

Plugged In

Lesson 7

Unit Four

Faith Makes A Difference

Here I Am, Lord

How sweet are your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to me!
I gain understanding from your teachings;
And so I hate every false way.
Your word is a lamp for my feet
And a light to my path.
I have taken an oath and confirmed it,
To follow your righteous commands.

Psalm 119: 103-106



God's Sure Promise...Our Birthright

This year we've discussed many topics to help you gain a better understanding of how God keeps his promises even when we don't. We've explored the ways he reveals himself to us through his Word and the traditions we celebrate together in the context of community. We have touched on how the beauty of the world, which he created for us, reflects his awesome glory! Also of great importance is the fingerprint of God within us which is manifested through our gifts and talents. Certainly we have proven that when we partner with God, and seek his will, we will discover a way of life that will help each of us reach our full potential and be all that God wants us to be, becoming the best version of ourselves.

As we journeyed through the Scriptures we came to understand the type of relationship God desires to have with his people and that despite our human shortcomings, his covenant offers each of us continual

forgiveness and endless opportunities to grow in relationship with him. In fact, not only did he remain faithful, his covenants got better and better, until he gave us the ultimate gift—his Own Precious Son—the new and everlasting covenant. This gift of his Son was the best deal we humans could ever have!

The investment God made for us is your baptismal birthright. So, perhaps as we conclude this year of faith exploration we will reveal the estimated worth of this deposit made in your name. God's promise is that this 'deposit of faith' will continue to pay rich dividends throughout your lives. In order that you fully benefit from your inheritance it is important to know exactly what the terms of this bequest are.



A Deposit Made in Your Name

The 'deposit of faith' is the body of doctrines or guidelines handed down from Jesus to the apostles and from the apostles to their successors, and YES... you are a successor! The deposit of faith contains everything that we've covered this year... the Holy Bible, the sacraments, our Divine Liturgy and so much more that comprises Holy Tradition. *"Therefore, brethren, hold fast to the traditions which you have received, whether by word or by epistle."* (2 Thess. 2:15)

This account holds all those things that God has revealed to us through his Son Jesus and his Holy Spirit. Nothing more will be added and nothing can be deducted from the account. All you are invited to do is draw on the abundant interest the account accumulates!

The deposit has been made in your name. Do you have any idea what the account number might be? Any guess? It's very simple, so simple that you will not even have to write it down to remember it...it is ...'F A I T H.' After a year thinking about faith, what is your definition?

Faith is _____

Simply...F A I T H!

Let's explore the letter, believed to be from St. Paul, to the Hebrews. It was written around 80-90 A.D. to a group of Greek-speaking Christians, some of whom were possibly Jewish Christians who were in danger of losing their faith. The theme was as important then as it is today...God saves us through Jesus' sacrifice and that we should always hold fast to faith and move toward Christ.



Read Hebrews 11.

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Wow! Faith sure has helped a lot of people in the Bible. Chapter 11 of Hebrews gives us many examples of how faith helped people live a godly life. It tells us how these men and women lived, how they obeyed God, and what happened as a result.

Faith is a personal acceptance and firm hold on what God has revealed in deeds and words.

Believing is a conscious and free response...no one can force you to have faith! But, once you have faith, you will recognize that God is both your origin and final goal and that you can put no object or person ahead of him in your life. In fact, God is the only person who truly exists for all times. God is the present tense. We cannot say God was or God will be because God always is. Let's be inspired by Hebrews 11.

1. Think of a way faith has helped you live the way God wants you to live. Start your paragraph like this:

"It was faith that helped me..."

2. Now write another paragraph about the ways faith can help you in the future.

"I know that as I grow in faith I will be able to..."



Our Armenian Way

Gregory of Datev's Book of Questions

Someone who really knew about how faith helps answer questions was the great theologian, teacher, and writer **St. Gregory of Datev** (*Soorp Krikor Datevatzi*). He was born in 1346 in the province of Vaiotz Tzor. He was one of the famous students of Hovhannes Vorodnetzi and was ordained while on a pilgrimage with his teacher to Jerusalem in 1373. Because Krikor understood Latin, which was considered the universal language, he was able to study all the great philosophers of the time. What he learned from them enabled him to write the famous (and very long!) *Kirk Hartzmantz* ("The Book of Questions"), a work of practical theology. (*Theo* from Greek meaning "God" and *-logy*, meaning "study of") He also authored two collections of sermons, the style and depth of which set a new standard for Armenian preaching.

Life Issue: Belong to Believe



Hopefully, through our studies this year, we have come to a better understanding of how community, study, and faith work together to bring us to a better understanding of who God is and what he wants for our lives.

What comes first, belonging or believing? Most people would respond that it is our belief that brings us together and gives us a sense of belonging. But, let's think about it in reverse. Perhaps it is belonging that leads us to belief. Studies overwhelmingly prove that everyone wants to belong...to someone, or something. In the Church we have both. Through our baptism we belong to God and through God to one another. When you enjoy a sense of belonging you are proud to say, to anyone who asks... "I belong here"...this is "my Church"...and, this is what we believe."

Final "Exam"

Here's an opportunity to test your classmates – follow your teacher's instructions for a great class review challenge.

us for the journey of life. We receive grace with each sacrament. Let's read more about how the Church prepares us for our life journey." Read **Our Armenian Way** which covers the sacraments of matrimony, ordination & prayers for the sick. 15 min.

5. Tell students: "Sometimes we forget how deeply connected our sacraments are to their origins in Scripture – in Jesus' life and teachings and in the early Church. Let's take a closer look." Ask volunteers to read the passages in **Scripture Tells All** and as a group identify which sacrament is being represented.

Answers: Genesis 1:26-28 (M); Mark 1:16 (O); Acts 6:1-7 (O); Genesis 2:20-24 (M); James 5:14-15 (P).

6. On the whiteboard or newsprint list three categories: 'married life'; 'single life' and 'ordained life' under each category write 'pros' and 'cons'. Ask the students to share what they feel could be positive and negative about each vocation. Tell them that their opinions will change as they get older and have more life experiences to draw from. Read **What's Calling Me**. Identify that God's desire for each and every one of us is happiness. Whatever we choose to do with our lives will be blessed by God if we learn to seek his will for our lives. 15 min.

7. Enjoy the review puzzle "**Find Four**" you can work as a class, in teams or allow each student to work on the puzzle alone. Go over the answers together. Answers: THE LIFE OF CHRIST

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Apostle - t | 9. Confirmation - f |
| 2. Eucharist - h | 10. Disciples - c |
| 3. Domestic Church - e | 11. faith - h |
| 4. Reconciliation - l | 12. Martyr - r |
| 5. Baptism - i | 13. Priest - i |
| 6. Confess - f | 14. Baptism - s |
| 7. Forgives - e | 15. Matrimony - t |
| 8. Covenant - o | |

8. Pray the closing prayer together.

15 min.

Unit Four: Plugged In

Session 7: Faith Makes A Difference

Key Concepts

1. The 'deposit of faith' is God's legacy to us: his revelation through his Son Jesus and the ongoing enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.
2. Faith is our personal acceptance of this revelation.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Explore the inheritance of faith gifted to us by God.
2. Produce their own definition of "faith."
3. Complete a Bible study on Hebrews 11.
4. Write about how faith has and will be a source of guidance and inspiration in life.
5. Briefly review St. Gregory of Nazianzen and the *Book of Questions*.
6. Participate in a review activity and celebrate the year!

Materials Needed:

Note paper or index cards
Refreshments

Procedure:

1. Welcome the students to the class. Pray from **Here I Am, Lord**. Then distribute index cards and ask students to write down *three* things they learned this year (you might have to prompt them by skimming through the units). Allow 5 minutes and then collect cards.
2. Read **God's Sure Promise...Our Birthright** and then ask students if any of them have ever received an inheritance. To receive an inheritance means that you are related or have had a relationship with that person. Grandparents often leave their grandchildren inheritances for college or to help secure their future. We too have a faith birthright because we have a relationship with God and through God with others in our faith community.
3. Continue into **A Deposit Made in Your Name** by pointing to the picture of the savings account passbook and telling students that before on-line banking, books like this were used to record deposits made into a savings account. Read the text and have the children share what they believe the definition of faith is. There will be an explanation later in the lesson. 15 min.
4. Read **Simply...FAITH!** together, including Hebrews 11. Distribute paper and have students write their paragraphs and share answers.
5. Ask students if it is ok for them to have questions about their faith (it is perfectly ok!). Read **Our Armenian Way** which highlights St. Gregory of Datev and his famous **work** *Kirk Hartzmantz (The Book of Questions)* Segue to reading **Life Issue** by saying: Okay, we've just read about this amazing churchman who specialized in questions and answers. And that's exactly what belonging to a faith community can help us with – enriching us with faith-based answers. Let's read....” 15 min.
6. Before the final review exercise invite students to get some of the refreshments that are provided. Explain that their '**Final Exam**' will be a group effort. Have them all develop five questions by going through their textbooks. They should write the question and answer and provide the page where the answer can be found. Assign each student a different lesson. Form two teams and begin to ask and answer questions. Play for 20 minutes. Give winners *and* losers a prize! Conclude by reading the students' cards about what they learned during the year. End with closing prayer from you: “Lord, be with us all over the summer; open our eyes to the beauty of the world and every human heart. Thank you for this year together. Amen! 30 min.