

We Are a Family of Faith Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

We Are Part of a Long Story

UNIT
4
Lesson
One



Prayer Starter

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ...
Dear Lord, thank you for our families and for our church family. Bless us as we worship and learn together. Help us know you and love you more each day. Amen.

Hye-Q

Seasons of the Church Game

Find two things about each feast or special church season from the list below. Put the correct numbers in the spaces.

- A. Advent _____
- B. Nativity and Theophany (Christmas) _____
- C. Great Lent _____
- D. Easter _____
- E. Presentation _____
- F. Transfiguration _____

1. This feast is a fifty-day period leading up to Armenian Christmas.
2. This feast celebrates how Jesus suddenly shone and appeared with other prophets to some of his disciples.
3. During this feast, we celebrate with symbols of new life, like eggs and baby bunnies.
4. We celebrate this feast on a different date than other Christians.
5. On this feast, we remember when Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to the Temple.
6. Many people fast during this time.
7. This feast recalls the amazing day Jesus rose from the dead.
8. People decorate their homes, put lights up, and send out cards during this time.
9. This day not only celebrates the birth of Jesus, but also his baptism by John.
10. This lasts 40 days.
11. Two wise elders in the Temple knew that the baby Jesus was the Savior.
12. This feast recalls something that happened on Mt. Tabor.



Daily Bread

Our faith as Christians begins with Jesus and his teaching. He taught his disciples and they went out and taught others about the love of Jesus. He promised them that the Holy Spirit would come after him and help the church grow. When we think about coming to church, first we must think about who brought us here in the first place. Usually, we came to church for the first time with our parents or grandparents.

They probably brought us here because their parents took them to church too. And it goes backwards through the history of our families, all the way back to Armenia, where our church began.



Many people struggled to keep the Christian faith through the centuries. It began with Jesus, who sent out his disciples to spread his word throughout the world. Two of his disciples went to Armenia. They were Thaddeus and Bartholomew.

They converted many people to become Christian when most people still believed in many gods. Several generations passed before the man we know as St. Gregory was born. Gregory became a Christian because there were others who showed him the love of Jesus Christ. He then converted the King and his family and started the Armenian Church.

From that time, each generation of people taught more and more people about Jesus and gave their time, money, and talents to the church. They built churches, wrote prayers and hymns, wrote the Divine Liturgy, studied the Bible and other religious writings, and most importantly, they taught their children to grow up as Christians.

You are the outcome of this great history. And you are the future of the church too. When you grow up and bring your children to Jesus, you will become part of the love that can be spread around the world.



SCRIPTURE SOURCE

God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” *Hebrews 11:40*

God sent his Son to us so that we could know him and live with him forever. This quote from the Bible shows how by being part of something bigger than ourselves, we can all become better. We look to Jesus for guidance, but it is also how we grow in faith together and love one another that brings us together with God.

Well Versed

“Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let’s also run the race with courage!”
Hebrews 12:1

In the Armenian Tradition

The story of the Armenian Church is the story of all the people who were part of it once and those who are today. That’s a lot of people! There is a place in our Holy Badarak where we pray for all of these men and women. These prayers are called “intercessions.” We ask God to bless those saintly people in history who have helped our church to stay strong and faithful.

Look at pages 35, 36, and 37 of the *Badarak* book. Write as many names as you can find among the people we pray to be remembered. The first and most important one is done for you!

1. Mary, the Mother of God
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



CELEBRATE WITH GOD

Our own prayers to honor and remember...

BIBLE BYTES

Elders *Today, this word mainly means anybody who is an older adult. But in the Bible, the reference didn't only mean that someone was older than you. It meant that the older person was a wise leader and a person to whom everyone in the community listened.*

Bartholomew and Thaddeus were disciples of Jesus who both came to Armenia after they left Jerusalem to spread the word. Thaddeus came first; he converted many people, including Princess Santookht. They shared the teachings of Jesus with people throughout Armenia during a time when most people worshipped other gods. Those people taught others. And it took almost 300 years of more and more people turning to Jesus before St. Gregory went to Armenia. He changed the hearts of the king and queen and Armenia became the first Christian nation!



Did you know...!?

Family Focus

Today, the children learned about how the church is a family of many generations. Since all the faithful of the church, past and present, are honored and remembered at the Divine Liturgy, we looked at the Badarak book together and listed some of the people we pray for by name. There were quite a few! The class completed a Connect-the-Dots puzzle that depicted the fullness of the church through time.

We also reviewed the story of how Armenia was converted to Christianity by St. Gregory.

Living Your Faith

1. Talk with your child about the puzzle; mount it where it can be seen by the family.
2. Share stories about *your* faith and involvement in the church as well as your parents' and grandparents'.

Make the room as dark as possible by closing the blinds or curtains on windows and turning off the light in the room. Once the room is somewhat dark, hold up the icon of the Transfiguration from the lesson and ask the children what is in the picture. (The room should be dark enough that they don't see much; if it isn't you might want to further obscure it by putting it into a box.) Allow them to answer out loud. Ask them to describe the picture's colors. Ask them what details they see in the picture.

Turn on the lights *and* now train a flashlight on the picture. Ask them what is in the picture and what details they see. They should see more details, more color, more of everything about the picture. At the very least, colors are brighter. 10 min.

3. Now, tell them that light is one of things that physically helps you see better, but it also is a word that is used when you suddenly understand something better. There are phrases in the English language using the idea of light, such as when someone has a great idea, they might say that a light bulb went on in their head. Read aloud the **Daily Bread** section of the lesson and have students complete the puzzle. (Answer: his *clothes* became *dazzling* white, *whiter* than anyone in the *world* could *bleach* them. And there *appeared* before them *Elijah* and *Moses* who were *talking* with *Jesus*.) 15 min.

4. Ask the children to recall how they saw the picture in the dark and saw the same picture in the light. Was the picture the same picture? Allow them to answer. Then tell them that yes, it was the same picture. The thing that changed was our view of the picture. When we saw the picture with more clarity in the light, we saw something more intense and vivid.

That is what happened with Jesus and the disciples on the mountain. Jesus did not actually change. The disciples just saw in a different way and became more aware of who Jesus was. 5 min.

5. Ask the children if they have ever heard the word "transfigure" before today? If they have, ask if they know what it means. Take any answers, and then ask one of the children to read **Bible Bytes** aloud as a review.

6. Distribute the coloring page to the children with the crayons or markers. Before they begin, hold up the page and review the people depicted (Elijah and Moses, the prophet and the holder of the Law, respectively; his disciples – and closest friends - Peter, James, and John at the bottom) While they are coloring, read **In the Armenian Tradition**. 20 min.

7. After the children finish coloring and clean up, read or teach **Did You Know**.

8. In closing, say the following prayer, "Dear God, thank you bringing us together, for showing us your way, and for giving us ways to celebrate your light in our lives. Amen."

Dismiss the class. 10 min.

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Key Concepts

1. The church is a family of many generations.
2. All faithful of the church, past and present, are honored and remembered at the Divine Liturgy.

Objectives

During this session students will

1. Review important feasts and seasons of the Armenian Church.
2. Explore how our faith is passed down through generations.
3. Review the "Great Litany" of intercessory prayers in the Holy Badarak and participate in a class recitation.
4. Participate in a prayer activity for their own family members.

Materials Needed

Optional: *How Armenia Became the First Christian Nation* (coloring book)

Divine Liturgy books

Lined paper

Procedure

1. Welcome the students and say the opening prayer together.
2. Have students complete the **Hye Q** exercise; they are permitted to find answers in their previous lessons. Answers: A. 1, 8 B. 4, 9 C. 6, 10, D. 3, 7 E. 5, 11 F. 2, 12. 10 min.
3. Ask the children if they remember their lesson about the very beginning of the Armenian Church in Armenia. Do they remember the story of St Gregory?

Take some answers and if nobody recalls the story, tell the following quick version (if you have the coloring book, you can show children some of the pertinent illustrations as you tell the story): St Gregory was a Christian during a time in Armenia when most people worshipped pagan gods, including the King – King Drtad. King Drtad was angry at Gregory when he refused to worship a pagan goddess and put him in a deep pit like a dungeon. The name of this pit came to be Khor Virap and it can still be visited in Armenia today. You need to climb down a steep ladder to be inside the pit. But Gregory was faithful and prayed. Then when the King was very, very sick, his sister had Gregory brought out of the pit to heal him. Once he was healed, the King understood the powerful love of Christ and became a Christian.

4. Now, ask the children how they think that Gregory became a Christian in the first place? After students offer a few ideas, conclude with “Yes, of course, from others – in Gregory’s case, it was his own family.” Read **Daily Bread**. 15 min.
5. Continue: “Let’s see if we can picture what it would look like to be part of this one big family stretching over time.” If you have a child in the group who likes to draw, ask him/her to come to the board and draw a picture of Jesus at the top of the board. It can be a stick figure or the written name if that is easiest. If no child volunteers, do this yourself. Put a halo over Jesus’ head (with the three cross bars that always appear in his halo). Draw two lines out from Jesus and draw/write Thaddeus and Bartholomew. Draw several lines out from each of the two disciples

and draw many figures symbolizing the people converted to Christianity. You might want to name those that children are familiar with or start adding names yourself: St. Santookht, St. Gregory, King Drtad, Queen Ashkhen, Princess Khosrovitookht, St. Nersess Shnorhali, and then perhaps your own family members and have students provide names of theirs and then the names of everyone in class (you can have children go to the board and draw their own stick figure and names themselves. 10 min.

6. Read **In the Armenian Tradition** together. After the first paragraph, distribute the Divine Liturgy books and have students open to page 35. Tell them that on this and the next few pages are the prayers we say for all the people of the church through the ages. Have the children make their lists and review them together. Then look at these pages together. Repeat that these prayers are called “intercessions.” Explain that “we beseech the Lord” means we prayerfully ask the Lord. Read through each prayer petition of the priest and have children follow with the response we say in church. “Be mindful (which means remember), Lord, and have mercy.” Explain that these are names of important people in the history of the church. By praying for these people every Sunday at the Divine Liturgy, we are all asking God to keep these people in his mind and heart and to pay special attention to them. 15 min.
7. After reviewing the list of people honored and remembered in the Divine Liturgy, tell students that after all the people of the past have been prayed for, we also pray for the priest and the Diocesan bishop and the whole world. Distribute lined paper (**Celebrate with God**), and write this on the board: “_____, _____, _____, _____ to be remembered in this holy sacrifice, we beseech the Lord” for children to copy on their paper. Then ask children to write down specific names of family members (living) they want to remember in the blanks – they can add more names than there are blanks. You should do this as well.
8. Ask the children to stand. Then (you can begin with your own), each child can read from their paper, after which, the entire class repeats “Be mindful, Lord, and have mercy.” Have students sit, collect the Liturgy books, and conclude class by reading

