabbath after her birth; **Coming of Age: Bar and Bat Mitzvah:** At age 13, boys and girls are officially part of the adult community in an elaborate ceremony in the synagogue during which they read in Hebrew from the Torah (having thoroughly practiced for weeks; the cantor – a sort of combined deacon and choir master in Jewish worship – is nearby to assist), direct the congregation in prayers, and provide a lengthy personal statement as well. This is fol-



lowed by a celebration to rival any sweet sixteen or graduation party.

Community Governance: Gather to meet and worship at a synagogue, around which each congregation is organized.

Most Basic Belief. One God, creator of all, who has established a covenant relationship with the Jewish people and in turn all the world. In accepting his just and merciful sovereignty, believers respond through a range of pious practices.

Symbols Star of David. The six-point star, used on his shield by David.

Menorah. An eight-branched candelabra with a larger 9th candle to light the others, used during Channukah.

Mezuzah. Metal container holding Scripture quotations that are put in doorjambes as directed by Deuteronomy 6:9.

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, today I learned that *(fill in something you learned)*

Thank you, Lord, because *(fill in why you're grateful for this)*

Be prepared to read the above two lines (without what's in the parentheses).

Verse Master

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6: 5



Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 6

Islam

heart to Heart

Dear Father in heaven, open our hearts to all the wonders of the faith journey; give us eyes to see the truth and wisdom you reveal to us daily, the heart to feel the love you have for us, the mind to learn your ways through Scripture and the traditions of your Church. Even as we step onto the paths of other faiths, lead us ever deeper into the love and salvation gifted to us in your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.



A Backward Glance

Okay, now it's *your* turn. Turn back to the chapter before this one and come up with five review questions. They can be true or false or short answer. Write them below along with the answers. Transfer your questions to the lined paper (no answers – allow space for the answer under each question).

1. Question:

Answer:

2. Question:

Answer:

3. Question:

Answer:

4. Question:

Answer:

5. Question:

Answer:

Verse Master

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

Romans 12:9-10



The Muslim Story

Beginnings

Muslims trace their beginnings to the 7th century in the city of Mecca in what is now Saudi Arabia. The prophet of Islam, Mohammed ibn Abd Allah, was born there in 570, in that bustling center of trade and commerce. Mecca was already an important religious center, housing a sacred shrine to three goddesses who were honored with pilgrimages and processions around a large black stone called the Kabah (perhaps a meteorite). Feuding tribal clans controlled the markets and sanctuary. And just like organized crime of today, they got rich on the backs of the poor.

The Prophet Mohammed

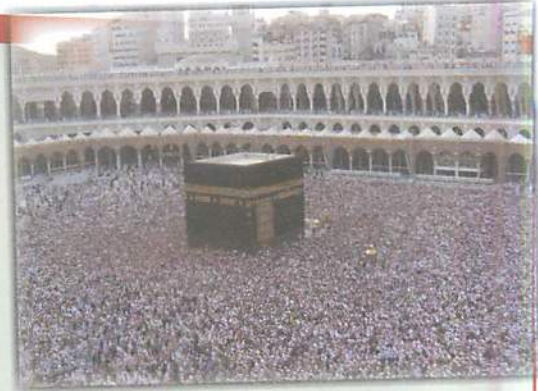
It was in this environment that Mohammed lived, questioning the religious values of his time. One day, at the age of 40 in 610, a married man by then, he had withdrawn to a cave to reflect; there he had a mystical encounter with the angel Gabriel and for 20 years thereafter was said to have received revelations from God, and became known as God's messenger. In 619, he was said to have been taken to Jerusalem by Gabriel where from a prominent rock he went up to heaven and spoke with Jesus, Moses and Abraham, even standing before God.

Beyond Mecca

Following opposition in Mecca and growing support elsewhere, Mohammed and his followers left Mecca for Medina in 622 in what has come to be called the Hijrah. From there, Mohammed worked to unify the people and finally marched into Mecca, placed his hand on the black stone saying "Allah Akbar" (God is most great); from that moment on the Kabah became the holy shrine of Muslims and Mecca its sacred city. From that point, in a long and complex story of Muslim growth in the Middle East, including very cultured and successful caliphates and dynasties such as the Umayyids and Abbasids (Google them to find out more), the religion then spread to such places as North Africa, and the Far East.

What Do Muslims Believe?

Islam is a monotheistic religion. The Arabic word for God is "Allah," creator and Lord. Muslims believe that God has revealed himself over time to a succession of prophets including Moses and Jesus but that these revelations found completion only in God's final messenger, Mohammed. The revelation to Mohammed was compiled in a collection of God's actual, literal words, the Koran. The word "Islam" itself means submission to Allah, to the will of God.



Community is very important to Muslims, a community founded on religious laws and obligations known as the Shari'ah. These are guidelines not only to their religious obligations but to their conduct in the world as well. Muslims consider the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospels as "God-given," but the Koran is the most important revelation. Similarly, they do not consider Jesus divine, but simply a prophet who will be honored at the end of time along with other prophets. For Christians of course, it is clear that Jesus is God himself. "I and the Father are one; the Father is in me and I am in the Father." (John 10:30,38)



The Five Pillars

Muslim life is founded on "the Five Pillars of Islam:"

1. *Acceptance of the faith* in its short creed, the shahada: "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is his messenger."
2. *Prayer* Five times a day, facing Mecca. Muslims are called to prayer by the *muezzin* who call from atop the slim minaret above a mosque. Nowadays, this is often an electronic announcement. The word "mosque" actually means "prostration" which is the Muslim posture of prayer. Prayer is founded on verses from the Koran.
3. *Almsgiving* Helping the less fortunate.
4. *Fasting* There are very specific and strict rules for fasting, including the entire month of Ramadan, during which no eating or drinking is allowed during daylight hours.
5. *Pilgrimage* (hadj) Providing a person can afford such a journey, a trip to Mecca and the Kabah is the 5th pillar; this features special clothing, rituals such as proceeding around the Kabah seven times and other visits and gestures.



The Koran

The Muslim holy book is believed to have come from God himself with the original, eternal copy in heaven; parts of it are said to have been dictated by Gabriel over 23 years. It contains 114 chapters (called *suras*) and is almost entirely written in the first person, with God speaking. What does it contain? Praises to God, stories of the prophets, the last judgment and guides for daily living and religious practice. Memorization and recital of the Koran is considered very important and children grow up hearing it in lullabies and study and learn it – always in Arabic, as this is considered the language in which God revealed it to Mohammed.

Study of the Koran over the centuries has led to volumes of commentary.

How does the Koran resemble the Christian Bible? How is it different?

Two Main Branches

Like all religions, Muslims, too, have different understandings of their faith. There are two main branches:

Sunni. The Sunni Muslims are considered "orthodox" in that they follow the tradition or "Sunnah" of law very closely which are based on the accepted understanding of Mohammed's teachings. They believe that the successors to Mohammed were duly appointed by his clan. Most Muslims are Sunni.

Shia Shiites believe that the leadership of the new religion was assumed through the descendants of Mohammed's son-in-law, Ali. Shiites are less formal than Sunni Muslims, and give more authority to their imams. They also believe in free will as compared to the Sunni emphasis on predestination. Iran is a Shiite Muslim country.



Scenic Overlook

The Islamic calendar is lunar, which means it is based on the rotations of the moon, with 12 lunar months and approximately 11 fewer days than the solar calendar. That's why Islamic religious festivals can be at many different times of the year, since the date of the New Year continually shifts!



Highlights

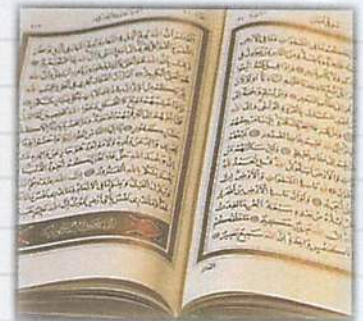
Most Basic Belief: One God, creator of all, who communicated his final instructions to the world through his chosen prophet Muhammed.

Holy Day: Friday

Holy Days: Ramadan, the month of fasting, a period of reflection, and concentration on godly living. On the 27th day, the **Night of Power** is celebrated remembering the night in 610 when Mohammed received his first revelation. This is followed by the **Feast of Fast Breaking** or **Eid al-Fitr**. For three days, Muslim families visit, feast, give gifts and also engage in religious devotion. **Id al-Adha**, the "Great Festival" which recalls Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. **Mawlid al-Nabi** is the birthday of Mohammed.



Holy Book: The Koran; the Hadith (oral anecdotes of the activities and teachings of Mohammed; these were compiled over the centuries in what are considered authentic collections).



Worship: The congregation gathers and prays in a *mosque*, which unlike Christian churches, is not adorned by pictures or stained glass or statues but only by ornately decorated inscriptions from the Koran (which is why calligraphy is the dominant art form in Islamic culture). Running water is always available for the ritual cleansing required for prayer. Much like the Christian and Jewish worship, prayer time also features a sermon. The faithful remove their shoes before entering a mosque. Men line up in rows in the front, women in the back. There is no music or singing, but the chanting (think of the deacon's chanting of Psalms in our church) can be very musical.

Membership Rites: A confession of faith by reciting the shahada with the witness of two other Muslims. Circumcision takes place around age 10 or when a boy can read the Koran.

Community Governance: There is no formal priesthood or clerical hierarchy. Imams are educated in the Muslim faith and become learned laymen who serve as teachers and worship leaders. Community life is founded on the *shariah*, a body of law developed from the 8th to 10th centuries by scholars of Islam to govern the community on Koranic principles.

Symbols

Perhaps the best known is the crescent, a symbol of the new moon; green is a sacred color in Islam.

Pious Practices Halal food follows the same Old Testament guidelines as does Kosher food.

Unit One

Who Am I? Who Are We?

Lesson 7

Looking East: Hinduism and Buddhism

heart to Heart

"If the faith of a mustard seed..."

Here I Am, Lord, page 39



A Backward Glance

1. The five "pillars" of the Islamic faith are a confession of faith, almsgiving, prayer, pilgrimage, and
 - a. holy war or "jihad"
 - b. fasting
 - c. simple living
 - d. reading the Koran
2. The most important role of the Muslim "imam" is
 - a. judge
 - b. matchmaker
 - c. teacher
 - d. pilgrimage leader
3. The word "Islam" means
 - a. prophet
 - b. angel
 - c. priest
 - d. submission
4. Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims
 - a. are the priestly groups of Islam
 - b. form the two major branches of Islam
 - c. are the gatekeepers at Mecca
 - d. were Mohammed's first followers
5. An important characteristic of a mosque is
 - a. women are not allowed in
 - b. images of God are not permitted
 - c. worshippers must dress in white
 - d. the roof is transparent to allow in the sun

Scenic Overlook

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) was considered the "father of the Indian nation" as he championed Indian independence from British occupation via civil disobedience. Gandhi's spiritual leadership had an enormous influence. He lived simply, dressing in traditional Indian dress. His vegetarianism and fasting reflected his respect for life. He was later referred to as "Mahatma" which means "great soul" in Sanskrit.



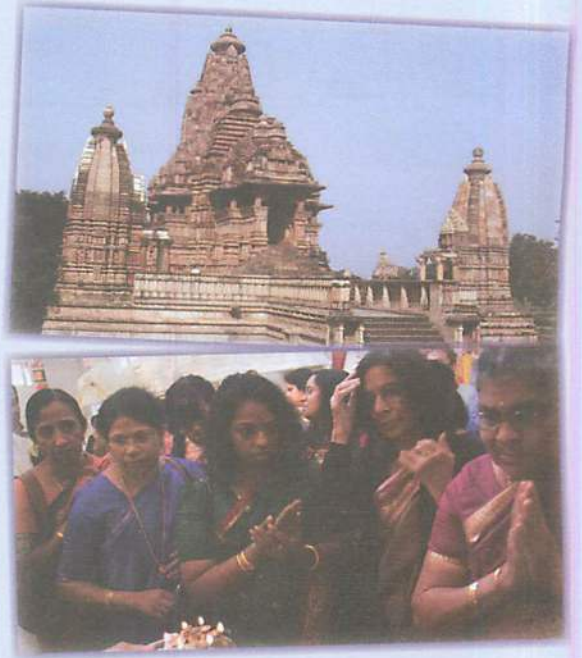
The Many Faces of God: Hinduism

A Long Time in the Making

After Christianity and Islam, Hinduism is the third largest religion. The majority of believers live in India, but many Indians have emigrated to other countries and you may have Hindu classmates or a Hindu temple in your neighborhood.

Hinduism is actually a collection of many ancient religious beliefs and philosophical schools. There is no single prophet, leader, creed or sacred text.

The name "Hindu" derives from the word "Sindhu," the traditional name for the Indus River. This complex fabric of beliefs developed from the merging of two main groups – the people of the Indus Valley in India, a culture that flourished 5,000 years ago in what is today Pakistan and northwestern India; and the Aryans of Persia, who invaded the Indus Valley civilization 4,000 years ago.



Many Gods Out of One

Hinduism is a polytheistic religion that lists hundreds, perhaps thousands of gods, but at its heart is the one true God - Brahman. There are three major Hindu sects, each based on a different idea of the divine, each devoted to a different god – Shiva, Vishnu or Shakti. They are loosely bound together by a single belief: that many different and individual paths may lead to the one ultimate goal of Hinduism, *moksha*, which is the release from the cycles of reincarnation, or attachment to the material world.

Shiva

Shiva is depicted as 4-armed, with contradictory powers - a god of storms, animals, healing, yogic self-control, sexuality. One of his sons is the elephant-headed Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, who is invoked at the beginning of every undertaking. His wife is Parvati.



Vishnu

Vishnu is a powerful but kind god, most commonly depicted as a handsome young man dressed in royal robes. His wife is Lakshmi. There are ten incarnations of Vishnu, called avatars. The 7th was the prince Rama, a powerful king who ruled for thousands of years and the subject of the famous epic poem "*The Ramayana*." The 8th is Krishna, one of Hinduism's most widely-worshiped gods. The 9th was the Buddha (more on him later). And the 10th is expected to come at the end of time, riding a white horse and holding a flaming sword.



Shakti

Shakti is a goddess, a composite of positive and negative traits, reflecting life and death, creation and destruction, vigor and rest. One of her forms is Kali, depicted with a string of human skulls around her neck.

Early religious laws supported a *caste* system which divided Hindu society into four basic occupations, but this system has loosened in more modern times.

Highlights

Basic Belief: Brahman is the one true god, the World Soul, the Ultimate Reality of which the many gods are part. Everyone's *individual* soul (atman) seeks union with the Universal Soul. All our actions, good and bad, will later have an affect in this life or another life. The consequence of our actions is called our "karma."

Holy Day: There is no specific holy day; every day is devoted to some sort of worship.

Holy Days: Dashera - a ten-day festival in the autumn in which Rama's victorious battle against the demon king Ravana is reenacted. **Diwali** - a festival in October or November that recalls Rama's return to his kingdom after fourteen years' exile. Because people would decorate their homes with lights it is called the "festival of lights."
Holi - a harvest festival celebrating the victory of truth over falsehood.

Holy Book: There is no one sacred text for Hindus. There are two main broad categories of Hindu scripture: *shruti*, "that which is heard" (considered more ancient and of a divine origin), and "smriti" - "that which is remembered." The *Vedas* are the most ancient of the shruti texts and are the primary scriptures for the Hindus. Veda means knowledge, revealed by the creator-god Brahman to inspired sages and these were then transmitted through an oral tradition. The *Rig Veda* is the oldest. They were compiled gradually, over the centuries and contain hymns, chants, and praises to the gods. The *Upanishads* were written around 700-500 B.C. and are the most recent of shruti scriptures. These are the writings of spiritual masters or gurus.

Well known "smriti" texts include the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* - two epics you may even study in college if you study world literature. The *Mahabharata* is probably the longest epic poem in history (90,000 stanzas)!

Worship: Each day Hindus worship the divine - performing "puja" - in a sacred corner of their home where offerings are made of flowers or food before a picture or statue of the god. But at the temple, the center of their religious and cultural affairs, more extensive rituals are held. People also visit their temples - dedicated to specific gods or goddesses - to worship individually.

Membership Rites: No membership rites per se, but rites of passage from childhood to youth to middle and then old age are marked by specific rituals performed at home by the head of the household.

Community Governance: Brahmins or priests.

Symbols: The sacred syllable or "om," which comes from the ancient Sanskrit language. The sound is believed to start from deep within the body and end at the lips which is a symbol of the movement of prayer from within. The sound is chanted at the beginning and end of Hindu prayers - something like a hypnotic and mesmerizing "amen." The cow is considered a sacred animal, representing all that is good about the earth and creation.

Pious Practices Pilgrimages to sacred rivers such as the Ganges are often made in the spring. People bathe and wash.



Buddhism

Siddhartha Gautama



Like Christianity, Buddhism was born from the teachings of one person. This was Prince Siddhartha from northern India – what is now Nepal. His family name was Gautama and was known at first as Gautama the Buddha. The word “Buddha” means “enlightened one.” Interestingly, while Buddhism developed out of Hindu culture, it is no longer a religion of India. It is the 4th largest religion after Christianity, Islam and Hinduism.



Born around 566 BC, Siddhartha lived the lush life of a royal but became disenchanted with his protected palace life. He married but eventually left palace life at the age of 29 to seek a better way. He studied Hinduism, but did not like the caste system and had already rejected the animal sacrifices of the Brahmin priests as well as their authority. He tried a severe ascetic life but this too proved unhelpful. Finally, he sat under a bodhi tree and decided not to move until he would achieve a better understanding of things. And he did, experiencing an enlightenment that allowed him to see the true way. Glowing with wisdom and slowly referred to as the Buddha, he espoused a right path open to anyone and not subject to the interpretation of the priests. He died at the age of 80 urging his followers to go forth and preach his doctrines. The conversion of the Indian King Asoka (3rd c. B.C.) added greatly to the spread of Buddhism, with monasteries, traveling shelters and hospitals built by his missionaries.

What Do Buddhists believe?

The Buddha developed 4 basic truths and an 8-fold path that he called a “raft” that takes one to the ‘other shore,’ to “nirvana,” the ultimate goal. Nirvana is the total loss of ego, the uniting with the universe.

The Four Basic Truths

1. *Life is suffering.*

The very nature of human existence is painful. Because of the cyclical nature of death and rebirth, death does not bring an end to suffering.

2. *Suffering has a cause: craving for and attachment to material pleasures.*

Suffering is the result of our selfish craving and clinging. This in turn reflects our ignorance of reality.

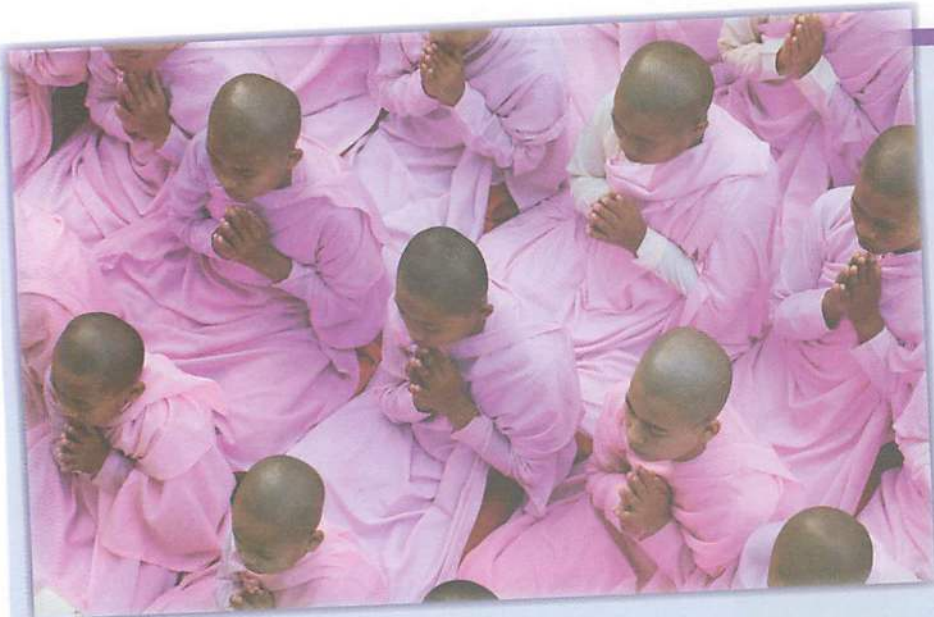


Verse Master

“Be still and know that I am God.”

Psalm 46:10





As you can see, there is a great emphasis on mind and attitude. Buddhists believe in *karma* (the consequence of our actions), but their emphasis is more on the mental attitudes and thoughts that lead to actions.

Two Buddhist Paths

There are two major branches of Buddhism: *Mahayana* and *Theravada*.

Mahayanas are primarily in Tibet, China, Mongolia Korea, and Japan. This group is more worshipful towards the Buddha, holding him to be almost divine. There is also an emphasis on the many lesser enlightened ones or saints and on helping others to enlightenment. Tantric Buddhism is an off-shoot of the Mahayana school.

Believers in the *Theravada* school are found in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. "Theravada" literally means "the way of the elders." It focuses more on monastic life and one's own personal enlightenment.

3. *Craving and attachment can be overcome.*

When one completely transcends selfish craving, one enters the state of nirvana, and suffering ends. Those who achieve nirvana but wish to help others achieve it renounce nirvana as a goal, thereby becoming saints ("bodhisattvas").

4. *The path away from craving and attachment is an Eightfold Path:*

- Right understanding (understanding the four noble truths)
- Right thinking (caring for other people and all life)
- Right speech (truthfulness, compassion)
- Right conduct (helping others)
- Right livelihood (earning a living that doesn't harm others; anti-war)
- Right effort (improving one's mind and soul)
- Right alertness (always aware of others)
- Right concentration (focusing on awakening the mind)



Scenic Overlook

Two giant 6th-century statues of Buddha carved into the rock face in the Hazarajat region of Afghanistan were destroyed with dynamite in 2001 by the archly conservative Taliban who thought them to be idolatrous.



Highlights

Basic Belief: Buddhism is a spiritually focused way of life, which believes that in detaching ourselves from the material world, we can live as enlightened, free, and successful people.

Holy Day: There is no specific holy day.

Holy Days: *Vaishakha Festival* honors Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death with a procession bearing the images of Buddha and saints, music, and two nights of burning lamps; *Ullambana* a ceremony for the souls of the dead (especially popular in Japan and China); *Pirit* a blessing ritual to sanctify a new home, give strength and health to the sick, or ward off evil.

Holy Book: There are many different "canons" of sacred Buddhist writings, i.e. the *Tipitaka* of the Theravada tradition. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a well known collection of funeral prayers.

Worship: Sunday afternoon "vandana" or devotional prayers that consist of praise of Buddha and commitment to the 8-fold path; includes a sermon by the chief monk.

Membership Rites: None

Community Governance: There is no such thing as a parish or temple as a site for cultural and community gathering, but temples exist in communities of monks and for individual devotion.

Symbols **The Image of Buddha** The Buddha is depicted in many ways, but most often seated with his hands in his lap in meditation or with a hand raised in a gesture of blessing.

The lotus is an important symbol in Buddhism. Its roots are under water, in the mud and the flower is above, a beautiful symbol of the corruption of the world even as the Buddha maintains his purity.

Zen is short for "zazen" - a type of meditation developed by a 13th century Japanese Buddhist who believed words were secondary to seeking enlightenment and espoused quiet meditation and a peaceful mind. Zen Buddhism emphasizes harmony and unity and has influenced such diverse things as gardens, tea ceremonies, and the discipline of samurai warriors.

Samsara is the cycle of birth death and rebirth, the movement from one lifetime to another. By reaching "nirvana," one can be released from this eternal cycle.



Remember

Buddhism was founded by Prince Siddhartha Gautama in the 6th century BC and is primarily about a harmonious and spiritually centered way of life.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 1

We're in This Together: The Nicene Creed

heart to Heart

Thank you, God!

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of things visible and invisible.

Havadank ee mee Asdvadz, ee Hayrn amenagal, harareechun yergnee yev yergree, yerevelyatz yev anerevooteetz.

ՀԱՎԱԾԱՄՔ ի մի Աստուած՝ ի Հայրն ամենակալ, յարարիչն երկնի եւ երկրի, երեւելեաց եւ աներեւութից:



Below, left, write what you would consider five of your most basic beliefs about the Christian faith.

My Creed

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Our Creed

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

From "I Believe" to "We Believe"

Each and every Sunday in church, we openly declare our beliefs by reciting the Nicene Creed. During the sacraments of baptism and marriage we recite a version of it as well.

We say the Creed together, in unison, with our hands held in a traditional prayer position, thumbs crossed, right over left. It's a very significant moment! Why?

Imagine you lived at the time of Jesus, witnessed miracles, heard his stirring sermons, and listened to his very firm



Verse Master

"The Lord is God. Besides him there is no other."

Deuteronomy 4: 35



direction about how to have "true" faith. Imagine that after his crucifixion - which filled you with despair - you heard of his appearances to the disciples and other followers. With new hope, you shared the stories of all you saw and heard.

Time passes and you and the whole generation of "witnesses" are gone. Younger generations of leaders in what are now organized Christian communities are faithful but differ in their understanding of Jesus Christ. Was Christ God for all time, or did he become divine at birth? Was he the Son of God? Was Mary really his mother? Did he truly rise from the grave? As debates became more heated, the larger church leadership knew it was time to "codify" the faith in a way that would stand the test of time and be true to God's will.



But even in the earliest centuries, creeds were being formulated, specifically for baptism. (One such early form of the creed was known as "The Apostles' Creed;" it is in use today in some Christian churches.) It was important for the new believer to declare his or her beliefs in a standard, formulaic way. These were often short statements of faith. We have a good example of such a creed in our own baptismal service.

Finally, in light of the newly-important position of the Christian Church as a national church, declared so by the Emperor Constantine in 313 in the Edict of Milan, unity of doctrine in the church became very important.

The Emperor convened what came to be known as the First Ecumenical Council in 325 in Nicaea, to begin this process. (Councils attended by delegates from every Christian denomination were considered "Ecumenical.") The Council delegates, who came from every church in the then known world, debated many things, but above all a controversy concerning the teachings of the preacher Arius. Arius declared that Jesus became divine at birth and was not eternal God. This was disproved at the Council through careful discussion of the Scriptures and the teachings of the church in the previous centuries. An outstanding product of this Council was the Nicene Creed, slightly revised at the next Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381. Some historians rightly refer to the final product as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (and if you can pronounce that correctly, bravo!). But we call it the Nicene Creed because it was hammered out almost entirely at the Council of Nicaea.

The Creed very quickly entered Christian worship services, as it was important that all assembled be of one mind in their belief. After all, the entire purpose of praying together was to be of one voice, one heart, one mind as they received bread and wine, that became truly the body and blood of the Lord.

The Nicene Creed became a formal part of our service by the mid 5th century.



Remember

The Nicene Creed sums up all our basic beliefs; we recite it every time we gather to celebrate the Divine Liturgy (Badarak) and in the sacraments of baptism and marriage.

Scenic Overlook

One of the participants in the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 was none other than St. Aristakes, the son of St. Gregory the Enlightener. Aristakes was consecrated a bishop in 318 by his father and had been serving as his assistant. His brother St. Vertanes was also a priest. Both brothers eventually became Catholicos. Talk about a family business!



We believe....

We say..... Which Means to Me.....

We believe

In one God

Maker of heaven and earth

Of things visible and invisible.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 2

Who's the Lord of My Life?

heart to Heart

And in One Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of God the Father, only begotten, that is of the substance of the Father.

Yev ee mee Der, Heesoos Kreesdos, horteen Asdoodzo Horeh, meeyadzeen, ayseenkun heyooteneh Hor.

Եւ ի վի Տէր՝ Յիսուս Քրիստոս, յՈրդիին Աստուծոյ, ծնեալն յԱստուծոյ Հօրէ՝
վիածին, այսինքն յեութենէ Հօր:



A Backward Glance

1. Write the first Creed statement you learned last week here:

2. Where was the Creed formulated?

- a. On Mount Tabor
 b. At two 4th century Ecumenical Councils
 c. In Rome under Constantine
 d. At the World Council of Churches

3. We recite the Creed

- a. On special feast days
 b. At every Sunday liturgy and every sacrament
 c. At every Sunday liturgy and the sacraments of baptism and marriage
 d. As often as we can

4. Why was it important that a statement of faith be written?

- a. Jesus' followers were dying off
 b. Christianity was being outlawed
 c. People began to disagree about who Jesus was
 d. all of the above
 e. a. and c.

5. In what century did the Creed enter our liturgy?

- a. 2nd
 b. 5th
 c. 9th
 d. 13th

Verse Master

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but shall have eternal life."

John 3:16



Jesus in Scripture

Life

Birth

Presented in the temple

As a young boy at the temple

Baptism

Temptation

Chooses his disciples

Turned water into wine

Feeds many people

Calms a storm

Walks on water

Casts out demons

Heals the blind

Heals the crippled

Heals many women

Raises the dead

Is transfigured

Enters Jerusalem

The Last Supper

Trial & Crucifixion

Resurrection

The Great Commission

Ascension

Matthew 1:18-2:15; Luke 2:1-20

Luke 2:21-40

Luke 2:41-52

Mark 1:9-11

Luke 4:1-13

Matthew 10: 1-4

John 2:1-11

Luke 9:10-17

Matthew 8:23-27

Matthew 14:22-33

Matthew 17:14-20

Mark 10:46-52

Mark 3:1-6

Luke 8:1-3

Luke 7:11-17

Mark 9:2-13

John 12:12-19

Matthew 26:17-35

John 18, 19

Mark 16

Matthew 28:16-20

Luke 24:50-53

Some Teachings

The Golden Rule

Love God and one another

Do good deeds for God's glory

Be at peace with one another

Pray for your enemies

Loving one another is what
makes you my disciple

Store up heavenly treasures

Be forgiving

Look for God first; everything
else will follow

Don't be quick to judge

Get to know me for your soul's sake

Helping the poor and unfortunate
is like helping me

Pray from the heart

Matthew 7:12

Luke 10: 27

Matthew 5:16

Matthew 5:23-24

Matthew 5:43-47

John 13: 35

Matthew 6:19-21

Matthew 6:14-15

Matthew 6:33

Matthew 7:1-5

Matthew 7:21-23

Matthew 25:40

Matthew 6:5



Remember

Jesus Christ is one substance with God the Father. He is Lord only if we truly make him Lord of our lives.

Scenic Overlook

As a teacher (rabbi), Jesus was a scholar of the Hebrew Bible, what we call the Old Testament. When he taught that the Law can be summed up in loving God and one another, he was referring to teachings in the Torah: Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 6:5.



So Jesus Lived and Taught...

Everyone is ruled by *something*. And it can change from moment to moment, year to year. Sometimes we are ruled by the desire to be popular and liked. Sometimes we can only be happy when we are getting A's at school. Or we might want to excel in a sport and so we play, read about, and *breathe* the subject. When we get older we might be governed by the desire to succeed, to be "successful" in our careers, in our bank accounts, in the kind of homes we live in.

Jesus tells us that all of this is unimportant. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me..." (Matthew 11:29) *What's a yoke?* Jesus doesn't want a fan club, he wants real disciples who will walk side by side with him and *learn* from him. And, he goes on to say, if you do so, everything will be easier.

"...you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11: 29-30)

St. Paul tells us that everything he thought was important *before* he became a Christian seemed worthless once he came to know Christ. (Philippians 3:7)



What's That Got to Do With Me? Now?

Look back at the partial list of teachings above. Choose 2 and identify a way this can be reflected in your daily life. Be prepared to discuss.

Jesus' Teaching

Living It Out in My Life

1.

2.



Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 3

True God and the Source of Everything

heart to Heart

Knowing God

Here I Am, Lord, p. 39

God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten and not made; of the same nature of the Father, by whom all things came into being in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

Asdvadz hAsdoodzo, looys ee looyso, Asdvadz jushmareed, hAsdoodzo jushmardeh, dzunoont yev voch araradz. Nooyn eenkn ee punooteneh Hor vorov amnenayn eench yeghev hergeenus yev ee vera yergree, yereveleek yev anerevooytk.

Աստուած յԱստուծոյ, լոյս ի լուսոյ, Աստուած ճշմարիտ՝ յԱստուծոյ ճշմարտէ, ծնունդ եւ ոչ արարած: Նոյն ինքն ի բնութենէ Հօր, որով ամենայն ինչ եղև յերկինս եւ ի վերայ երկրի, երեսելիք եւ աներեսոյթ:



A Backward Glance

1. (Fill in the blanks) We believe in one God, the _____, _____, maker of heaven and earth, of things _____ and _____. And in One _____ Jesus Christ, the Son of God, _____ of God the Father, only begotten, that is of the _____ of the Father.

2. Name 3 life events of Jesus and where in Scripture you might read about it.

a.

b.

c.

3. Look up Matthew 6:14-15 and copy the verses here:

Verse Master

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork.”

Psalm 19: 1



By Whom All Things Came Into Being

The second statement of the Creed forcefully summarizes the first two statements. What do we have so far?

We believe in one God who created everything.
We believe in his Son, Jesus Christ, who even as he is Son, is also the same one God as the Father.
God the Father and God the Son= one light, one Truth, and the source of all life.

In a scientific age, some people think that faith and science are an either/or proposition. Either life came about through *evolution*, with higher life forms evolving from lower life forms OR God created Adam and Eve and set everything in motion. But if we understand the creation story of Genesis we know immediately that there is no conflict. Here's why.

People have wondered about the beginning of things for as long as they were capable of wondering such things. For eons, even in the modern world, people have had a feeling that there is something greater than the human mind at work in the world.



One explanation of how things began is referred to as "**First Cause.**" This asks us to suppose that whatever we look at, we can ask the question, "who created or caused that?" For example, a piece of sculpture, or even the universe. Take evolution. You might ask "where did life come from?" An explanation could be the process of evolution. But a question can be raised "who caused the first step of evolution?" Every time you provide an answer, there is always the question, "but who caused *that*?" Finally, you get to the "First Cause": God.



Very similar to this is the argument of "**The Unmoved Mover.**" Since the whole universe is in motion and evolving (even an atom's electrons are moving), the question arises: where did all this movement start?

Scenic Overlook

Armenia has actually yielded important archaeological evidence from past civilizations! In 2010, the oldest known shoe in the world was discovered in a huge cave in Armenia. Made of cowhide and tanned with oil from a plant or vegetable, the shoe is about 5,500 years old, older than Stonehenge and the Egyptian pyramids. It is part of a treasure trove of artifacts that provide unprecedented information about an important era: the Chalcolithic period or Copper Age, when humans are believed to have invented the wheel, domesticated horses and produced other innovations. Along with the shoe, the cave has yielded evidence of an ancient winemaking operation and what may be the oldest known intentionally dried fruits: apricots, grapes and prunes.



Remember

God is the source of all life; the discoveries and understandings of science are not at odds with this fundamental truth.

Another explanation you might have heard is “**Intelligent Design.**” This simply means that if you look around and see how complex life forms and systems are, how could they possibly be explained by evolution? Not only the universe, but so many other things – the human digestive system, for example – are masterpieces of design.

But whatever theory attracts you, in the end, the story of beginnings in Genesis is about one simple Truth, told in various ways, from poetry to anthropomorphic fable: that God created the world and everything in it, as we say regularly in our creed: “by whom all things came into being, visible and invisible.”

In the first chapter of Genesis, we read a beautiful, hypnotic, chant-like account of the origins of life. God spoke and he brought all things into being. The writers and editors of the Bible were not concerned with science, they were concerned with Truth. They did not explain the hows of creation, only that God created the world. It is not the faith of the Armenian Church to dwell on the number of days or to calculate the number of years ago that this might have taken place based on other events in the Bible (this would come to 4,000 years as opposed to the billions of years ago that modern science calculates). Rather we understand that the writers of Genesis were not interested in giving a scientific treatment of creation. And, therefore, *we don't expect it!*

The church is only too happy to hear of new scientific discoveries. After all, each one helps us know more about



God. Every single scientific revelation accomplished through research, experiment, and discovery has only affirmed the revelation of God through Scripture, the world, and the community of believers.

Read Genesis 1 – 2: 3, then discuss these questions:

1. What repeated words or phrases do you hear?
2. What did God create on each day?
3. What's special about the creation of humankind?

Dilemma: What Would You Say?

A friend of yours thinks that the religious view of God creating the world is unscientific, just a lot of “superstition.” As a person of faith, how would you respond?

Write your answer here:



Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 4

Help!

heart to Heart

I will bless the Lord at all times....” Psalm 34: 1

Here I Am, Lord, p. 7

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, took body, became man, was born perfectly of the holy Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Vor haghakus mer; martgan, yev vasun mero purgootyan eechyal ee hergneets marmnatsav, martatsav, dzunav gadarelaves ee Mareeyama surpo goosen Hokvovun Surpov.

Որ յաղագս մեր՝ մարդկան եւ վասն մերոյ փրկութեան իջեալ ի յերկնից՝ մարմնացաւ, մարդացաւ, ծնաւ կատարելապէս ի Մարիամայ սրբոյ կուսէն՝ Հոգւովս Սրբով:

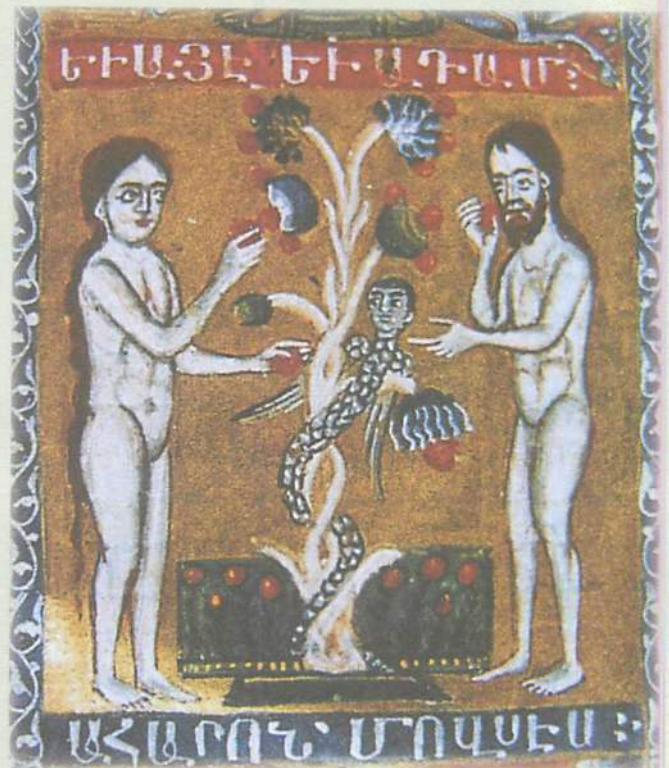


Help! A Crash Course in Salvation History

Okay, so we've gotten to the heart of the matter – Jesus, light of light, true God from true God, the *real* thing – came down and became human. Wow. What does it mean for God – the divine, the heavenly, the everywhere – to decide that it was time to enter into our story in the most amazing way possible – by becoming *one of us*. Let's take a look at our story and God's unrelenting effort to save us from ourselves.

We saw in the book of Genesis that God created humankind in his image and therefore able to get to know him. But he also gifted his creation with the ability to *choose* to know him. After all, no one would really want to get to know someone if they *had* to. No one falls in love against their will, right? So God gave us free will to enter into the love relationship he wanted to have with his beloved creation.

And as God knows even before we do what choices we will make (he doesn't choose for us, he just knows



Verse Master

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

John 1: 14



what we will choose), he also knew that people would need every kind of help he could give them. He gave us commandments, rules that would help us know him and live peacefully with one another.

Turn to Exodus 20 1 – 17 to see what the ten most important of them were and write them here:

1. (vs. 2 & 3) _____
2. (v. 4) _____
3. (v.7) _____
4. (v.8) _____
5. (v.12) _____
6. (v.13) _____
7. (v.14) _____
8. (v.15) _____
9. (v.16) _____
10. (v. 17) _____



Do you think we do a good job of following these today?

God then sent us prophets, the people he gifted with the ability to help people be aware of where they were going wrong - men such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, and Micah (among many others). Their critical words were rarely welcome! People were becoming “dehumanized” over time – so much less than God had intended us to be.



Scenic Overlook

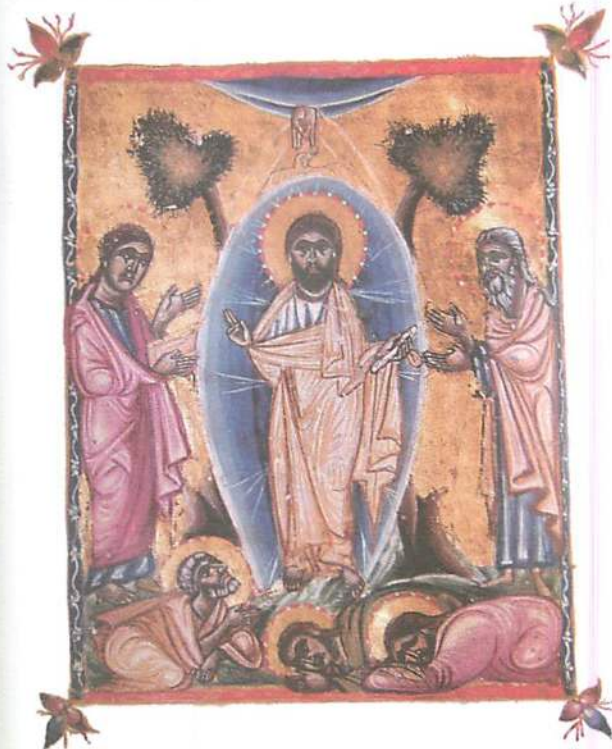
St. Athanasius [c.298-373] is world famous for many accomplishments. He wrote two very influential short works: *The Life of St. Antony* and *On the Incarnation*, was the champion against the heretic Arius at the Council of Nicaea, and wrote the Easter letter in 367 which is the earliest listing of the 27 books of the New Testament.



But he knew eventually, he himself would have to intervene one last time into human affairs. St. Athanasius, the great 4th century Church Father, wrote very eloquently about this very subject in his long essay “On the Incarnation.” (The word “incarnation literally means “to become flesh.” from the same root word we get “carnivore.”) Here’s an excerpt:

What then, was God to do? What else could he possibly do, being God, but renew his image in humankind, so that through it people might once more come to know him? And how could this be done, save by the coming of the very Image himself, our Savior Jesus Christ? Human beings could not have done it, for they are only made after the Image; nor could angels have done it, for they are not the images of God. The Word of God came in his own Person, because it was he alone, the Image of the Father, who could recreate humanity after the Image.

However he first had to do away with death and corruption. Therefore, he took on a human body, in order that in it death might once and for all be destroyed, and that humankind might be renewed according to the Image... Here is an illustration to prove it. 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 redrawn in the same material. And so it was 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 humankind made after himself.



Remember

We are saved by the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. What were we saved from? The sinful nature that would keep us forever from knowing God as he originally intended.

What Do You Think? A Voting Exercise

- 1. Knowing that we were made in God's image should change how we behave.*
- 2. Jesus saved me and made a relationship with God possible.*
- 3. It would help if God came back and told us clearly what he expects.*
- 4. We could use a good prophet – someone who could keep us on God's track – right now!*
- 5. It's harder to believe in Jesus today than for 1st century Christians.*



Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 5

God Knows How I Feel

heart to Heart

Prayer for a Safe Journey

Here I Am, Lord, p. 19

St. Hovhannes of Garni wrote this prayer. Find out more about him on page 84 of your prayer book.

In what century did he live? _____

Where is Garni? _____



Name 4 things St. Hovhannes did:

By whom he took body, soul, and mind and everything that is in man, truly and not in semblance.

Vorov eyar marmeen, hokee yev meed, yev zamenayn vor eench eh ee mart, jushmardabes yev voch gardzyok.

Bible places that show his humanity

Որով էառ մարմին, հոգի, եւ միտ, եւ զամենայն որ ինչ է ի մարդ՝ ճշմարտապէս եւ ոչ կարծեօք:

Jesus Was Fully Human: He Felt What I Feel!

Jesus was fully human and fully divine – a difficult concept for us to understand. The early believers knew what they saw and heard – Jesus healing the sick, curing the blind, raising the dead, calming the storm, appearing dazzlingly white in the presence of Moses and Elijah (at the Transfiguration), hearing the voice of the Father above, declaring Jesus to be his beloved son in whom he was pleased (at the Transfiguration and his baptism). But they also saw him tired, hungry, sad, lonely, and sorrowful. What did this mean? Was he human when he was angry? Divine when he changed water into wine?



After Jesus was crucified, died, and rose from the dead on the third day, his disciples slowly began to share what this meant with others. In their busy missionary lives, they won people immediately to the faith through the power of their personal testimony. But after the first generation of believers passed on, younger faithful began to wrestle with matters on a “head” level, attempting to understand the life of Jesus and define exactly how he was God and human being at the same time. After much debate and three ecumenical councils, Jesus’ nature was summed up in the statements of the creed, presenting the deepest of truths simply.

The Armenian Church and the other Oriental or lesser Orthodox (remember: lesser only because they were smaller in number) parted company with the larger Orthodox family over just this issue. They maintained (and still do)

Verse Master

“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God.”

1 John 4: 16



Remember

Jesus was human in body, soul, and mind. He knows how we feel!

that Jesus was human and divine in one indissoluble nature, whereas the larger Orthodox defined it as two natures. These theological debates were hugely important at the time, and still remain obstacles to unity.

But the fact that Jesus was born of a human mother, Mary, means that he shares fully in our nature, "truly and not in semblance." So *everything* we feel and go through he has shared with us. Which means that all our experiences are opportunities for holiness, as well. But we'll think about that in a minute.

For now, look up just these few stories in Scripture that tell us just how human Jesus was.

Read the story and be prepared to tell it in your own words. Then draw a line matching the story with the correct emotion on the right.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. Mark 3:1-5 | a. felt affection |
| 2. Mark 5:25-34 | b. was ridiculed |
| 3. Mark 5:21-24; 35-43 | c. celebrated with the community |
| 4. Mark 6:30-32 | d. felt compassion for others |
| 5. Mark 6:33-34 | e. determination |
| 6. John 2:12-17 | f. felt tired and hungry |
| 7. John 11:17-44 | g. felt forsaken by God |
| 8. Matthew 26:35-38 | h. anger and distress |
| 9. Matthew 26:39-45 | i. sad and troubled |
| 10. Matthew 27:45-46 | j. was moved to the point of tears |
| 11. Luke 18:15-17 | k. was disappointed by his friends |
| 12. John 2:11-11 | l. enraged to the point of taking action |



Think of a time you experienced one of the feelings above. Circle the one you've chosen and think in detail of the time you felt this. How does it make you feel to know that God had this very same experience?

Scenic Overlook

St. Antony, about whom St. Athanasius wrote a famous biography (see last week's lesson), once received a letter from the emperor. His young assistant was very impressed with the fact that such an important man had sent a lowly monk a letter. St. Antony reminded him: "Do not wonder that the emperor writes to us, even to a man such as I am; rather be astounded that God has communicated with us, and has spoken to us by his son."



Lesson 6

Why Did God Have To Die?

heart to Heart

Lord Jesus Christ, open our hearts today to understand how you died and rose from the dead to sit at the right hand of the Father. Help us understand how this changes everything we once knew about life and death. Teach us to become your true children so that we can be who you always intended us to be and so we can know you now and forever. Amen.



A Backward Glance

1. What were two events in Jesus' life during which God the Father's voice could be heard saying "This is my son in whom I am well pleased."?

- a. baptism and presentation
- b. transfiguration and crucifixion
- c. baptism and transfiguration
- d. baptism and crucifixion

2. The Armenian Church and other Oriental Orthodox Churches split from the larger Orthodox family over the issue of

- a. the celebration of Easter
- b. the nature of Christ
- c. proper vestments
- d. whether Mary was a saint or not

3. Examples of Jesus' human feelings are well documented in

- a. every book of the Bible
- b. Matthew Mark, and Luke
- c. the Old Testament prophets
- d. all four gospels

4. An example of when Jesus was moved to tears was when

5. Who Am I? I lived in the 13th century and wrote prayers, converted pagan Armenians to Christianity, healed the sick and ended up living a quiet life of prayer.



Scenic Overlook

The Feast of the Ascension in the Armenian Church is called *Hampartzoum*. It always falls on a Thursday, 40 days after Easter. The Feast is linked to a popular Armenian custom called *vijag* (or lots), a game which may be connected to how St. Matthias was selected by lots to replace Judas. Young men and women would place items of value (a bracelet, an earring, a ring) in a bowl of water. The *vijag* interpreter would then draw out each item and predict the person's destiny.



Creed Statement #6

He suffered and was crucified and was buried and rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven with the same body and sat at the right hand of the Father.

Charcharyal, khachyal, taghyal, herrort avoor harootsyal, yelyal ee hergeenus noveen marmnovun, nusdav unt achmeh Hor.

Չարչարեալ, իսաչեալ, թաղեալ, յերրորդ աւուր յարուցեալ.
Էլեալ ի յերկինս նովին մարմնովս, նստաւ ընդ աջմէ Հօր:

He suffered

And was crucified

And was buried

And rose again on the third day

And ascended into heaven with the same body

And sat at the right hand of the Father.

The End That Was the Beginning

Prays in Gethsemane

1. Matthew 26: 36-46
2. Mark 14: 32-42
3. Luke 22: 39-46

Trial and crucifixion

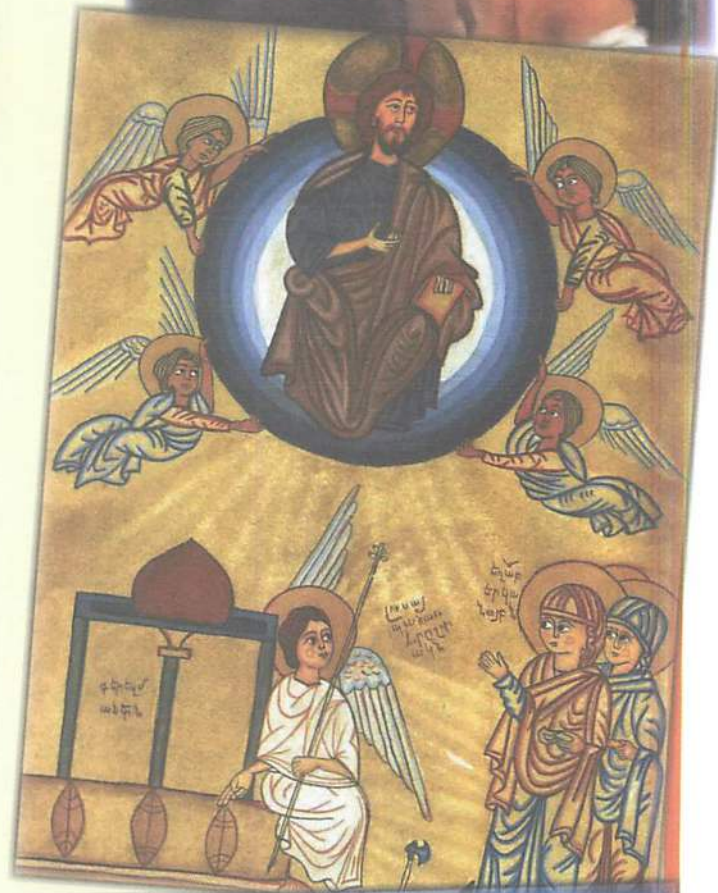
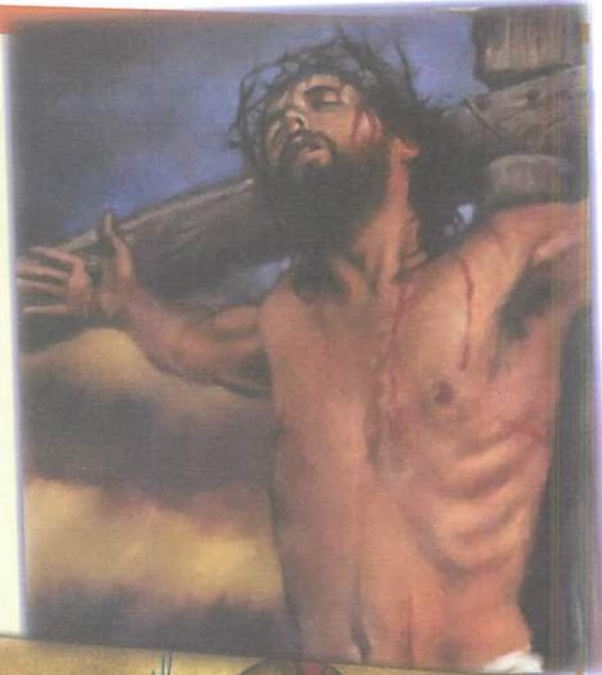
4. Mark 14: 43-15:47
5. Matthew 26: 47-27:66
6. Luke 22: 47-23:56
7. John 18
8. John 19

Resurrection

9. Matthew 28:1-10
10. Mark 16
11. Luke 24: 1-12
12. John 20

Ascension

13. Luke 24: 50-53
14. Acts 1: 1-11



On the Right Hand

Sitting at the right hand of a king meant sharing in his power and authority. Even today it is considered an honor to be seated to the immediate right of the host at a banquet or dinner. It is important to remember each time we repeat the Creed that Jesus returned to the right side of the Father to share once again in God's glory and power.

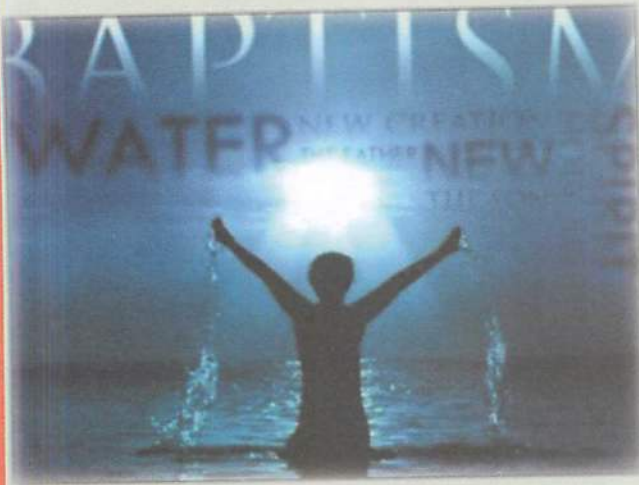
Surprise! We Died and Rose with Jesus

Do you know when *that* would have been? If you answered at your baptism, you are correct! Let's go back in time to a moment in your life you couldn't possibly remember. Think back to when you were a little baby, maybe two months old. The priest is holding you in his arms and places you into the font of water. As he does he says

“___ this servant of God, coming from the state of catechumen to baptism, is now baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Saved by the blood of Christ from being a slave of sin, he (she) received adoption as a child of the heavenly father, to be joint-heir with Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 6:3-4

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.



Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 7

Uh Oh...Judgment Day

heart to Heart

Look back over the last six Creed statements and then write a prayer by filling in the blanks.

Good and gracious God,

I believe that _____

In all you have learned so far, what do you believe most emphatically?

Thank you for _____

From those first six Creed statements, what are you most thankful for today?

Help me to _____

Since Jesus was human "truly and not in semblance" and knows how you feel, what help do you need from him today?

He is to come with the same body and with the glory of the Father to judge the living and the dead; of his Kingdom there is no end.

Kalots eh noveen marmnovun yev parok Hor ee tadel uzgentanees yev uzmaryalus, voro takavorootyanun voch ko vakhjan.

Գալոց է նովին մարմնովս եւ փառօք Հօր ի դատել զկենդանիս եւ զմեռեալս. որոյ թագաւորութեանն ոչ գոյ վախճան:



Scenic Overlook

The Church actually consists of the living and the dead, even now! Those who have passed away form the part of the Church known as "The Church Triumphant." Why do you think they are referred to as "triumphant"? One good answer is that they have passed through this life and triumphed over its challenges, even the ultimate challenge of death. The living [that's all of us] are referred to as "The Church Militant." How might you explain *that* term?



The Second Coming

God's plan for his creation is beautiful, when you think of it. Out of great love, God created a magnificent universe teeming with life. In it he placed the single thing he made in his image – that's us! - specifically so we could grow to understand him and his plan for us and all of creation.

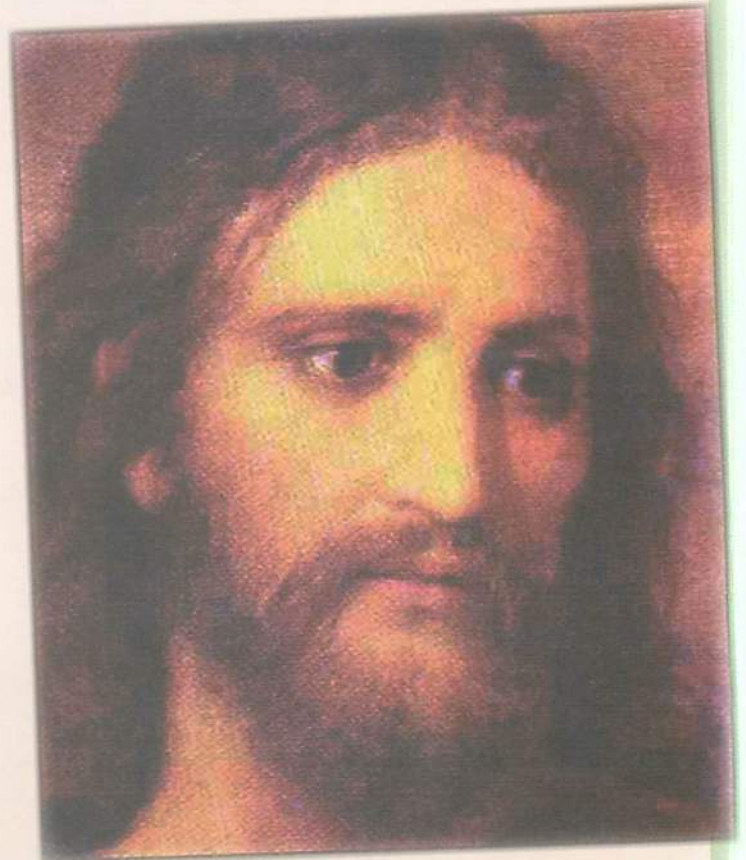
Of course, for it all to be real and make sense, we had to be free to choose him, to *want* his love and guidance. He knew it would take *eons* for us to understand the awesome love and wisdom he was offering us, but if there's one thing God has that we don't, it's time. We lost Paradise, but we did not lose God's love. Again and again he tried to shepherd his people, through leaders and patriarchs, through laws, through the wise words of prophets, through miracles. But for every miracle people gratefully received, they very quickly forgot. One example from Exodus 16: 1-3: Even though God parted the waters of the Red Sea to allow the Hebrew slaves to escape from Egypt (among many other miracles), it didn't take long before they started complaining because they were hungry!

The prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, often spoke of the coming of a messiah, a "suffering servant," who would lift up the people of God once and for all.

When the time was right, God entered human history one final time. The sinfulness of the world had grown so great, it needed God's own sacrifice to be saved. And so he joined his divine nature with human nature as Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the "anointed one," "truly and not in semblance" so that every aspect of human life, *including death itself*, was redeemed, was brought back to wholeness. The world, once irretrievably fallen, was now on the road to recovery. Of course, we still had a choice. We could choose a meaningful (and eternal) life with him or a short, rather clueless life without him. It was still up to us.



After Jesus died and rose to heaven he promised us the Holy Spirit (more on that awesome Person in the next lesson) to help us grow closer to God. And he told us he would always be with us, to the end of time.



Verse Master

"Behold I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

Revelation 22: 12-13





Remember

Jesus will return at the Second Coming, in the glory of the Father, to judge all of us, the living and the dead.

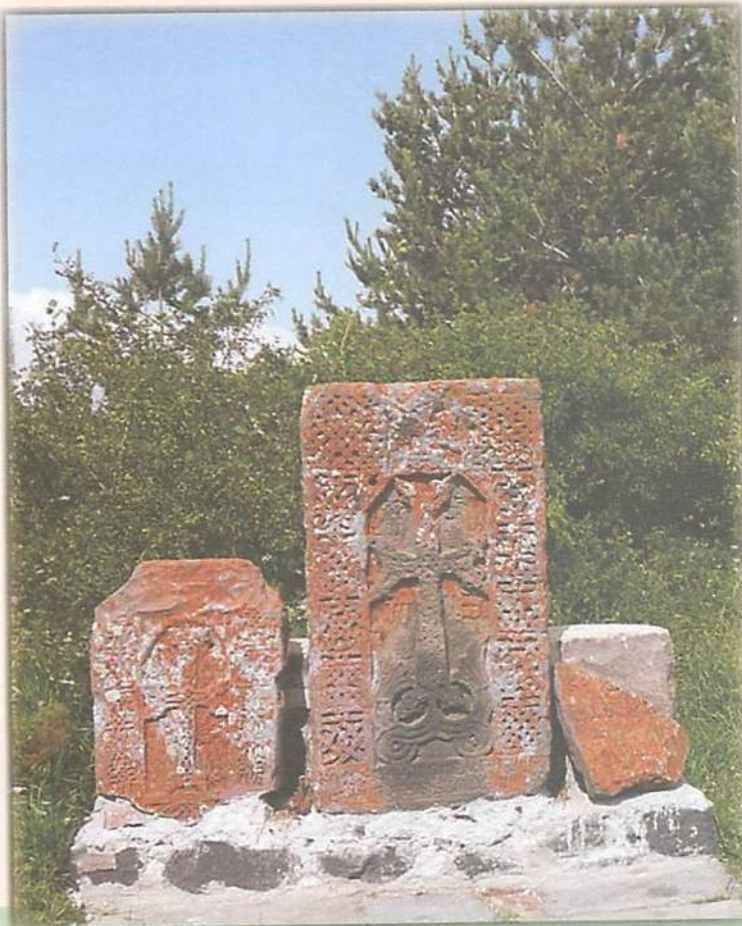
Ah. There it is. The end of time - which will come in God's wisdom and knowledge, certainly not ours. Jesus tells us (Matthew 24:36) "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

The interesting thing is there are two amazing criteria for Jesus' judgment. We will be judged for

1. How well we came to know and love him.
2. How devotedly we loved others.

This reflects the two greatest commandments Jesus gave us: (Matthew 22: 37-39) that we love God with all our heart and all our soul and with all our mind and that we love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.

We believe that when we die we are with God in a special way awaiting that final moment when time and creation come full circle and we are called to be in God's Kingdom. In fact in historic Armenia, people were buried with their



feet at the cross-shaped cemetery stone (khachkar) so that at the Second Coming when they were called out of their graves, the first thing they would see would be the cross. (Nowadays, people are buried with their heads at the "headstone.")

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 8

The Ultimate Motivational Speaker

heart to Heart

Lord, with a mighty sound..."

Here I Am, Lord, p. 35

We believe also in the Holy Spirit, the uncreate and the perfect; who spoke through the Law and through the Prophets, and through the Gospels; Who came down upon the Jordan, preached through the apostles and dwelled in the saints.

Havadamk yev ee Soorp Hokeen, haneghun yev ee gadaryalun, vor khosetsav horenus, yev ee markares yev havedaranus. Vor echn ee hortanan, karozyats harakyalsun, yev punagetsav ee soorpsun.

Հաւատամք եւ ի Սուրբ Հոգին, յանէղն եւ ի կատարեալն, որ խօսեցաւ յօրէնս եւ ի Մարգարէս եւ յԱւետարանս: Որ էջն ի Յորդանան, քարոզեաց յառաքեալսն, եւ բնակեցաւ ի սուրբսն:



The Holy Spirit.....

Write next to each phrase taken from the Creed, what this actually means.

1. is "uncreate and perfect" _____

2. spoke through the Law _____

3. spoke through the prophets _____
4. spoke through the Gospels _____
5. came down upon the Jordan _____
6. preached through the apostles _____
7. dwelled in the saints _____



Verse Master

"The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

Galatians 5: 22



Scenic Overlook

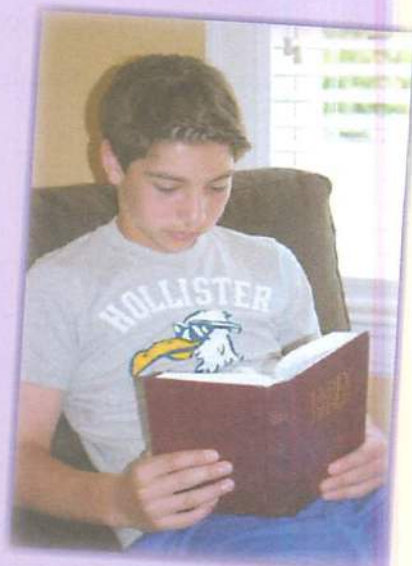
The vessel of the Armenian Church that holds the Holy Muron (oil) is traditionally dove-shaped. When the container is tipped, oil pours out of the dove's mouth, a beautiful symbol of the Spirit's powerful blessing.



The Ultimate Motivational Speaker

The Bible is, of course, the place we read about the Holy Spirit. Look up these Bible passages and learn more by matching the Bible passage to the correct information.

1. Genesis 1:1
 2. Ephesians 3:14-21
 3. Acts 2:1-4
 4. Matthew 3:13-17
 5. 1 Corinthians 12:3
 6. John 16:12-13
 7. John 14:25-26
 8. Genesis 2:7
 9. Ezekiel 37:1-10
 10. Joel 2:28-29
 11. Galatians 5:22-25
 12. John 20:19-23
 13. John 3:5-6
- a. The Holy Spirit will be poured into the hearts of the faithful
 - b. We are baptized in water and the Holy Spirit
 - c. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would remind us of everything Jesus taught us
 - d. Jesus breathed the Spirit
 - e. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles at Pentecost
 - f. The Holy Spirit gifts us with virtues
 - g. The Holy Spirit helps us believe in Jesus
 - h. The Holy Spirit called the prophets
 - i. The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, came down upon Jesus at baptism
 - j. The Holy Spirit was the breath of life in Adam
 - k. We proclaim our faith in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - l. The Holy Spirit guides us to the Truth
 - m. The Holy Spirit was with the Father and Son at Creation



The Holy Spirit is like....



Remember

The Holy Spirit guides the Church and the individual believer.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 9

Once Again: We're in This Together

heart to Heart

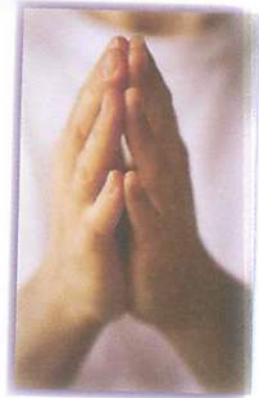
1 Corinthians 12: 12-31

"We are one body, one body in Christ."

We believe also in only one catholic and apostolic holy Church;

Havdamk yev ee mee meeayn untanragan yev arakelagan soorp Yegeghetsee.

Հաւատամք եւ ի մի միայն ընդհանրական եւ առաքելական սուրբ Եկեղեցի:



Discuss

Write next to each phrase taken from the creed, what this actually means.

1. Can you explain verses 12 and 13 in your own words?
2. Why do you think St. Paul gives such a long illustration with so many examples of the parts of the body? (verses 14-26)
3. What kinds of skills does St. Paul mention in verses 27-31?

To see what St. Paul means in the second half of verse 31, translated in the NIV as "and now I will show you the most excellent way" let's read together the world-famous...

1 Corinthians 13

Defining Terms

This creed statement stresses four vital characteristics of the church. Let's make sure we understand what these mean, because these features mark all of us as church members!

The Church is one Church. This word stresses the unity of the community on two levels. First, we are one within our own Armenian Church family. We become united with the rest of the church through baptism, the sacraments, worship and Holy Communion. The Kiss of Peace is a perfect example of the unity and love we feel in Christ.

On another level, it is about the unity of the *entire* church throughout the world. That is why the ecumenical movement is so important. It was never God's intention for the church to be fractured into so many "families," some of them in dispute. So we continue to build bridges and repair misunderstandings through such important organizations as the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches, the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. The Armenian Church is active in all of these.



Scenic Overlook

The Armenian word "yegeghetzi" comes from the Greek "ecclesia" which means "assembly" or "gathering." This further emphasizes that the church is first and foremost the gathering of the people of God for a purpose and is not just a building.



The Church is holy. The word holy means that we share in the holiness of God. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again, he gave us all the opportunity to become holy through baptism and life in the church. The Holy Spirit continues to guide the church as it "grows into a temple sacred to the Lord. (Ephesians 2:21-22). Finally, we ourselves become the bearers of holiness when we express the fruits of the Holy Spirit through our changed behavior. (Galatians 5:22)

The Church is catholic. This word has nothing to do with the specific Roman Catholic Church. It simply means "universal." And that means that the church is for everyone – it cannot limit itself to one place or time or people. So while the Armenian Church – as other national churches – developed in one part of the world and its language and traditions reflect the experiences of a particular people, it carries Jesus' message to all people. It needs to reach out to *all* people to bring them to Christ.



The Church is apostolic. The community of believers who together form the Body of Christ on earth began with Jesus' apostles. They were sent by Jesus himself to "be witnesses to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) It is reassuring to know that the Armenian Church has continued to grow in a straight line (more or less!) from the two apostles who brought the Good News to Armenia, Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew. That is why the Armenian Orthodox Church is also referred to as the Armenian *Apostolic* Church.

Our ordained leaders, starting with the first Catholicos, St. Gregory the Enlightener, continue this direct succession. It is said that the holy oil used in ordinations and made in Etchmiadzin contains some of the holy muron from centuries ago!

What is The Church?

What do you think of when you heard the word church? For many, a building comes to mind – for Armenian Christians, the image of our own parish church or perhaps the image of Etchmiadzin.

But "the church" was actually never primarily meant to describe the place where Christians gathered, but rather the *people* themselves. The root of the word "church" comes from the Greek "ecclesia" which means "assembly" or "gathering" of those baptized into Christ (more on baptism in Lesson 11). And those people were defined by Jesus himself.

Remember

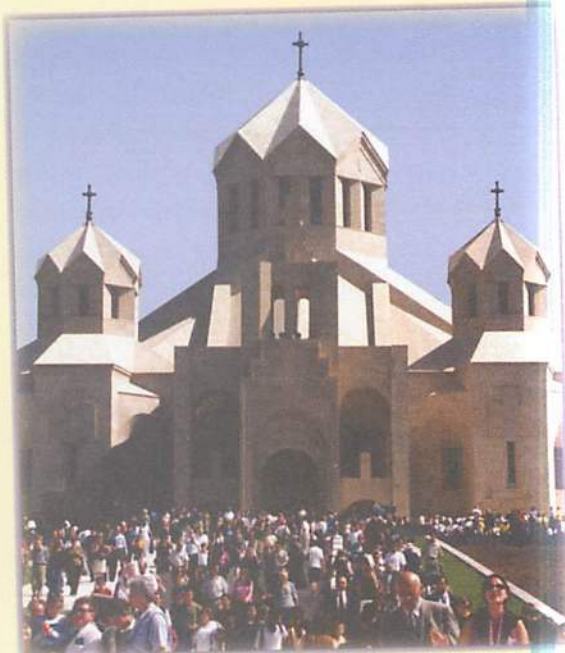
It is in the Church - the Body of Christ on earth - that we most fully realize our faith, growing closer to God and to one another and being empowered to identify our spiritual gifts.

Paul described the believers as members of one body. Who is the Head? Interestingly, this image stresses the importance of being and growing together into Christ. For the Armenian Church, it is impossible to know the Lord fully outside of this Body, the Church. And there is no time when we are more united than at the Divine Liturgy. There, every individual – with different personal stories, different joys and sorrows, different backgrounds – becomes completely united into the one Body and we pray and sing with one voice.

Of course, the story of the people of God began long before Jesus. It begins in Genesis 1 – from the beginning of time. It took a particular shape with a particular people when God called the first Patriarch, Abraham, to leave his homeland and begin a new community. That is why the Hebrew Bible – the Old Testament – is as much a part of our Scriptures as the New Testament.

The Christian Church – the gathering of the people who believed in Jesus – could be said to have started at Pentecost. Do you remember what happened on that day to the believers who were gathered in Jerusalem? After that amazing day, when the Holy Spirit breathed “life” into the Body of Christ, the apostles went out to teach and people were baptized in the thousands days after day.

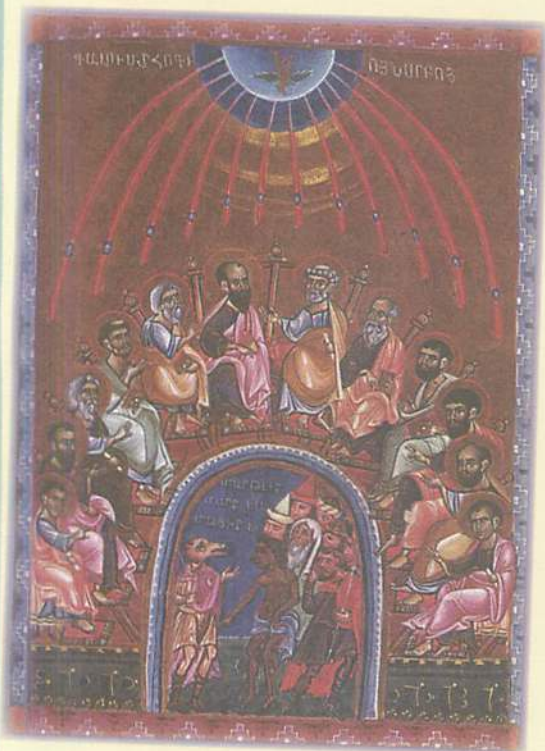
Even though the Church is filled with the Holy Spirit, it cannot be perfect. Why not? Because imperfect human beings make up the church. And as much as God might guide and prompt us, we are always free to choose our path. You’ve already seen how the early church struggled with disputing factions and competing authorities. Until perfection is restored to the world at the end of time, it will always be a challenge for the church to act harmoniously as one body.



Acts 2:42-47

Read these verses which contain the oldest description of a Christian church community. List all the things people were doing:

Look at John 15: 5. How does Jesus describe the connection between him and those who believe in him?



Lesson 10

Living Stones

heart to Heart

The Living Stone

1 Peter 2: 4-10



Discuss

1. What are the qualities of stone that make it important to a structure?
2. What kind of “spiritual sacrifices” would a Christian want to make to honor Jesus? (v. 5)
3. Write the four ways St. Paul describes believers in verse 9. We are: _____, _____, _____, and _____.
4. Being all these amazing things, what would we naturally want to do?

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—
Lord, we come before you, the Living Stone.

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
Make our faith strong and long-lasting, Lord.

For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”
Lord, we trust you and love you with all of our hearts.

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”
Lord, know that we believe you are precious.

and, “A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.
Help us to stand straight and firm in our faith.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.
Thank you, Lord, for taking us from darkness into light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
May we be forgiving and merciful, too, Lord. Amen.



Scenic Overlook

In Armenian, a parish community is referred to as a "dzoomh" which literally means "smoke." This originated in the tradition that parish priests would have jurisdiction over an area as far as the furthest chimney that could be seen.



I am a living stone in this spiritual house!

The Living Stones of My Parish

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7. ME

What gifts do I possess as a living stone in this spiritual house? How could they be put to use right now? In the future?



Verse Master

"Once you were not a people, now you are a people of God."

1 Peter 2: 10



Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 11

Dunked!

heart to Heart

Heavenly Father, you called me closer to you in the holiness and enlightenment of baptism. Make me always worthy of this grace. With the power of the Holy Spirit, continue to renew me daily into a new life in you. Help me always remember that at my baptism I was adopted as your child, to be a joint-heir with Christ Jesus and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Adapted from the baptismal prayer of the Armenian baptismal service

How does thinking of yourself as the “temple of the Holy Spirit” change how you think or act?

In one baptism with repentance for the remission and forgiveness of sins;

Ee mee mugurdootyoon, habashkharootyoon, ee kavootyoon yev ee toghootyoon meghats.

Ի մի մկրտութիւն, յապաշխարութիւն, ի քաւութիւն եւ ի թողութիւն մեղաց:



A Backward Glance

1. When the baby is immersed three times in the water of the baptismal font, he or she is sharing in the
 - a. agony of Jesus in Gethsemane
 - b. Jesus' transfiguration in the presence of Peter, James, and John
 - c. Jesus' death and resurrection
 - d. the first three days of Creation
2. The church consists of all the living believers as well as all who have passed away. These groups are referred to respectively as the Church...
 - a. militant and triumphant
 - b. now and forgotten
 - c. prophetic and patriarchal
 - d. present and past
3. The statement in the Creed that the Holy Spirit “came down upon the Jordan” refers to
 - a. the Spirit's appearance at King Dtrd's baptism
 - b. the Spirit's appearance at Jesus' baptism
 - c. the Spirit's presence at Pentecost
 - d. the Spirit's presence as Joshua led the Jews across the Jordan.
4. The four essential features of the Christian Church:
_____, _____, _____, and _____.
5. St. Paul's image of “living stones” refers to
 - a. the twelve disciples
 - b. all Christians
 - c. the bread and wine of communion
 - d. the canonized saints

Verse Master

“No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

John 3: 5





Scenic Overlook

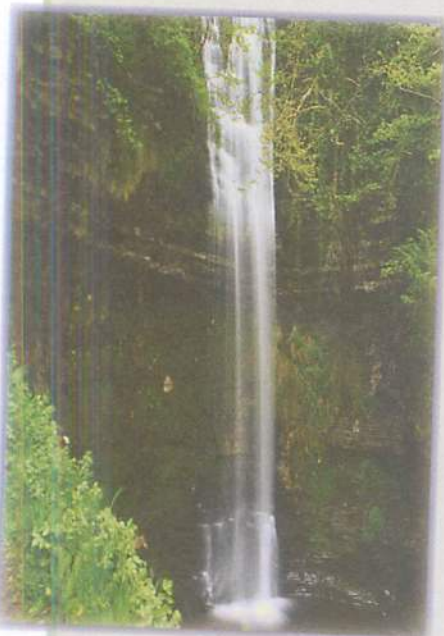
In the earliest days, baptisms took place in lakes and rivers. The River Jordan, where Jesus was baptized, has become a place of pilgrimage where people continue to immerse themselves.



Dunked! Baptism Does A Lot... But Not Everything

Think of a lamp on a bed stand (remember the one Jesus taught about in the Beatitudes?). If it's not plugged in, there is NO way it can ever be a source of light, right? Now think about the baptismal service - of course you won't remember your own but just picture the baby immersed in the font of blessed water, then anointed with holy oil, then taken to the altar for holy communion and then...a party. A celebration that now this child is a fully participating member of the Armenian Church.

So, the "lamp is plugged in." But was the light turned on? Not really. That part is up to you. So with care and attention to what it means to now be a child of God, you are given the rest of your life to learn how you can let the light of Christ shine through you. There are important symbols of the baptismal service...



Water

The baptismal font filled with water recalls so many things: the River Jordan, the life-giving oceans, the water in which the unborn baby floats before being born. Water itself is a paradox. It is a symbol of life. Most of our bodies consist of water; and all living things need water to survive. And yet it also evokes death, since if we were

to be immersed in water too long, we would drown. Floods destroy life, as the Great Flood did. When the baby is immersed in water three times, we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus (remember Lesson Six?), uniting both extremes of water's effect. The water is blessed in a special act of consecration.

Holy Oil

The water is anointed with holy oil or muron. Oil is another important religious symbol. Think of all the uses we put oil to: it's used as a medicinal balm, to cook food, and to light homes. Oil is a symbol of reconciliation (think of the olive branch; the dove Noah sent out returned with one as a sign of the reconciliation of creation). In fact, in the Armenian Church, oil is poured out of a dove-shaped vessel and during the anointing of the water with muron, the priest sings *Arakeloh Aghavnoh* (*the Dove that was sent*), recalling the descent of the Holy Spirit over Jesus when he was being baptized.



The baby is anointed with the same oil in nine places - the forehead, eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, heart, back and feet. We pray that with the power of the Holy Spirit, what we see, do, say, and think will all be conformed to God's glory.



Remember

We are baptized to be freed from original sin and become participating members of the Church.



White Clothes

Dressing the newly baptized child in white is a symbol of spiritual purity and the righteous life we have now been empowered to seek.

The Narod

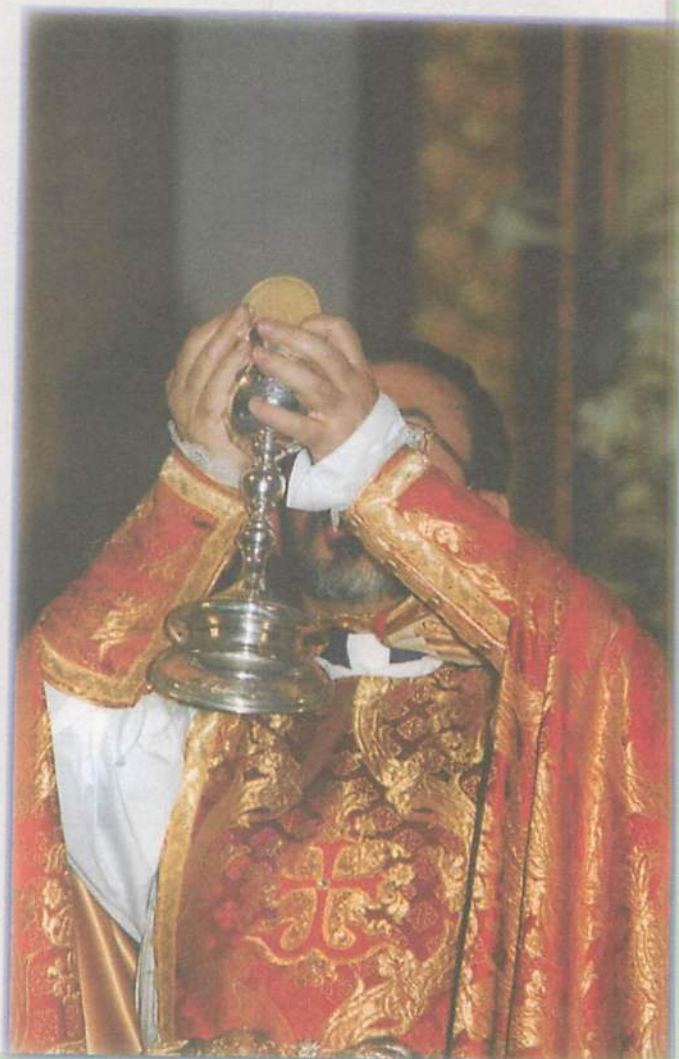
The traditional red and white braid is often used as a necklace for the baptismal cross now placed around the

child's neck. These colors symbolize sacrifice and purity and recall the blood and water which poured out of the side of Christ. The same type of braid, interwoven with a third green strand as a symbol of life and fertility, is traditionally used as the wedding crown in the Armenian marriage service. (Some people save their baptismal narod and use it in their marriage ceremony!)



Holy Communion

Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, which has separated the rite of initiation into three – baptism, confirmation and first communion – in the Armenian service, the newly-baptized baby is a fully participating member of the Church with the last gesture of the baptismal service – when the baby is taken up to the altar by the priest and given Holy Communion. Having first died and been reborn in Jesus at the baptismal font, the baby now receives Christ. He or she is fully a member of the church and beginning a very personal journey of awakening to his or her new life in Christ.



Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 12

Act Two: Life After Life

heart to Heart

Two Prayers of Hope
You gave a promise...
I entreat you.....

Here I Am, Lord...p. 37

In the resurrection of the dead, in the everlasting judgment of souls and bodies, in the kingdom of heaven and in the life eternal.

Ee harootyoon merelots, ee tadasdanun haveedeneets hokvots yev marmnots, harkayootyoonun yergneets yev ee gyansun haveedenaganus.

Ի յարութիւն մեռելոց, ի դատաստանն յաւիտենից հոգւոց եւ մարմնոց. յարքայութիւնն երկնից, եւ ի կեանսն յաւիտենականս:



Life Eternal

There are three prayer services in the Armenian Church for those who have died – a brief service at the “wake” where people pay their respects to the family and to the deceased; the funeral itself, at church; and the prayers at the graveside. In all three there are inspiring Bible readings, prayers and hymns that remind us of God’s promise to keep us with him eternally. The following prayer is from the wake service:



“And now, O benevolent and merciful Father, accept the soul of this your servant _____ who completed his exile on earth and received your rest from the worldly toils and illusive deceptions. Rank him among your saints in your heavenly kingdom from which pain and lamentations are excluded, and where your chosen ones rejoice in everlasting happiness, illuminated through your divine glory.”

This prayer contains many images about life on earth and life eternal. Write two questions you have about any of these images here. After discussion, write the answers to your questions:

1. _____

Answer: _____

2. _____

Answer: _____

Scenic Overlook

In the Armenian Church, the burial service at the graveside includes a beautiful set of prayers for the sealing of the four corners of the grave. As each corner is blessed, the priest prays for the safekeeping of the deceased's body until the Lord's return. The final prayer sums it up powerfully: "May the seal of the Lord remain unbroken on the tomb of this servant of God until the Second Coming of Christ, who will renew it in glory, to the glory of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."



The Kingdom of Heaven.....according to Matthew

How is the Kingdom of Heaven described in each of these verses?

Matthew 4:17

Matthew 7:21

Matthew 18:3-4

Matthew 13:
24-29

32

33

44

45

47-49



Do these refer to a kingdom that is now...or later?

The Kingdom of Heaven: A Poem

What comes to mind when you think of the "kingdom of heaven"?

Write a poem as follows:

Line 1 – "Kingdom"

Line 2 – two adjectives that describe line 1

Line 3 – three "ing" words that are related to the title

Line 4 – four nouns, the first two related to line 1, the last two related to line 7

Line 5 – three "ing" words related to line 7

Line 6 – two adjectives describing line 7

Line 7 – "Heaven"



Verse Master

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms..I am going there to prepare a place for you."

John 14:1-2



Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 13

Amen!

heart to Heart

A Psalm of Praise: Psalm 63:2-3

I have seen you...

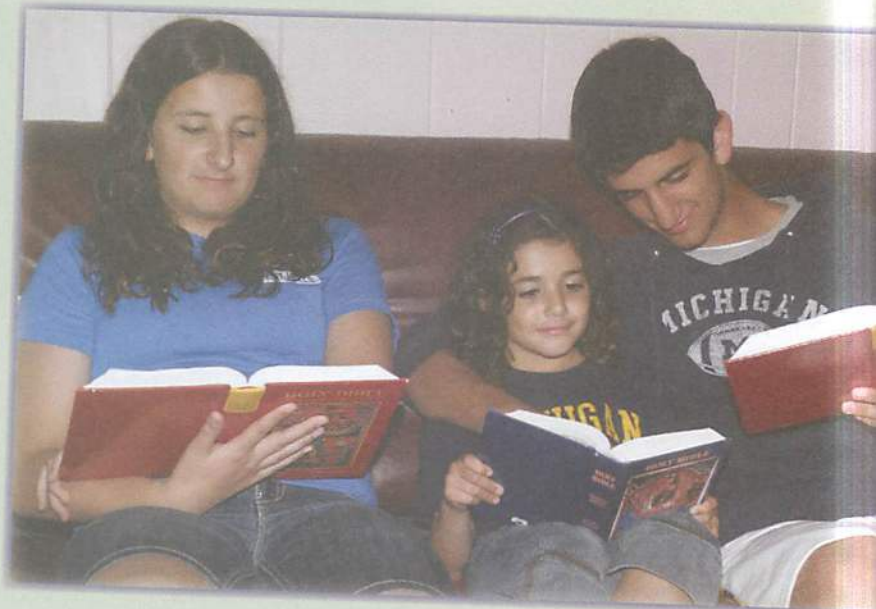
Here I Am, Lord, p. 2



Here's What We Don't Believe

Congratulations! You've explored the meaning of the Nicene Creed in considerable detail and have done a great job improving your mastery of simply reciting the words. Words are important. It was with simple yet powerful words that God created the world. (*Let there be light!*). It was God the Son, the *Word* of God, who entered human history as the human Jesus, saving us from empty self-absorbed lives into a redeemed life centered in him and in love.

After the last word of the last Creed statement, there is a strongly worded instruction from the deacon. This is known as "the anathema."



Write the definition of "anathema" here:

And here it is:

The Deacon: As for those who say there was a time when the Son was not, or there was a time when the Holy Spirit was not or that they came into being out of nothing; or who say that the Son of God or the Holy Spirit

are of a different substance and that they are changeable or alterable, such does the catholic and apostolic holy Church anathematize.

The Priest: As for us, we shall glorify him who was before the ages, worshipping the Holy Trinity and the one godhead, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Why do you think this is included, and uniquely in the Armenian Church? Some history:

If you recall from a previous lesson, the First Ecumenical Council – a gathering of leaders from every church – was held in Nicaea in 325 A.D. at the Emperor Constantine's request to resolve issues that were disrupting the unity of the church. Most importantly, they dealt with the priest Arius who was widely teaching that God the Son was a lesser being who had been "created" and does not exist eternally as one substance with the Father. This approach, called Arianism, was finally branded as heretical (against proper and truthful teaching). It was considered essential that the Nicene Creed speak to this ancient dispute. The anathema was meant to draw a defined line between those who were Christian (believe that Jesus is both human and divine and consubstantial with God) and those who believed otherwise.

The Armenian Church has retained this ancient formula in its original form and place.

The Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) continued to debate the nature of God, particularly the "one substance" of the Trinity: God (the Creator and Father), the Son, (Jesus the Christ, divine and human) and the Holy Spirit.



Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 14

A Summing Up

My Five Answers

1. The answer is _____. What is the question?
2. The answer is _____. What is the question?
3. The answer is _____. What is the question?
4. The answer is _____. What is the question?
5. The answer is _____. What is the question?

What
Do We
Believe?
What Do
Believers?

Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Lesson 1

Living a Life That Matters

heart to Heart

Prayer to Follow the Saints' Example....

Here I Am, Lord, p. 71



Verse Master

"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

James 1: 22

Read more! James 1:23-25; 2:14-17



What I'm Thinking....

Vote with your classmates

I think that

God is real and the stories I grew up with in Sunday School and the church help me to understand him.

I have a good relationship with God.

You can be a good Christian without necessarily serving others since you might not be comfortable doing that.

Faith has nothing to do with science.



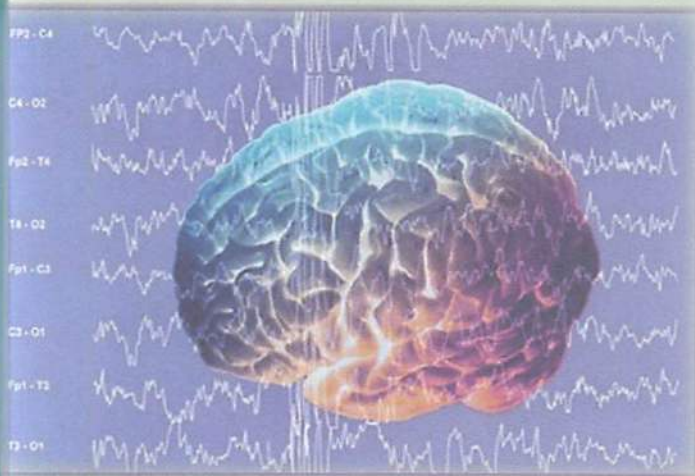
Remember

All our faith knowledge means nothing if it does not change how we live.

And You Thought It Was Just “Old Time Religion”!

In *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*, scientist-authors Newberg, D'Aquili and Rause describe the state of mind of Franciscan nuns in prayer. The nuns claimed that at these moments, they felt a great closeness to God and a mingling with him. To the traditional scientific mind, of course, these words are useless. Science concerns itself with what can be weighed, counted, calculated and measured. And yet, these women discovered that prayer – that most spiritual of experiences – might be something that actually can be measured and verified by solid science.

In well-documented experiments, people about to pray were injected with a tracer that would remain in brain cells for hours. A scan of the brain showed that during prayer there was activity in one specific part of the brain – a small section in the top rear of the brain called the – okay, get ready for this – “posterior superior parietal lobe.” This is the part of the brain that helps us draw the distinctions between ourselves and everything else. People with injuries to this part of the brain have great trouble, for example, walking or getting into bed.



Now, at the *peak* of prayer, activity levels were sharply reduced. So what happened? If this is the place that helps us find the borderline between ourselves and the outside world, why was it that suddenly the brain was not doing that job?

After many experiments and much study, the conclusion seemed clear. The state of prayer triggered a function in the brain that actually *allowed us to feel at one with God*.

That special union with God and all of creation that comes with deep prayer might not be wishful thinking or an illusion but scientifically real.

Newberg concluded that there was a brain process that allowed humans to go past material existence and connect with a deep, more spiritual part of themselves. Translation: we're *physically* wired to commune with God!

Some scientists have suggested that religion is based on superstition and fear and that we cling to God because we lack the courage to face the real world without him. And yet, in reality, science seems to be finding out that religion is still around because the wiring of the human brain continues to provide us with a connection to the Divine – a God that exists!



When we read in Genesis 1:27 that “God made us in his image,” we can understand now that he gave us a brain that would help us know and communicate with him.

So instead of dreaming up a powerful sky god because we were afraid of life's dangers, scientific experiments show that we get to know God in a way the brain makes possible.

A Cloud of Witnesses

In Hebrews 12: 1, we read that “since we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses” we can be even stronger and more persistent in our faith. Who were those “witnesses?” Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the Hebrews who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, and many, many others who *lived by faith*.

How does the writer of Hebrews define faith?

Look at Hebrews 11:1 for that definition. Write it here:

Faith is _____

If we explore Hebrews 11, we discover what it is that so many did in response to their faith. Find out for yourself by looking up each verse and describing what it is the person did out of faith:

Noah (v. 7)

Abraham (v.11)

Jacob (v.21)

Joseph (v 22)

Moses (v. 27)

The Hebrews (v 30)

Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew

St. Gregory

A Call to Service

Matthew 25: 31-40



Scenic Overlook

Religion is as old as our Stone Age cousins, the Neanderthals. They were the first human beings to ever bury their dead with ceremonies, equipping them with tools, weapons, clothing and other essential supplies. They clearly believed that their world was not chaotic, but governed by powerful forces they could come to know. They believed they could appeal to them with proper practices. This is further confirmed by the discovery of Neanderthal shrines and crude altars from as long ago as 200,000 years!



Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Lesson 2

Using the Manual: The Bible

heart to Heart

Lord, the whole Bible was given to us by your inspiration. We know it is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong with our lives; it straightens us out and helps us do what is right. It is your way of making us prepared at every point, fully equipped to do good to everyone.

2 Timothy 3:16-17



The Bestseller of All Time

From Timothy's description, it's no wonder that the Bible has sold more copies than any other book ever. Any book that claims – and correctly – to do all that Timothy says it does would be on anyone's "must read" list. So what is this book we call the Bible?

The word Bible comes from the Greek word for "books." And it is just that, not one book, but a collection of books written by different people over several centuries.

The Bible is divided into _____ major sections. These are called the _____ and the _____.

Christians consider the Old Testament the first part of our story. But for Jews, this is their Scripture, simply referred to as the Hebrew Bible. When Jesus quoted from Scripture in his time, it was this collection of writings to which he referred.

Christians divide the writings of the Old Testament into four sections:

First, the Law or Torah which are the first five books of the Old Testament.

Write the name of one of the books of the Torah here _____.

This is followed by history, wisdom literature, and the prophets.

A history book: _____ An example of wisdom literature is _____.

Three prophets: _____, _____, _____.



Verse Master

“The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword..it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12



These writings weren't assembled at one time, but were used in worship settings where people gathered. As the community migrated over a larger geographic area, it was felt necessary to put a final stamp on what was considered an approved book of the Bible. This was done in approximately the 1st century B.C. at which time the 39 books of the Old Testament were compiled and considered the Biblical “canon.” (Canon means “rule.”)

The Armenian Church, as do all Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, accepts what are called the “deutero-canonical” or “second canon” books, those that had been included in the famous Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Septuagint. (In the 16th century, Protestant reformers rejected these extra books.)

These include, for example, 1st and 2nd Maccabees – two very influential books for Armenians. These books recount the uprising of the Jews against the Romans in the 1st century B.C. Yeghishé, the Armenian priest and the historian of the Vartanantz War, used much of its imagery in describing the Battle of Avarayr, when the Armenians fought to defend their Christian faith.

The New Testament consists of four distinct accounts of Jesus' life story (the Gospels), history (Acts), the letters of Paul and other apostles to the early Christian communities (the Epistles) and an apocalyptic (“uh-pock-uh-líp-tick) book of encouragement to persecuted Christians that describes a hopeful future (Revelation).

The four gospels are _____, _____, _____, _____.
Name three epistles: _____, _____, _____

There were many gospels and letters circulating and read in the early church, but gradually the ones that seemed most authentic grew in importance and a canon of 27 books as we have today appeared in the Easter letter of the bishop of Alexandria, St. Athanasius, in 367 A.D.

The process of writing and editing and compiling was guided and nourished by the Holy Spirit.

Do the following just to hone your Bible reading skills.

Read each of the passages listed below. Write the message in these verses as simply as you can.

- Jeremiah 17:7-8 _____
- Romans 12:13 _____
- Galatians 5:22-23 _____
- Philippians 4:6-7 _____
- James 4:7 _____

Choose one of the passages above.

How does it apply to your life right now?

What change in your life can you make based on the advice in this passage?





Remember

The most important resource for our faith is the Holy Bible as it came to be in the Holy Church.

New International Version (NIV)


- 9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:
- 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.
- 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.
- 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’
- 13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’
- 14 “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

King James Version

- 9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:
- 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.
- 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.
- 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.
- 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.
- 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The Message

- 9-12 He told his next story to some who were complacently pleased with themselves over their moral performance and looked down their noses at the common people: “Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax man. The Pharisee posed and prayed like this: ‘Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, crooks, adulterers, or, heaven forbid, like this tax man. I fast twice a week and tithe on all my income.’
- 13 “Meanwhile the tax man, slumped in the shadows, his face in his hands, not daring to look up, said, ‘God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner.’”
- 14 Jesus commented, “This tax man, not the other, went home made right with God. If you walk around with your nose in the air, you’re going to end up flat on your face, but if you’re content to be simply yourself, you will become more than yourself.”



Scenic Overlook

Aramaic, which is closely related to Hebrew, was the language that Jesus spoke. It all but died out in the centuries following Jesus' day. The language still survives today, but only in isolated villages in Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Assyrian Christians from northern Iraq still speak it today as well, and it is the language used in the worship of the Syrian Orthodox Church.



Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Lesson 3

A Community of Disciples: The Circles of the Cross

heart to Heart

Christ has not called you to believe all on your own...

Here I Am, Lord, p. 51



Verse Master

"To those who would come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Matthew 16:24



The Cross of Circles

In 2000, the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America (ACYOA) adapted a wonderful resource called "The Circles of the Cross" to guide its programs. These circles were also part of the mission statement of the entire Diocese.



WORSHIP.... refers to our relationship with God through liturgy, prayer, and sacramental life. That's where we actually experience and get to know God. The Divine Liturgy and the sacraments of the Armenian Church provide basic spiritual nourishment, but they must become a meaningful personal experience,

and not simply a formal ritual. Christ said, "*This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.*" (Luke 22:19)

What do you feel when you're in church? Happy? Bored? Explain. 8th graders in church

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

WITNESS.... is the living and sharing of our Christian faith and experience with others, by sharing and living the "Good News" of our Lord. Witness is the logical extension of worship. If we are united with God, we will reflect him in our daily life.

In the same way that Christ constantly pointed to the Father, we, too, must point to him, and witness to our faith through our example and our daily lifestyle. When the disciples were preparing to replace Judas with a new disciple they knew that his *witness* would be important: "*It is necessary to choose someone who has been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was among us....one of these must become a witness with us.*"

Acts 1:21-22

Are you comfortable talking about God?

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

EDUCATION.... is important to our spiritual growth. We need to learn who God is, how he is at the center of all life, and how that changes our lives. Though





Remember

The Christian faith calls us to discipleship through community which is founded in worship, service, witness, education, and fellowship.



we may be brought up in the Church, we cannot understand the importance of that experience without a sound program of religious education.

As for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.” (II Timothy 3:14-15)

Aside from Sunday School, when and where else do you talk about God?

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



SERVICE.... the emphasis is on sharing one’s “gifts.” Christ came not to be served, but to serve, and he urges us to do the same. Christians may use their respective “gifts” to be kind and merciful as Christ was when he walked among the sick, the poor and the downtrodden and extended his holy hand to them.

“Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’” (Matthew 25:37-40)

What are some qualities and talents you have that you can use to serve others?

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

FELLOWSHIP.... refers to the way in which Armenian Christians gather in parish life and remain conscious that they are people of God - in constant fellowship with each other and the Holy Spirit.



[The early community of believers] “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe...” (Acts 2: 42-43)

What are some of the things that make you happy about being part of a church family?

I can be part of this circle by:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Scenic Overlook

St. Nersess the Great was an early example of a zealous do-gooder in the Armenian Church. The father of St. Sahag of alphabet fame, St. Nersess was elected Catholicos in 353 at a difficult time in Armenian history. He built hospitals, schools, and travelers’ hostels among other public works.



Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

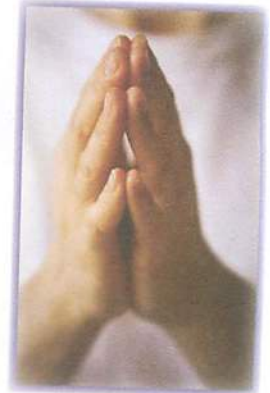
Lesson 4

The Holiness of Time

heart to Heart

Guard us, O Christ our God, under the shadow of your holy and precious cross in peace. Save us from enemies visible and invisible. Make us worthy to give you thanks and to glorify you with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and always, Amen.

Priest's prayer from Armenian blessing services



What Does It Take To Grow a Faithful Heart?

This unit has been all about what it means to live your faith, for it to grow and be healthy so that you can grow and be healthy spiritually.

Every living thing needs certain things to live: Food and water, sufficient rest, protection from the elements. Even if you never worked in a garden or took care of a plant, you know what it takes to grow one! Sun, water, good soil, seasonable weather and the tender care of the gardener.



Faith is very much the same. It is nourished in many ways as we journey through life. And if we don't do our part in helping it grow, it will wither just as a healthy flower or fruit or vegetable will dry up and fall off the vine if it is not cared for properly.

We've already seen some of the ways we feed our faith. But there are many; list some of them here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Verse Master

"May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice."

Psalm 141:2



Feasts: Celebration → Transformation

You don't have to be a Christian to know what it means to celebrate.

What are some of the celebrations you've attended?

In addition to celebrations that mark special moments in your family, our country celebrates special days as well. Name some. What do these celebrate? They mark either an event, person, or concept important to the country.

The community of believers thinks back on its life and history in the same way. Over time, important people, events and concepts were celebrated. Of course, the most important person to Christians was their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And so, his birth and baptism, his passion, death and resurrection were all commemorated. Everyone connected with his story, especially his mother Mary, was celebrated.

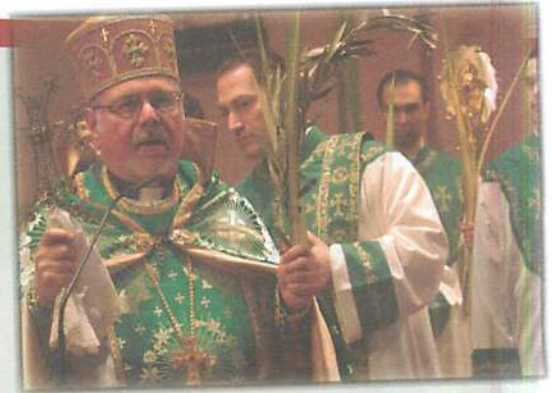
As the centuries passed, key events were marked as feast days and celebrated. Look at the church calendar and find feast days that mark

Important people

Important events

Important concepts

What opportunities do these feast days provide for us so we can grow in faith? The opportunity to...
better understand the life of Jesus Christ and therefore strengthen our faith
learn about and be inspired by the lives of the saints
learn more about the history of the Armenian Church
participate in any special customs associated with the feast
celebrate with your family and the church community, strengthening your bonds



Scenic Overlook

Feast day celebrations are sometimes a combination of historical traditions. For example: The Feast of the Transfiguration was shifted to July when the Armenian calendar was changed in the 6th century. The new time coincided with an observance for Astghig, the pagan goddess of love, beauty, and water. The merging of customs led to the Armenian custom of throwing water on each other on Transfiguration Day. We also continue to refer to it popularly as "Vartavar," a reference to the roses associated with Astghig.



Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Lesson 5

The Living Word/The Bread of Life

heart to Heart

“How sweet are your words ...”

Psalm 119: 103-106

Here I Am, Lord, p. 1



Verse Master

“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

Psalm 119: 103



A Backward Glance

Name 5 feasts that commemorate events in the life of Christ.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



B. Name 5 church feasts that remember significant events in the life of the Armenian Church and people.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

3. In three or four sentences, describe how remembering important people and events in the story of our faith can strengthen our faith.



Scenic Overlook

In Revelation 10:9-10, St. John writes about encountering an angel who handed him a scroll, saying to him: “Take this and eat it. It will be bitter to your stomach but sweet as honey to your mouth.” Which turned out to be true! Before John, the prophets Jeremiah (Jeremiah 15:16) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:8-3:3) received similar advice. Look up their stories.



Remember

The Word of God refers to both the written words of Scripture as well as Jesus himself, the living Word; we are spiritually nourished by both.

The Word as words....

We know how important the Bible is to our faith. In an earlier unit, you took a closer look at this special book, its contents, and what it has to do with *our* lives. The word of God is so important to our well-being, that Jesus uses this as a weapon against the devil during his 40 days in the wilderness. When the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones to bread because he was hungry, Jesus quoted the Hebrew Bible (Deuteronomy 8:3), telling him: "We do not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)



Scripture is truly *soul* food.

God's word as experienced in the pages of Scripture was crucial for the evolving Christian community. After only a few centuries of the gospels and letters circulating through the early church, they were prayerfully organized into the collection of 27 books as we know them today. Reading these words, hearing them at church every Sunday, studying them together at church, in Sunday School: these are just a few ways we can "take in" the word of God. Turn back to **Scenic Overlook** and read about how three men of the Bible experienced the word of God.

The Word as Body and Blood

The Gospel of John opens with world-renowned words: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning....the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" (John 1: 1-2, 14)

So the "Word" then also refers to the person of Jesus Christ. In the opening verses of the Gospel of John, the Word:

- Is One with God
- Created all things
- Is a light for all people, shining in the darkness
- Became human and lived among us
- Blesses us with grace and truth

It is this Word of God that we share in when we receive Holy Communion, accepting the wine-soaked bread that has become the very Body and life-giving Blood of our Lord. How concrete is this *spiritual* food!

So there you have it. At every liturgy, every Badarak, we receive Jesus in two ways: through the written words of the Gospel and the Body and Blood of our Lord's Holy Communion. Let's see how that takes place right in the liturgy book. Turn to page 13 of the Divine Liturgy pew book and follow your teacher's instructions.



Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Lesson 6

The Heart of the Matter

heart to Heart

“You who fashioned the countless lights of heaven...”

Here I Am, Lord, p. 21



Hello...God?

On a scale of 1 -10, with one being you're real close and 10 being “total strangers”, how would you rate your relationship with God? _____

How often do you think about God?

Every day _____

Rarely _____

On Sundays if I'm at Sunday School or church _____

Never _____

When do you feel closest to God?

At church _____

When I'm praying _____

In Sunday School _____

Christmas and Easter _____

When I read the Bible _____

Other _____

What are are ways you think would help you have a better relationship with God?

Check the ones that would help.

Read the Bible more _____

Attend church more often _____

Pray more often _____

Have serious Christian friends _____

Church services that meant more to me _____

Christian education at school _____

Lived in a world that was more God-focused _____

Spend more time helping others through church work _____

Other _____



Verse Master

“Come near to God and he will come near to you.”

James 4:8





Remember

Our relationship with God is the most important one in our lives and needs our time and loving attention.

When I Love Someone I....

Think of them often

How is my relationship with God similar?

Talking with Someone We Love: Prayer

One of the most important ways to be close to people we love is to spend time with them, talk with them. What do we call talking with God?

Prayer.

Now, the difficult part of prayer is that unlike two human beings talking, we're talking about human beings and God. If you remember, Adam and Eve were able to talk very freely and openly with God in the Garden of Eden and immediately understood his response. But what happened? Our sinful nature, our tendency to think we had all the answers, changed everything. Although we lost the gift of conversing with God directly, we have the ability to talk with him and listen for his responses – in how we feel, what we hear, what we begin to notice – in our lives. Of course, some people continue to think of prayer as a shopping list to present to God – I want this, I want that. It happens all the time. Check this out:

Woman Says Prayer Helped Her Win Lottery

As far as Rachel Goozemian is concerned, luck has little to do with it. The 30-year-old flight attendant won \$100,000 in a New York lottery game, on top of \$50,000 she won the previous year the same way.

And she's not finished yet. Her goal is the \$1 million grand prize.

Goozemian believes prayer has paved her way to riches. "I pray to God to help me and he answers," she says.

1. How does Rachel's claim make you feel? If prayer works that way, why don't all lottery players pray and win? Do you think Rachel will win the million dollars?
2. Should people pray to get rich? To win sports events? To be successful? Explain.
3. What would you feel comfortable praying for? An A on a test? A lot of money? Winning a game? New clothes? A special Christmas present? Explain.
4. Read Isaiah 65:24. If God already knows what we're going to pray for, why is it necessary to pray?
5. Read Matthew 7: 7-8 and 21:22. If this is true, why don't all people who pray receive what they want? For help with the answer, read on.
6. Read Psalm 19: 14 and Philippians 4:6. Do these give us guidelines for how we pray?
7. Read Luke 22:42, and 1 John 5: 14. Is it always necessary to say "if it's God's will?"
8. Read 2 Corinthians 12: 8-10. How can God's grace help even when you want things to be different?

Unit Three

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Lesson 7

Review and Celebration

heart to Heart

“Help me be thankful...”

Here I Am, Lord, p 79



The Year in Review

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____

Answer _____.

Question _____

Page in textbook _____



