

heart to Heart

Knowing God

Here I Am, Lord, p. 53

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 աներեսելիք:



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 plums.



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:



2. Have students close their books. Distribute index cards and ask students to write the words *Jesus Christ* at the top and 10 things they know about his life and teachings (they can number 1 to 5 on each side). 5 min.
3. Pass around the bag for students to deposit cards. Then give the bag to a student, have him or her pick out a card. Call on 2 recorders to be at the board (opposite ends). Have one write “Jesus’ life” and the other “Jesus’ teachings.” As student reads items, have the recorders write them under the appropriate heading (students can take turns picking a card out of the bag). As cards are read, there will be less and less to add. Review final list and use the references in **Jesus in Scripture** to fill in what’s missing. Have students look them up in their textbooks according to time remaining. 25 min.
4. Spend remaining class time on **So Jesus Lived and Taught**. (A yoke attaches two animals together as a pair so that two oxen can pull a heavy plow or two horses can pull a carriage.) Before students begin **What’s That Got to Do With Me? Now?**, give an example or two (A friend makes a sarcastic comment about something you did: be forgiving; you’re not getting enough credit for helping your aunt clean out her backyard: do good deeds for *God’s* glory). After discussion, dismiss class with this prayer: “Lord, help us understand that to know you is more than just knowing *about* you. Lead us to you through Scripture and prayer and in the many opportunities life gives us to be your heart and hands in the world. Amen.” 15 min.

Unit Two
What Do We Believe?
What Do I Believe?
Lesson 3
True God and the Source of Everything

Key Concepts

1. Jesus is true God, of one substance with the Father.
2. God is the Creator of the universe and everything in it.

3. Evolution is compatible with this understanding of life’s origins.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Discuss doubts they may be feeling about their faith.
2. Complete a review quiz.
3. Explore the relationship between science and faith in the matter of evolution.
4. Examine Genesis 1.
5. Participate in a dilemma exercise about evolution.

Procedure

1. Have students turn to page 53 in *Here I Am, Lord*. (This can be on the board before class). Read the prayers together and discuss the question. If students share doubts, list them on the board. Discuss how some of these can be resolved in very specific ways (in the Bible, via Sunday School, talking with other Christians) and some are resolved over time, as we live our faith and pray for guidance, and through the example of others. Affirm that God is okay with our doubts and asks only that we work with him to answer them. 10 min.
2. Turn to the review quiz. The first question asks students to recall the first two creed statements. Tell the class that reciting the creed regularly at Badarak and at milestone moments such as when parents baptize their children or when we marry is a way that the community continues to affirm its basic beliefs. Have students complete quiz; discuss answers. (1. Father, Almighty, visible, invisible, Lord, begotten, substance, 2. See student lesson 2) 5 min.
3. Read **By Whom All Things Came Into Being**. Form students into smaller groups to read the Scripture and discuss questions (or you can read aloud together). Then have an all-class discussion. (Answers: 1. “*there was evening and there was morning*” - a beautiful sense of the orderliness; this ancient understanding of the day beginning at sundown the night *before* is still evident in the Jewish start of the Sabbath on Friday night; we also reflect this understanding when

we celebrate Easter liturgy on the eve of Easter; “*it was good*” – a *good* creation; “*and God said*” – the importance of the Word; with the presence of God’s Spirit (v. 2), this Word coming out of the Father Creator has been long understood to stand for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so that the Trinity is clearly present at Creation; 2. 1st: night and day; 2nd: separates water and sky which were once thought to overlap; 3rd: land and vegetation; 4th: stars, moon and sun – different from the light that was formed in the void on the first day; 5th: sea creatures and birds; 6th: animals and humankind; 7th: God rested, making the day a holy day of rest; 3. Humankind is made in God’s image, able to know him; they are made good stewards of the rest of creation. Mention to students that the word translated as “man” actually means simply creature of the earth in the original Hebrew, sort of “earthling” and that God created humankind as male and female. 25 min.

4. Have students respond in **Dilemma: What Would You Say?** Discuss. Answers could include: for eons, even in the modern world, people have a feeling that there is something greater than the human mind at work in the world; there is nothing in science that contradicts the faith of the Armenian Church; evolution is certainly possible in the Orthodox Christian’s understanding of the creation of the world; the point of Genesis is that God is the source of all life – it doesn’t tell us *how* the world was created; a “day” in the Genesis story could be a million years or it could just be a poetic expression; the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve are perhaps *symbols* of our beginning – the perfection of living in union with God.
5. Dismiss class with the prayer: “Lord, thank you for the wisdom of faithful people who did and continue to guide us in defining and understanding our faith. Help us think and pray, too, that we might grow closer to understanding your will for us. Amen.” 20 min.

Unit Two

What Do We Believe? What Do I Believe?

Lesson 4

Help!

Key Concepts

1. Humankind is free to accept or reject a relationship with God.
2. God’s intervention in human history was needed to redeem humanity once and for all.
3. Jesus was born of Mary in union with the Holy Spirit; this is called the “Incarnation.”

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Play review games on the first three creed statements.
2. Recite the 4th statement in English and Armenian and define terms.
3. Read about salvation history.
4. List the Ten Commandments.
5. Examine St. Athanasius’ renowned description of the Incarnation.
6. Participate in a voting exercise.

Materials Needed

Large 4” X 6” index cards with one word of each of the first two creed statements in English (capitalize the first letter of the first word) written in thick, bold letters OR prepare these by computer on white paper. These should be taped on two opposite walls, out of order. Have the 3rd and 4th creed statements also prepared.

Two rolls of masking tape

Dictionary

Procedure

1. Open by having students turn to page 19 in *Here I Am, Lord*. Tell students that these are the very words we sing at the end of Badarak in “Orhnetzitz Der.” Discuss question. Possible answers: practicing kindness, being generous with our time and attention, living gratefully, answering parents with