

Looking At Life

Lesson 2

Unit One

God Reveals Himself

Here I Am, Lord

Lord, from the day of our birth you revealed yourself to us through the loving touch of our parents.

As we grow you continue to reveal yourself to us through our senses and our minds. Today, Lord, you will again reveal yourself to us as we learn to know you through your Word, revealed to us in fullness through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ and the sacred Tradition of our holy faith.

Open our hearts, minds and souls so that in faith we might seek understanding, wisdom and grace. We ask this and all things with confidence in your love. AMEN.

What are some ways we grow closer to God through our senses?



God Has Given Us Ways to Find Answers

A bit of holy humor... A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, "I know what the Bible means!" His father smiled and replied, "What do you mean, you 'know' what the Bible means?" The son replied, "I do know!" "Okay," said his father. "What does the Bible mean?" "That's easy, Daddy..." the young boy replied excitedly. "It stands for **'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.'**"

Well, what do you think about that response? Is the Bible a book of instruction?

It is true that reading the Bible involves two aspects. First is *knowing* the Word of

God and committing to it. And the second is trying to better *understand the mystery* of that Word. We call the Bible "God's Word." In and of itself, that suggests that we will always need help to understand the

contents correctly.

That is why the Bible is entrusted to the Church. The Church is made up of the people of

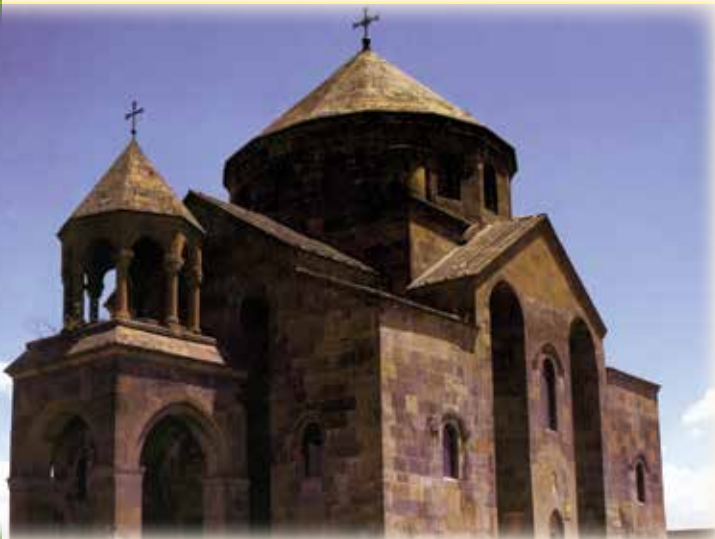
God, and it is to this very group that the wisdom of the Holy Spirit was promised. All through the Book of Acts we read about how the Spirit inspired and empowered believers. And so the Holy Spirit continues to do so today and will do so until the end of time.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... John 1:1

Have you ever thought about where the Bible came from or who wrote it? Even though the Bible is a divine reality expressed in human words, it remains a mystery that requires sound interpretation, reflection and care. That is a job for the Church! All together, as the Church, we listen to the Word with faith and devotion, guard it with dedication and explain it with

faith. The apostles and authors of the Word of God were inspired to write down what they actually lived—this is part of what we call Holy Tradition. Scripture and Holy Tradition are understood at a deeper level through a developed sense of faith of all the people of God over time, guided by the bishops of the worldwide or universal Christian Church.

If you read the introductions at the beginning of each book of the Bible, you can learn a great deal about the authors and their readers. Thanks to Church Scripture scholars along with academics and archaeologists, we know more and more about the original manuscripts, the different writing styles, and the different audiences for which the books of the Bible were written. For example, the Gospel of Matthew was written to a predominantly Jewish community. He explained the mysteries of God, revealed through Jesus Christ, in a way a person of Jewish ancestry would understand. It is a very comforting reality that the Church is a haven



for her children. We can rest assured that if we work together, as a body of believers, God will reveal to us the deepest secrets of a good life, centered in him.

John's Words on *the Word*

The Gospel of John (1:1) says that “in the beginning was the Word.” Have you ever sat and wondered about the beginning of existence? John’s description of the origin of life is very important in the Armenian Church; we repeat it on the majority of Sundays for the “Final Gospel.”

There is a cool TV commercial for bottled water that takes a large drop of water and when it hits the surface it turns into an athlete. At the start of a PIXAR movie, animated figures change their shape to become a word that spells out PIXAR. John’s reflection on the “Word” can evoke its own kind of imagery. As we read, just close your eyes...hear the words...draw a picture of Jesus in your mind. If you thought of Jesus as a ‘Word’ what would that word be?



What has come into being in him was life...and the life was the light of all people...

Imagine Jesus

Here’s a list of words; some are a good description of Jesus and others are not... circle the ones that you think fit, cross out the ones that don’t fit Jesus at all:

honest shy *divine*
 extraterrestrial **friendly**
happy **gentle** influential
 smart *humble* **NOBLE**
amazing *uninspiring*
 awesome **powerful**
mysterious **spirit** weak
 light **God** sad **fun** **angry**

Imagine Jesus is one of your classmates...
what would he be like?

1. What would be his favorite TV Show?
2. Would he be a popular guy?
3. Would he like to hang out after school?
4. Would he play sports?

5. What kind of music would he listen to?
6. Where would he go to church?
7. Would he join a church youth group?
Would he like it?

The fullness of God's Revelation is expressed in Jesus Christ.



Our Armenian Way

Pentecost/Hokekaloost

Acts 2: 1-12

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Imagine yourself there in Jerusalem with the apostles on the day of Pentecost. You know the Holy Spirit is present in the wind and the fire and in the people who suddenly have the ability to speak in different languages. How do you think the disciples felt when all of a sudden they were able to speak languages they did not know? The only conclusion one could draw is that this is the handiwork of God. This is when God's Spirit came to renew the face of the earth through the establishment of the Church. This renewal is an ongoing reality through the living Church. Actually, Pentecost is considered the birthday of the Universal Church, celebrated 50 days after Easter. The Armenian Church is one of the members of this Holy Universal Establishment... we are **the True Church** and we have the 'marks' to prove it! We are: One, Holy, Universal, & Apostolic.

While the first nine articles of the Nicene Creed (*Havadamk*) are about the Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the last three articles concern the destiny of humankind and the role the Church plays in guiding the faithful toward that destiny. The Church is all true Christian believers together. Another word for true is Orthodox. All of the true churches can be identified by the four 'marks'...



One—founded by the one Lord Jesus Christ, it has one faith, one liturgy and one hierarchy.

Apostolic—because all her ordained bishops are successors of the Apostles, in an unbroken line.

Universal—as according to Our Lord’s command to go out and teach all nations. Our goal is to convert the entire world.

Holy—Jesus Christ is the founder of the Church. He is holy because he is God—He gave his blood for us. We are one body, the Body of Christ, and we do not stand alone!

Do you pray each day for the power of the Holy Spirit? How can this power help you in your choices, decisions and daily activities?

Holy Communion Soorp Haghortootiun

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Take, eat; this is my body, which is distributed for you and for many, for the expiation and remission of sins.

from the Armenian Divine Liturgy

In Luke’s account of the Last Supper, Jesus asks his disciples to remember him and all that he did, as they share the bread that he identified as his body given for us and the cup of wine that he identified with the New Covenant, sealed by his blood.

In Armenian we say: *Arek, gerek, ays eh marmeen eem vor vasun tser yev pazmats paskhee, ee kavootyoon yev ee toghootyoon meghats...* This serves as a common celebration of our faith, a celebration that binds not only all Armenians, but all Christians together as one body. You can go to any Armenian Church in the world and join in the celebration of Divine Liturgy.



Hokekaloost	Pentecost
Muron	Holy Oil
Soorp Haghortootiun	Holy Communion
Arek gerek.....	“Take, eat...”
Havadamk.....	We believe



Choices and Decisions: Following God's Lead

Fill in the blanks with the words below.

God is a God of _____ choices...there is no ONE way that is the ONLY way.

God _____ in the ordinary and is always with us in our _____ and our inclinations.

God's _____ is for us to be happy...not unhappy.

God in his _____, takes us a step at a time.

The choices we make in the present _____ our decisions in the _____.

impact

choices

desire

future

multiple

works

mercy

8 Tips to Help Find Some Answers...

† **Be faith-filled.** Pray for guidance in your decisions and seek to deepen your relationship with God. Let Christian values guide you.

† **Be generous and of service to others.** We find our true heart in acts of service.

† **Pray...** in ordinary and extraordinary circumstances.

† **Share faith.** We grow and learn by talking and studying.

† **Make sacrifices.** A happy and holy life involves sacrifice.

† **Reach out.** Your parish priest & members of your parish family are excellent resources to help guide you.

† **Education.** The more you study the more you learn; remember that God reveals himself...but we must be open to his call.

† **Support.** Have a heart that can listen and lead others to Christ.



Unit One: Looking At Life

Session 2: God Reveals Himself

Key Concepts

1. God reveals himself through his Son, the Church, one another, life itself, and his Word – the Holy Bible.
2. The Bible is the written Word of God.
3. All believers need to nourish themselves with Scripture, but deepest understanding and interpretation take place in the Church, the Body of Christ.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Reflect on how we experience God through our senses.
2. Identify the resources available to us to learn about Jesus.
3. Read about the importance of the believing community (the Church) for understanding Scripture.
4. Participate in a Bible study on John 1:1-14 emphasizing Jesus' revelation as Word and light.
5. Imagine Jesus as a contemporary.
6. Review the story of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and identify the four marks of the True Church.
7. Read about the establishment of Holy Communion (Luke 22:14-20) as well as related Armenian vocabulary.
8. Complete a fill-in exercise on following God's lead as we make choices.

Materials Needed

1. Index cards
2. Box or bowl in which students will place the cards

Procedure

1. As students arrive give them an index card and ask them to write down the resources that they would use if they had to prepare a written report on Jesus Christ, and place them in the box you provided for them. 5 min.
2. Reflect on the opening prayer together and discuss question. (Answers might include: seeing a loved one's face, beautiful sights, smells, and sounds in nature, linking arms with a friend, feeling a snowflake on our face...all helping us understand God's love and glory without words, etc.).
3. Continue by teaching or reading **God Has Given Us Ways to Find Answers**. Have them each select an index card from the box and read it – continue until all the cards have been read. Answers might include: the Bible, other religious books, the authority of the Church, my pastor, knowledgeable family members and parishioners, Sunday School teachers, media. 10 min.
4. Continue: "Let's see what the Gospel of John has to tell us about the living Word." Read John 1:1-14 to them twice; the first time ask them to listen for one word from the reading that stands out to them. Before reading the passage again, ask them to think about what that word reveals to them. Discuss. Read **John's Words on the Word**. Segue to the next activity by saying: "Let's think a little bit more now about how *we* think of Jesus." 10 min.
5. Have students quickly circle words and jot down their thoughts in **Imagine Jesus**. Then discuss. Add a little personal humor...make them comfortable in their realization of Christ's humanity. 5 min.
6. Re-read John 1:3-5 together and ask these question: What do you think John means when he says that Jesus is the true light of the world that overcomes darkness? (Jesus is the single unfailing light that will defeat the sorrows, limitations, and evils of this world.) How can our actions and attitudes continue to be a light in the world? (We can be God's ambassadors in this world, alleviating suffering, etc.) 5 min.

7. Segue with: “Well, how exactly did the Church grow and spread in order to do exactly what we’ve been talking about – spread the light of Christ?” Ask students how many languages their families speak at home and if they know the same languages. Ask if any of them had ever gone to school in a place where they did not know the language. If none have had this experience, ask them to imagine what it might be like and consider what difficulties they might encounter if they had to complete a big project with four other students, and they all spoke different languages. (Read Genesis 11 prior to the session and briefly recap the Tower of Babel.) Read Acts 2:1-12 together, and then **Our Armenian Way**. 10 min.
8. Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 22:7-22. Then teach or read **Holy Communion**, concluding that “here once again, something so foundational to our faith as the establishment of Holy Communion through which we share in Christ every Sunday, is recorded for us in Scripture. We follow Jesus ‘example.” Review the Armenian words. 5 min.
9. Complete **Choices and Decisions: Following God’s Lead** together as a class. Answers are: *multiple, works, choices, desire, mercy, impact, future*. Conclude by saying: “Throughout this session we’ve explored some of the ways that God reveals his will to us. God is not like anyone else you have ever or will ever know. You can talk with him at *any* time about *anything*. He knows everything about you, and loves you no matter what. He expects that we will make mistakes as we grow, but he expects that we will learn from our mistakes. God is forever faithful and forgiving so you can definitely say our God is a God of second chances, but you must remember that you will still live with the consequences of your decisions and actions...so why not consult God first? Let’s see how we can start to do that...”
10. Review the eight tips provided – tell students that these are good instructions for them to write into their phones as reminders.. You might consider making posters of these tips for permanent display in your classroom.
11. Conclude with a closing prayer: “Lord, be with us this week, drawing us closer to you in every moment and in every way, amen.” 10 min.

Unit One: Looking At Life

Session 3: The Alpha and Omega

Key Concepts

1. God is the source of all life, embracing the theory of evolution and intelligent design.
2. Both Old and New Testaments confirm the origins of life in God.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Examine the meaning of “alpha and omega.”
2. Compare the accounts of Creation in Genesis 1 & 2.
3. Reflect upon the differences between human creation and God’s creation.
4. Identify their personal beliefs about life’s origins in a continuum exercise.
5. Explore the faith foundation of evolution.
6. Read about the Armenian services of blessing – Blessing of the Fields and Home Blessing – as rededicating God’s creation to holiness.

Materials Needed

Four definitions of Alpha & Omega (these can be hand-written or done in large type on computer; see Procedure #1):

1. The first and last letters of the Classical Greek alphabet.
2. The first and the last – the beginning and the end
3. A phrase found in the book of Revelation
4. A phrase interpreted by many Christians to mean that Jesus existed from eternity.

Examples of God’s creative genius: large rock, leaves, flowers, small caged pet, etc.

Man-made items: toy, cell phone, palms pilot, video game etc.