

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. 87



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.



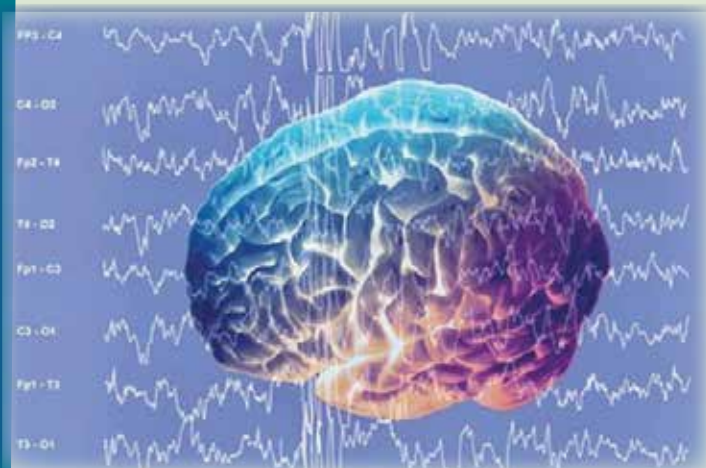
Remember

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. 8)

Jacob (v. 21)

Joseph (v. 22)

Moses (v. 27)

The Hebrews (v. 29)

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 B.C.



“But for now, we’re going to wrap up our study of the Creed in a sort of “right brain” way. All these weeks we’ve been learning historical and theological information, reciting and reviewing. At this point, let’s try to summarize all that left-brain book learning in a creative and evocative way. I’m going to assign pairs (if the class is small, students can work alone or in pairs with more than one Creed statement to illustrate) to take one of these basic tenets of the Creed and illustrate it. Here are magazines, glue, scissors and markers. Our aim is to assemble images and perhaps even words that help describe the statement. When we’re through, we’ll be displaying this on a bulletin board for the rest of the school and parish to enjoy and learn from.”

- Clean up in a way that materials will be accessible next week. Conclude with the priest’s part of the anathema as a prayer. Before praying together in unison, remind students that this is the priest’s prayer directly following the anathema and is an affirmation of our faith. 25 min.

- Play a review game.
- Participate in a personal reflection exercise on the Creed.

Material needed

As indicated in previous lesson.

Note to the Teacher

Remember that students will be leading the congregation in reciting the Creed today.

Procedure

- Gather in class and review the Creed. In church, sit in the front pew; at the appropriate time, stand, face the congregation and recite.
- Complete the art project and clean up (and mount the display if time permits). 20 min.
- Instruct students to look through Unit Two and come up with 5 “answers” (along with the page number where this information can be found) for which fellow students will have to provide the questions. For example, the answer is Arius. The question would be? (see if students can answer this one) Yes. The priest who was teaching the heresy that Jesus was created and was not one with God.” Allow 10 minutes for them to come up with answers and 10 minutes for reviewing some of them together. Depending on class size, you can have students share all or just some of their answers. 20 min.

Unit Two
What Do We Believe?
What Do I Believe?
Lesson 14
A Summing Up

Key Concepts

- The Nicene Creed is a statement of faith that can provoke deeper reflection.
- The Nicene Creed is clearly and thoughtfully proclaimed at liturgy.

Objectives

During this session students will

- Attend church and lead the congregation in reciting the Creed. (You may leave as the deacons chant “mi vok” and “Marmin deroonagan” is being sung.
- Complete their art project (it can be mounted by students or later by the teacher and parent volunteer).

Unit Three
I Believe! Help Me to Believe More
Lesson 1
Living a Life That Matters

Key Concepts

- We were created to live with God at the center of our lives.
- Life with God at the center will result in the best life we can live.
- All our faith knowledge means nothing if it does not change how we live.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a poll on issues of faith.
2. Explore, through prayer and Scripture, the importance of *living* our faith.
3. Read about the science of spirituality.
4. Study Biblical, historical, and current examples of people living their faith.
5. Reflect on Jesus' call to loving service in Matthew 25.
6. Discuss and select a service project.

Materials Needed

Bring in a newspaper or magazine article about a person in the news whose actions or words reflect their faith (see procedure #5). Also think of someone you know personally who evidences this same quality.

Note to the Teacher

This unit will include a service project that students will begin to discuss today. Bring in the ideas you have put together (see **Introduction**) for local, national or international (including Armenia) charities.

Procedure

1. Have students turn to page 87 in *Here I Am, Lord*. Pray and discuss the question. Together peruse the brief biographies on pp 104-106 (be prepared to choose the ones you want to highlight), reading 2 or 3; discuss with students what character and qualities appeal to them.
2. Have students look at the verse in **Verse Master** and then its continuation in their Bibles, James 1:23-25; 2:14-17. Tell the class: "We're learning something very simple here. If you read the powerful teachings of Jesus, if you hear about what God is telling us is *really* important about life, if we hear that faith is caring for the poor and hungry, and then we walk away and go about our lives as if we never heard these things, well then, we might as well have never read it, right? Look at again at verse 17 in chapter 2. Why would faith be dead without any kind of action?" Solicit answers and then conclude: "Yes, our faith needs to *live* in the things we do and say, otherwise it's the world's best-kept secret, no?" 10 min.
3. Take a quick poll (agree, raise hand; strongly agree, wave raised hand; disagree, thumb down; strongly disagree, shake thumb up and down) by reading the statements in **What I'm Thinking...** (Guidelines: 1. For those who disagree, explore why; what brought them to this conclusion? 2. Explore what students consider a "good" relationship – does it include time with God in prayer? Reading the Bible to learn more about him? Etc. Advise them that in a few lessons they'll be exploring this matter more closely. 3. For those who agree, emphasize that God wants us to get out of our comfort zone; mention the examples of Moses who thought he couldn't speak well enough to go to the Pharaoh (God told him not to worry, he would help him do what needed to be done as well as provide his brother Aaron as a further support); the prophet Jeremiah thought he was too young but God again assured him he could do the task; Jesus called disciples who were not necessarily skilled in all the right ways – but he knew that love of God would empower them as needed; service is the most important part of being Christian, since it honors the most important commandments (loving God, loving others). 4. Here's where you can provide a great segue to the next activity: "As a matter of fact, and maybe surprising to you, faith *does* have something to do with science. More and more scientists are discovering that we may be *biologically* equipped to know God. Let's read about it. 10 min.
4. Read **And You Thought It Was Just "Old Time Religion"**! 5 min.
5. Teach **A Cloud of Witnesses**; discuss the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1: "Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Have students make a quick study of the Bible people mentioned (Answers: Noah – built an ark when God warned him of the impending flood; Abraham – obeyed God and left home to go to a place he knew nothing about; Jacob –blessed his sons even as he lay dying – faith in the future God promised; Joseph – believing in God's plan and knowing he was going to die, spoke of Israel's exodus from Egypt and gave instructions for his burial; Moses – took the slaves

out of Egypt; Hebrews – went through the Red Sea believing they would be safe.) Continue by saying “These were just some of the people in the Bible who acted in faith. But let’s think of a few others. How about Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew who received the gift of speaking Armenian at Pentecost and traveled to Armenia to share the Good News. What did *they* do by faith? (Traveled to a distant land, believing that God would grant their mission success.) How about the first recognized Armenian saint, St. Santookht, the princess who converted to Christianity because of St. Thaddeus’ teaching and defied her father? Remember her story? (She chose to be Christian, facing certain death at her pagan father’s hands, believing that Christ was more important than a rich life in the palace.) Or St. Gregory, who converted Armenia to a Christian nation in 301A.D.? (Even with the enormous suffering and difficulties, he believed God would help him succeed in converting the Armenian people.)” Ask students to identify people in their lives who evidence this kind of strong faith. Begin with your newspaper story and an example of your own. 15 min.

6. Tell students: “Well, we’ve spent the year looking at other people’s experiences of God, and our own basic faith through the Nicene Creed and we’ve done some productive thinking today about how all of that has to have some kind of *impact* on how we live or else, I guess you could say, what’s the difference if you know it or not? Let’s turn to what Jesus tells his disciples about the most important thing they have to do.” Have students read Matthew 25:31-40. Conclude: “So there it is, loud and clear. Jesus is telling us: “When you neglect those who need help, you’re neglecting me. When you reach out to them, it’s *me* you are serving. We’re going to spend the next few weeks on a service project. We’ll either raise money or collect food and clothing or serve in some way we’ll all decide together.” Begin the discussion. Students should choose a project and begin mapping out a plan that should include: 1) designing a flyer describing the project and 2) plan of action over the next month (project should be concluded in 4 weeks’ time).

End with the simple prayer: “Lord, thank you for giving us ideas and energy as we plan our service project. Fill us with your Holy Spirit over the next four weeks so that our love for you will turn into our love and service to others. Amen.” 20 min.

I Believe! Help Me to Believe More

Unit Three Lesson 2

Using the Manual: The Bible

Key Concepts

1. The most important resource for our faith is the Holy Bible as it came to be in the Holy Church.
2. As we would with any book, we need to learn what the Bible is and how to use it.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Participate in a review game on what they know about the Bible.
2. Read about how the Bible came to be and review Bible basics.
3. Consider how Scripture can impact on their own lives.
4. Compare and contrast examples of different current translations.
5. Continue their service project.

Materials Needed

Samples, if possible of 3-4 different Bible translations (NIV, NRSV, The Message, CEV, Armenian language)

Procedure

1. The opening prayer is based on verses from 2 Timothy that underscore the importance of Scripture. Ask students to underline the phrases that describe what the Bible can do. Then discuss answers. 5 min.
2. “Okay, let’s see what we know about this amazing book!” Form two teams. Write Holy Bible at top of board and draw a line to divide board in half. Then