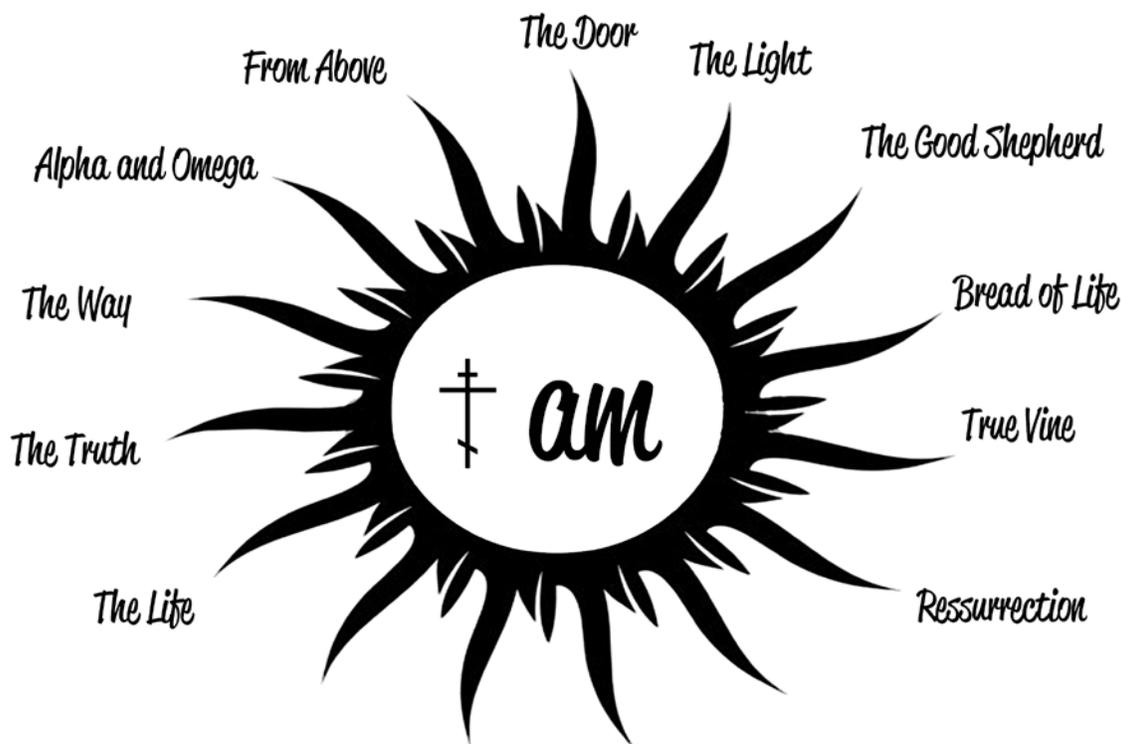


Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA



Consistory Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry 2014-2015

I Am Workbook

LEADER'S EDITION WITH
INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES
For ages 8-12

2014

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***I Am* - Leader's Guide Introduction:**

This curriculum aims to help the youth understand:

- their relationship to Christ through His *I Am* statements
- their relationship to others based on the *I Am* statements
- specific ways that they may emulate Christ

This curriculum is designed to be carried out in one lesson per meeting, however adjust in response to the participants. If you find that they want more time to discuss a particular idea or lesson, others may be shortened or abbreviated, as long as the main understandings above are addressed. The curriculum is to be used in conjunction with the book by Fr. Anthony Coniaris, No Man Ever Spoke As This Man: The Great I Am's of Jesus. It is suggested that a copy of the book be purchased for each participant. They may be obtained through Light and Life Publishing.

This leader's guide includes many suggested topics and activity ideas, and notes are in bold face. Modify based on your group and their maturity. Be sure to check with your Spiritual Father if any significant changes are made.

The Participant Workbook may be utilized in two ways:

1. Needed section copied and provided on an as needed basis
2. Full workbook printed and bound (suggested usage)

General Notes and Suggestions:

Professional Development: You may be interested in reading more about the theme before teaching. The Office of Youth Ministry website provides additional resources or the OYM office may answer any questions you may have. Also, the commentary included in the Orthodox Study Bible can be very useful to your understanding of the content, as well as your that of the youth', and you are encouraged to pre-read the passages and commentary.

Modifications: This curriculum is written for the median age level of 10-12 year olds, but the maturity and academic abilities of youth can vary greatly, as well as their familiarity with the topics being discussed. Although there are some specific ideas for modification listed throughout the curriculum, here are a few general suggestions:

- Modifying for younger participants/lower abilities:
 - Paraphrase the Bible passages for participants. It is important for participants to become familiar with the process of finding specific passages and reading the language, but if you feel a particular passage will be far too difficult to understand you may want to put it in your own words. This may also be useful if you find the participants need more time working on a different section of the lesson.
 - Answer questions together. In most cases, the participants are given a space to explain concepts and main ideas after reading the Bible or learning about a saint. If you feel participants may need more explanation, ask them to answer together using the white boards or large paper, and have them all write down an answer the class is comfortable with.

Session One

Who Do You Say I Am? I am a King

Who is Jesus?
How do we make sure that He is the king of our lives?

Needed Items:

Note Cards
Pens
Copies of Participant Sheets
Orthodox Study Bibles
Information Sheets (provided in Appendices)
King Costume



Preparation:

Ask an adult or one of the participants to become King of your town. For example, King Pittsburgh. Tell them that you will ask them to join the group at some point. Their entrance should be made into a big deal. Give them the opportunity to interact with the group, all the while acting very "royal", ie. making demands, assuming people will go out of their way for them, expecting the best, etc.. Allow your King plenty of time to prepare for this, do not ask them five minutes prior to the session

10 minutes- Introduce yourself as the leader and have participants introduce themselves to the group. Begin with this simple and fun activity to introduce the theme.

Instructions

1

Pick one name for each person playing. Don't let any of the players see the names until the game starts. The names can represent real people you know, celebrities, animated characters, storybook characters, historical figures or political personalities. There are endless possibilities, but keep in mind the age- and group-appropriateness of the choices. Don't make them so obscure or difficult that people give up.

2

Stick one label on each person's back. Do not allow him to see the name before you put it there.

3

Tell everyone the rules. Each person gets 20 "yes or no" questions to find out who she is. For instance, she can ask, " Am I real person?" "Am I a male?" "Am I alive?" "Did I invent something?" "Am I in a current movie?" and so forth. The questions cannot be either/or questions like "Am I male or female?" The players have to roam around the room to ask other people the questions. Tell them they can't ask only one person all the questions; the point is to mingle. Whoever guesses correctly first wins the game. No hints are allowed, unless everyone is stuck and can't figure out who they are.

4

Vary the game by using the names of objects instead of people and characters. If everyone is enjoying the game, make a second set of tags and play again.

Once complete, then have participants read through the following paragraph to introduce the general topic. Conduct a short discussing comparing their opening activity to what they read.

Introduction:

As you may know, this year's theme is "I AM!" The lessons in this workbook will help us to learn more about this theme. Throughout His time here on Earth, Jesus told His followers about the many ways He can be involved in our lives. He is the Door, the Bread of Life, the One from Above, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd, the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the Resurrection, the True Vine, the King, and the Alpha and the Omega. He gave us these examples to help us to know that God is always with us and to help us to see His guiding hand in everything we do. The lessons in this book often ask you to look for further information in No Man Ever Spoke As This Man: The Great I Am's of Jesus. These passages are written in *italic print*.

5 minutes: Read the first two sections on page 5 of No Man Ever Spoke As This Man entitled "I Am" and "The Timeless God." You may want to read these passages yourself this time, but can ask to read in the future. Then read the brief I Am! Passage below and ask participants to write an answer to the question at the end.

I Am!

The first two passages in the book "*I Am*" and "*The Timeless God*" help us to learn more about Jesus's words in John 8:58 "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.'" Why did He say I am and what does this phrase tell us about Jesus?

5 minutes: Read through the passage below, including the verses from Matthew 16.

Who Do You Say I Am?

We know that Jesus is God, but at the time when Jesus was here on Earth, not everyone was sure of who Jesus was. His followers, the disciples, tried to teach others about Jesus, but not everyone believed them. Some people were confused and wondered how Jesus could be God and man. Some people, like kings and emperors, were angry because their subjects listened to Jesus and the disciples instead of them. Other people believed that Jesus was actually other more well-known religious men. Take a look at the verses below to see who people thought Jesus was.

Matthew 16: 13 – 17

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus answered and said

to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but My Father who is in heaven."

15 minutes: Break participants into three smaller groups. Assign each group one of the names listed below and distribute the information sheets about each person to the assigned group. Have each group jot down important details about each man, which they will share with the rest of the class. Participants should be sure to write down information share by each group.

What do you know about the men the disciples named in this passage?

John the Baptist - *Cousin of Jesus, baptizer of Christ, Prophet, one of the most well-known saints*

Elijah - *The Glorious Prophet, his name is translated something like "God is the Lord," God revealed Himself through Elijah many times, is taken to heaven in a chariot of fire*

Jeremiah - *Prophet, name means "the one whom God appoints or exalts," promised hope for those who remained faithful to the Lord.*

10 minutes: Allow participants a minute or two to brainstorm answers to each question below then discuss as a group. At this time have King City arrive, so that he has time to interact with the participants.

Why do you think people might have confused Jesus with these men?

Participants may have many answers, but be sure the conversation addresses the idea that these were well-known, holy men, and that it was easier to believe that Jesus was a holy man, than it was to believe that He was God. They also did not have the internet or even photography at the time, so many people truly would not know these men to see them, and they based their understanding of people on words and descriptions alone.

Why did Jesus ask the Disciples who they thought He was?

Be sure the conversation addresses the fact that knowing about incorrect information that is being taught helps us to avoid it in the future. He wants the disciples to be aware of what the people are saying about Jesus so that they can do a better job of teaching the truth.

10 minutes: Have participants begin by making two lists of characteristics, one of King City and one of Jesus. Then read through the following section and paragraph on page 119, beginning with "But it is obvious that..." then answer the question that follows.

I am a King

Many people also thought the Messiah, Jesus, would be a king coming to save them from the rule of evil leaders. They knew that the prophets had foretold the coming of a man who would be the "king of kings." Jesus is our king, but He did not come to sit on a throne and rule a kingdom here. Read the last paragraph of "...I am a King" on page 119.

What kind of king is Jesus?

Ask them if King City was more like the *King* page or the *Jesus* page? Why? How was he different? What are the differences between the *King* list and the *Jesus* list?

10 minutes: Talk to the participants about how we can treat Jesus as the king of our lives. Read the next two sections, then have participants answer the follow up question.

Philippians 2: 10-11

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Obeying the King

Even though Jesus is not a worldly king, we are told that we are expected to obey Him like one. Every King has an army. His army swears to follow whatever He tells them to do. In what ways can we treat Jesus like He is our king?

Pre-reading the entire "...I Am a King" section in the book (pages 119-123) will provide additional answers to guide the participants to. Especially in the older grades, conversation may gravitate to the idea that a good king is someone for whom you make sacrifices, and who does the same for you. Jesus sacrificed His life for us, what do we sacrifice to make room for Him in our lives?

Read to them page 121 *Whose King?* - stop at the section where they give the explanation of why we cross ourselves - tell the participants that whenever we do this we are putting on our armor and re-pledging our loyalty to our king. Skip the section concerning the Nazis

Wrap up your session with a meal or fun activity.

Notes for this Session: All though this session is placed first, you may want to rearrange and have it fall during the Nativity season. In this way, you can tie in the birth of The King of Kings. Hold an additional discussion based on the Nativity scripture readings.

Certain topics to touch upon:

- Why was King Herod threatened by the possibility of a new king?

- What type of king were the wise men looking for?
- How did Jesus show us what type of king he was going to be based upon his birth?

An additional activity for this lesson:

Stained Glass Icons

Needed Items:

- Ink Jet Printable Vellum (available at Amazon)
- Icon Line Drawing of the Nativity (available at <http://dce.o.ca.org/resources/line-drawings/>)
- Colored tissue paper
- inexpensive paint brushes
- modge podge or clear drying craft glue

Step One - Print the desired line icons on the vellum. Provide them a few hours to dry completely before use.

Step Two - Cut up the tissue paper into small shapes (based upon the icons you have chosen). Place each color in a small zip lock bag for storage. Various shades of the same color will be helpful.



Step Three - Have the participants choose their icons. They may begin gluing the appropriate color tissue in the correct places. You should do at least two layers of tissue to ensure that the entire area is covered. Allow sufficient time to dry.

Step Four(optional): Place the stained glass icon in an regular frame. The best effect is to allow the sun or a light to shine through. You could purchase two picture mattes per icon and glue them together with the icon in the middle or purchase a "hanging" frame that does not have a back but is two pieces of glass. You may also want to laminate or use contact paper to ensure the icon does not lose its tissue. It provides a nice finishing touch.

Session Two

The Good Shepherd



What is a shepherd and what does it take to be a good one?
How is Christ the Good Shepherd and who is His flock?

Needed Items:

Blind Folds

Penned in area

Participant handouts

Orthodox Study Bibles

Chart paper or white board

20 minutes: Good Shepherd game. The children will be split into two to five teams depending on the size of your group. One person on each team must be designated as the shepherd - the remaining participants are the sheep. Give the following instructions:

The sheep are to "graze" in the open area. The shepherds are to begin calling for their sheep. The sheep will need to listen carefully to hear *their* shepherd and make their way to him or her. The Shepherd is responsible for all of his or her sheep. They have only two minutes to gather their sheep. Once a sheep makes it to the shepherd they are safe. The shepherd should do whatever it takes to make his sheep safe. The sheep will be blindfolded until the game is over.

The participants do not know - but during the game some adults or fellow participants will appear as wolves and try to steal the sheep. We will see what the shepherds' reactions are.

Follow up questions might include:

- Was the game easy or hard? Why? What would have made it easier?
- Sheep, what made it hard to hear your Shepherd?
- Shepherd, what was it like to direct your sheep when they didn't hear your voice?
- How is this like listening for the ways Jesus wants us to follow Him?



What is a shepherd and what does it take to be a good one?
How is Christ the Good Shepherd and who is His flock?

15 minutes: Begin the session by briefly reviewing the previous lesson on the theme and I Am a King, then remind them of the Good Shepherd game they just played. Work through each of the Bible passages below, having participants take turns reading out loud. After each passage is read, have participants work individually then as a class to identify the characteristic of a good shepherd that is being described in the passage. Use chart paper to keep track of the characteristics of the good shepherd on the wall.

Luke 15: 3-7

So He spoke this parable to them saying: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.



A good shepherd: Each sheep in the flock is important, and the shepherd will spend more time and energy looking for the lost one, than on taking care of the whole group because he loves the sheep and it is his job to care for them.

John 10: 3- 5

"To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."



A good shepherd: There is a strong relationship between the shepherd and his sheep; they follow him and know him because he cares so deeply about them and takes such good care of them

John 10:11-15

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep."



A good shepherd: sacrifices for the sheep because they are his and his responsibility; unlike a person who is hired to care for them and is less invested.

John 10:27

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

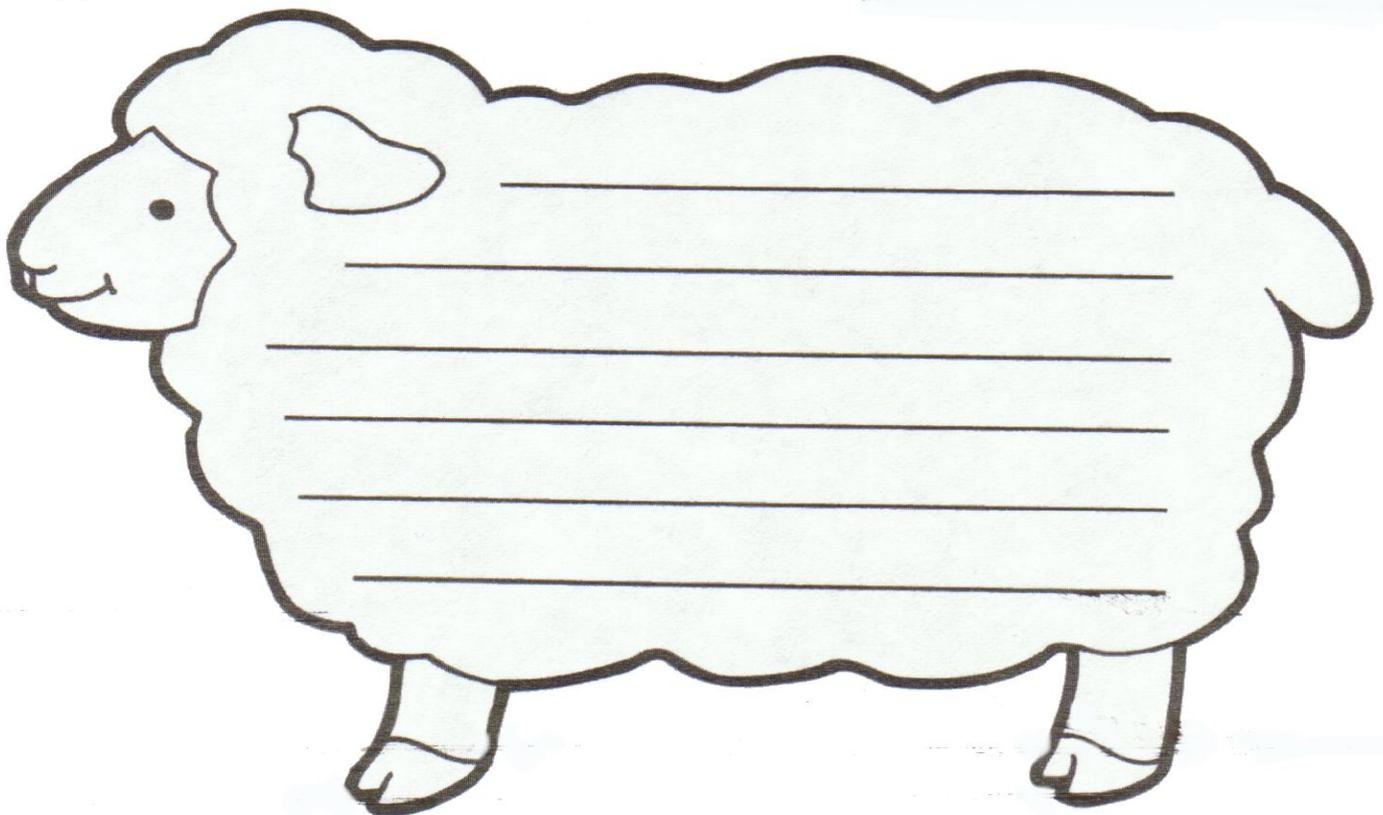


A good shepherd: is present and attentive to the sheep, so they know him and listen to him; we're usually drawn to the people who show the most positive and nurturing attention to us and we're more likely to follow those people than the ones who don't give us positive attention, only pay attention to us when there is something to gain, or ignore us altogether.

15 minutes: Read the entire section called *Concern for the Lost* beginning on page 49. Ask participants to read the section below and answer individually, then share their answers with the whole class.

After reading *Concern for the Lost*, let's think about the idea of getting lost. Most people think of getting lost as a bad or scary thing. Getting lost "in the moment" might mean you get behind on a task because you are daydreaming. Getting lost when we are traveling to a new place can be frustrating...you might be late or end up unable to make it at all. Getting lost or separated from your family at a store or amusement park might be scary because you don't know where to go next. But we don't usually try to get lost, it's something that happens because we are distracted or aren't paying attention. Think about a time when you got lost while you were traveling, separated from your group, or distracted while working on a project. Describe the situation here. You can take notes about the ideas your classmates bring up too!

Notes:

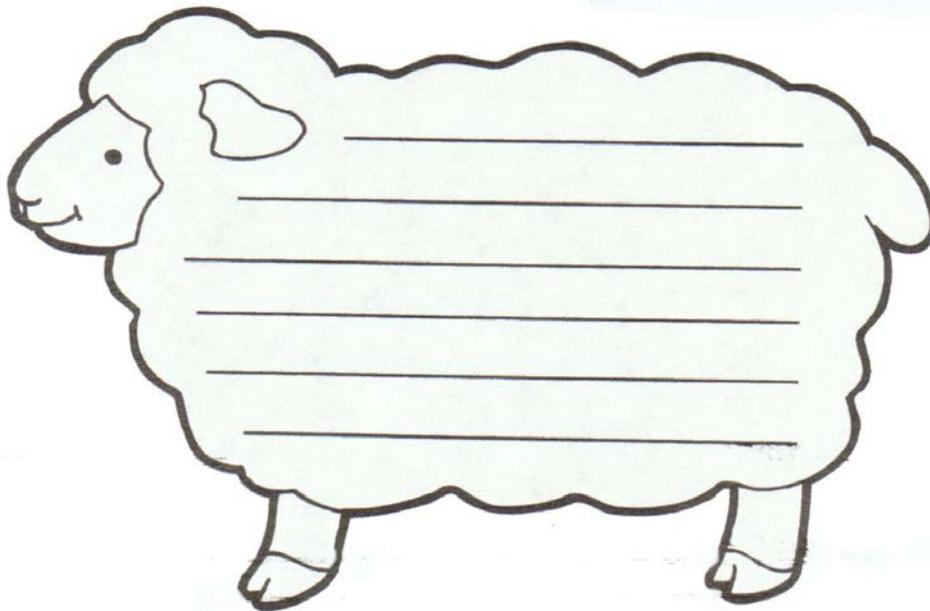


10 minutes: Have a participant read the section entitled "*I Know My Own*" beginning on page 53. Have the participants read the section below and make note of ways in which Jesus knows us and how others know we belong to Him (we are "branded" by our baptism and Chrismation, we wear our crosses and say prayers in public, etc.). Wrap up the lesson.



I Know My Own

As you have learned, a good shepherd keeps track of every member of the flock for which he is responsible. He also makes sure that others know that his sheep belong to him. In what ways do we show others that we are part of Christ's flock?



Optional Activity:

Take time to look at photos of the participants' baptisms. Briefly review what happens at the Sacrament of Baptism. Allow them to read some of the prayers. Especially those that pertain to their commitment to Christ. Focus on the part of the service where the Godparents stand at the entrance of the church building to reject satan and then turn and accept Christ with the reciting of the Creed.



Session Three

The Way, the Truth, and the Life

What does it mean to be “the way, the truth, and the life?”

How does the truth help us?

In what ways is Jesus all three?

Needed Items:

Bibles

Participant Worksheet

Items for Scavenger Hunt

Pre-lesson Preparation:

You will need to designate (#) locations for your scavenger hunt and have a corresponding amount of helpers to coordinate the clues. Print out the clues. Have a complete version of both the correct and incorrect creed ready for the end of the hunt. If weather permits, hold this lesson outside on parish property or a local park. You may want to consider breaking this session into two parts.

20-30 minutes: Welcome participants and conduct scavenger hunt.

5 minutes: Read the Bible passage below to introduce the lesson on the way, the truth, and the life.

John 14: 1 – 7

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am you may be also. And where I go you know and the way you know.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going, and how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on, you know Him and have seen Him.”

Jesus told His disciples that He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” Let’s take a look at what each of these means to us and our relationship with Christ.

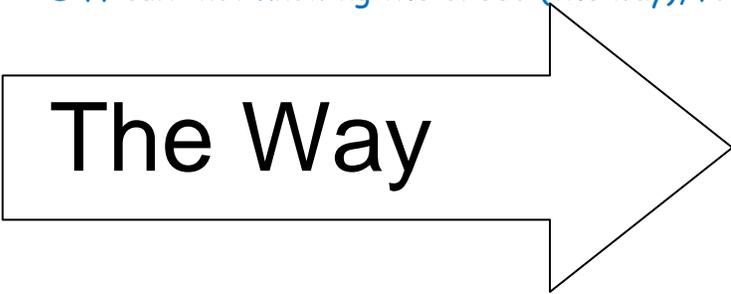
5 minutes: Read section below to remind participants of the scavenger hunt they completed earlier in the day.

Scavenger Hunt

You began this lesson with a special scavenger hunt about the Creed, which shows us “the way” to live our lives. What made the hunt difficult? What made the hunt easier?

Helpful: If you already knew the Creed completely, if you asked the right questions at the help desk,

Difficult: not knowing the Creed (the way), following the wrong directional signs, etc.



The Way

10 minutes: Read the passage below then have participants share other situations where the way you do something isn't as important as getting the job done (as long as you make it on time there are usually different routes you can take to get to school or work, scoring goals, points, etc. is important for winning a game although there can be multiple ways to score, there are lots of ways to prepare particular foods, say chicken for example, and one way isn't necessarily the right way as long as you like the way it tastes, etc.)

Knowing the right way

We make many decisions each day about the right way to do something and in many cases there can be more than one right way to do things. For example, you probably have to make choices about how to get all of your homework done each night, as well as, attend extra-curricular activities to which you have made commitments. As long as the work gets done, it doesn't matter too much whether you do the homework before practice, after you get home, or during a study hall at school.

Read the first two full paragraphs on page 64 beginning with “there are many ways...” then read *How Can We Know the Way* on page 58. Follow with the passage below.

How Can We Know the Way tells us that there is only one way to enter the kingdom of heaven, and that is Jesus. He is the Way! Although there is only one, the good thing is that we know the path and it has been made very clear to us. If we remain on the right path by doing what Jesus asks us to do, we can't get lost!

Older children may be familiar with Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism which emphasize looking inward to the self for “the way” to happiness and you can discuss the fact that these are in complete opposition to the idea of Jesus as the Way.

10 Minutes: have participants play two truths and a lie, or some other game where they need to distinguish between true statements and untrue statements. Talk about the definition of truth and what clues they used to determine the truth in the game.

10 minutes: Take the class outside into the sunshine. Give each participant a candle and have them light them. Ask the participants to answer the following questions:

- Is your candle producing light? How do you know that?
- Is it illuminating something near you?
- Why does the candle not throw light in the area around you?
- If the sun is brighter than the candle does that mean that the candle is not a "real" light?

Read the following passage when you come back to the classroom.

The Truth

Think about your candle. What happened when out blew it out? Nothing really happened because the sun was shining, right? The truth of Jesus Christ is like the Sun. Its light is everywhere and nothing can shine brighter than Him. The candles were all small parts of the light - little bits of truth that men may "discover" in life- but none of them were the whole truth, which would answer all questions - the way the sun lights and nourishes all things.

5 minutes: Read the last paragraph on page 78 and finish the chapter. Then read below.

Keeping True

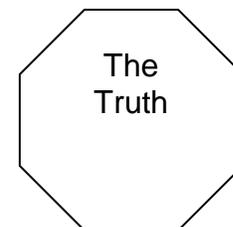
It is one thing to know the truth and another to live it. What are some ways that we can show that Jesus is Truth? (going to church, choosing to do what Jesus would want us to do, being an example to others, etc.)

15 minutes: Read through the passage below and discuss the importance of recording the truth (perhaps use the analogy of police officers writing down all details they can record, from lots of witnesses to get the whole story and to remember it for a long time). Have participants copy the Nicene Creed into their workbooks.

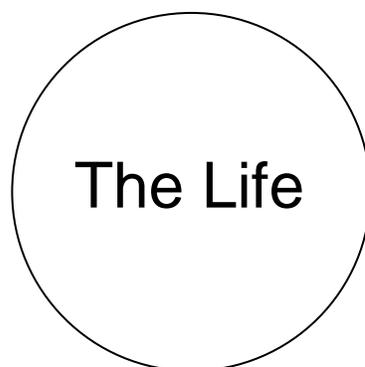
Protecting the Truth

We all know that over time, we can forget what is true about something. It gets harder to remember what happened at a particular event or the specific words someone said to us, the more that time passes. As the years passed after Jesus returned to heaven, people started to forget the truth about what happened when He was here on Earth.

Others purposely changed the truth and spoke heresy or untrue statements about God and the Church. To set the record straight all of the bishops and priest came together to remember and record the truth. This was called the First Ecumenical Council. During the First and Second Ecumenical Councils they wrote the Creed, so that everyone could remember the Truth about the Faith.



The Nicene Creed



Session Four

The One from Above

The Word of God



How does Jesus lead us up to heaven?
Where does everything we see come from?

Needed Items:

Bibles

Participant worksheets

Materials to create pocket prayers (see instructions for the project)

20 minutes: Quickly review past lessons, then have participants work with a partner to fill in the blanks in the statements below. They may use a Bible if necessary. When teams have filled in all or most blanks, review the answers as a group and talk about the answer to the follow up question.

Think up!

Work with your partner to fill in as many blanks as you can.

-Moses received the _____ ten _____ commandments from God on a _____ mountain _____ called Sinai.

-When _____ Jesus Christ _____ was Transfigured, he had gone (circle one) Up Down to the _____ mountain _____ called Tabor.

-Special knowledge was revealed to the Holy Prophets from _____ God _____.

-Elijah was taken _____ up _____ to God in a _____ fiery chariot _____.

What do the answers have in common?

The answers should be that the people either had to travel up, were taken up or gained knowledge from God above.

Establish with the participants that all gifts, wisdom, and knowledge come from God, who is above. Ask them if they know the story of Jacob's Ladder. If someone does, have them tell the story, if not - tell them the story. Ask them where the ladder started (on the ground) - where did it reach to (heaven above). We journey on that ladder but God noticed that we

were never quite making it so what did he do to help us? He came down to meet us and help us up the rest of the way. How did He do this? By sending Jesus.

Going Up

We know what direction we need to head, but it's literally an uphill battle! Without God we will never make the journey to heaven, but with Him all things are possible. God knows we need help on the journey, so He sent Jesus to meet us half way and bring us closer to heaven.

15 minutes: Have participants read through the Bible passages below, attempting to summarize the concepts presented. Use the information below to guide the conversation.

The One From Above

Jesus came from above to help bring us closer to heaven. Look at the Bible verses below and try to summarize how each relates to the idea that Jesus who has always existed in heaven came from above to bring us UP.

John 8:23

“And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”

Jesus came from above; emphasizes the separation between this world and heaven...this isn't heaven, but we can get there; the forgiveness and peace that Jesus gives to us are above and beyond what this world can provide

John 1: 1-4

“In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

Jesus has always been from above, and this includes the whole Trinity

John 1:14

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus came down to bring us up; He did not need to come here for Himself because He is God

10 minutes: Participants should read the information about the Feast of the Ascension below and fill in the Tropar activity.

When Jesus went up- The Feast of the Ascension

The former account I made O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for truly John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud receive Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." Acts 1: 1 –11.

How many days after Pascha does Ascension occur? **40**

Is Christ's body or spirit taken up into heaven? **both**

What do the angels tell the Disciples will happen? **He will come back again**

What day of the week does Ascension always fall on? **Thursday**

Forty days after His Resurrection, Christ ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of His Father. It is very important that Christ ascended in both body and spirit. He went out of His way to prove this to the Disciples by eating with them prior to His departure. The Feast of the Ascension truly shows us that Christ is from above. When He ascends both in body and spirit - God and Man - he repairs and truly becomes "the way" between man and his creator. He takes us UP to God. Man once again can journey to be with his God - who is from above. We can travel on the ladder upward to Christ our God.

Ascension Tropar

You have ascended in glory O Christ our God, granting joy to the disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through the blessing they were assured that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world!



15 minutes: At this point the participants can make "Pocket Prayers". There will be several already printed prayers that they can choose from. They can decorate the prayers and mount them on color construction paper. Then they will be laminated. Tell them they can keep these prayers in their pockets, always having the Words of God with them, to lift them UP closer to Him.

Pocket Prayers

This simple little project will provide participants with a portable reminder of the Word and how to continue looking UP-ward.

Needed items:

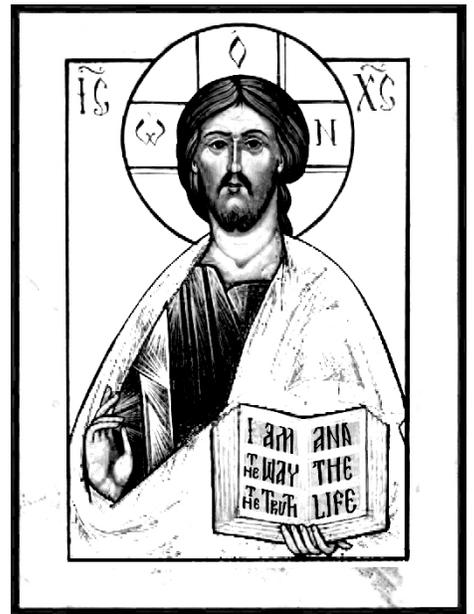
Printed prayers or short passages from scripture

Paper Icons

Markers

Glue

laminator/laminator or contact paper



The prayers and icons should be no larger than a business card so that they are easily portable or able to be kept in a pocket.

Allow the participants to choose a prayer and an icon. They may "illuminate" or decorate the prayer. Have them pair up the icon and prayer back- to- back and them laminate them for use.

Alternative Ideas:

You may print purchase blank printable business cards. Print the prayers on one side on print icon line drawings on the other. Allow the participants to color in the icons and illuminate the prayers. Laminate.

Session Five

The Door

What do doors provide for us?
How is Christ a door in our lives?

Needed Items:

Alice in Wonderland Animated Movie
Participant worksheets

25 minutes: Watch the section of classic cartoon movie, *Alice in Wonderland* where Alice must choose a door to enter and what she had to go through to enter that door.

10 minutes: Have participants read the section below and brainstorm ideas about how they use doors. Participants can share their lists with the class. Then read *The Door of the Sheep* beginning on page 9 and information that follows.

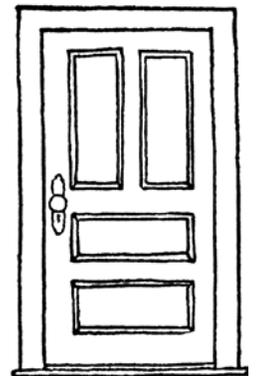
Ways to use doors

It might seem like a pretty simple question, but how do we use doors? Make a list of the ways we can use a door and what doors help us to do.

(to make it easier to get to parts of a building, to protect things, to block things out, etc.).

John 10:9

I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.



The Door of the Sheep

The Door of the Sheep explains that being the door between the sheep and their pen isn't just about keeping them inside at night. The door is the way to get into the pen and the shepherd acts as the door to protect the sheep from any danger. As the good shepherd who watches over us, His flock, Christ acts as both the door that opens up for us and closes to protect us from danger.

15 minutes: Have participants brainstorm answers to the questions below, then share with the class. Read pages 10-12 addressing each of the Doors that Christ can be in our lives.

Christ the Door

What is opened to us by passing through Christ the door?

Be sure to highlight Salvation, Security, Abundance (every thing we need), Life

What does Christ protect us from by closing the door?

He protects us from the Evil One

THE Door

Jesus Christ is *the* Door, not just any door to heaven. There are lots of people and things that try to distract us in life, but we need to make sure we are paying attention to the choices we make and the directions we go. If we pick the wrong door it might not lead us where we want to go, or maybe it won't even open. We also have to make sure we are ready to enter the door. The door to heaven, Jesus, is always open, but we need to live the life He asks us to and follow His directions so that we fit His size and shape of the door.

Ask the participants to recall the clip from *Alice in Wonderland*. Ask them if they remember when Alice had to choose between several doors to continue on her journey. What was different about the doors? What did Alice have to do to enter through the doors? How are we like Alice? We need to fit through Christ's door.

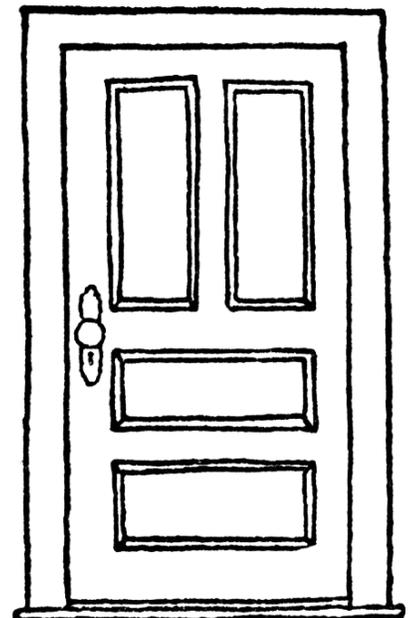
We can try to fit through many other doors but they are all dead ends. Many, no matter how hard we try will never open. What happens if we choose the wrong door - like this morning's game? Discuss the game and tie together the lesson.

Additional Activity:

Door Hangers: You may want to have the participants make door hangers for their rooms or somewhere in their home. The door hanger may be decorated with icons and the passage "I Am the Door..."

Door Cross: Purchase wooden crosses from any local craft store. Crosses that are thinner in depth work better. Have the participant beautify the cross with sharpies, silk flowers, et. Add an icon of Christ and the passage, "I am the Door..."

These should be hung on the interior of their family home front door as a reminder every time they exit of Christ in their life.



Session Six

The True Vine

What does a vine need to thrive?
How is Jesus the vine of our lives?

5 minutes: Quickly review lessons from last week, I Am... the King; the Good Shepherd; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the One from Above; and the Door. Be sure to fill in for participants who have missed any of the sessions.

15 minutes: Sketch activity and share drawings.

Sketch it out

Use the space below to sketch all of the parts of a living vine. Make sure your vine fills as much of the pages as possible.

Ask the participants to draw in their workbook a picture of a plant or vine, including all of its parts (this is very important). Have each participant share their drawing. Go over each part with them: the roots, the trunk or vine, the branches, the leaves and fruit. Ask them what would happen if one of the branches, leaves or fruit were removed from the trunk or vine. Why would it die or wither away?

35 minutes: Have participants read the Bible passage below then read through each of the parts of the vine. Have participants add to or change their sketches as needed.

John 15: 1-5

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.”

The Roots

Why do vines need strong roots? Roots help to bring nutrients to the rest of the vine. A plant without roots cannot survive. They also help to keep the vine firmly planted in the ground. If you've ever helped your family by weeding in the yard, you know that plants with very strong roots are the hardest to pull up from the ground. Christ helps us to stay firmly planted and protected. Listening to Him helps us to be strong when facing obstacles. Make sure your vine has a strong root system. What might our "root system" include?

Take a "field trip" with the participants, Have them look at the electric poles on the nearest street. Ask them what the difference are between the pole and the trees surrounding them. The electric/telephone poles have no roots. They could be easily uprooted; they have nothing to give them nourishment to still be alive, nothing to help them grow fruit or leaves. Highlight being "rooted" in Christ. How does this help us? A strong root system in the Church and Christ might include things like reading the Bible, learning prayers, attending services, etc. Participants can sketch these parts of the roots.

The Vine

The vine or trunk holds all of the parts together. The roots, the branches, the leaves and fruit all depend on the vine to keep them together and to deliver the water and nutrients throughout the plant. As you read earlier, Christ tells us that He is the Vine and *we* are the branches. He holds us all together through His love and attempts to bring us all closer together. Notice that as the branches get closer to the main stem or trunk, they get closer to each other as well. Be sure to label Christ as the main part of the vine in your sketch.

What is so special about the vine (trunk)? Why would Christ say He is the vine? The vine is a part of the roots and it is what keeps the whole plant together; the roots, the branches, the fruit and leaves...everything. How does Christ keep everything together? What is He keeping together? Add Christ's name along the vine on the picture.



The Branches

Read page 108 -109 *The Vine Needs Branches*, then follow with the passage below.

The Vine Needs Branches tells us more about why the vine needs the branches, just as the branches need the vine. A vine wouldn't be much of a vine without branches. It also would not be able to grow fruit or flowers without branches for these items to grow on. Remember, we are the branches on Christ's vine. He provides us with everything we need, and he expects us to "bear fruit." What do you think we could to be a fruitful vine that shows off everything God has given us? Add your family and friends to the branches of your vine.

Living a life that shows other people how blessed we are to be part of Jesus's vine. This might include attending services, being kind to others, following the commandments, etc. How is each of us like a branch on the Vine? Ask what the difference is between a vine that just grows (bears) leaves and one that bears leaves and fruit. What makes the fruit special? Have the participants add names of their fellow participants to the branches. They may also add names of family and friends.

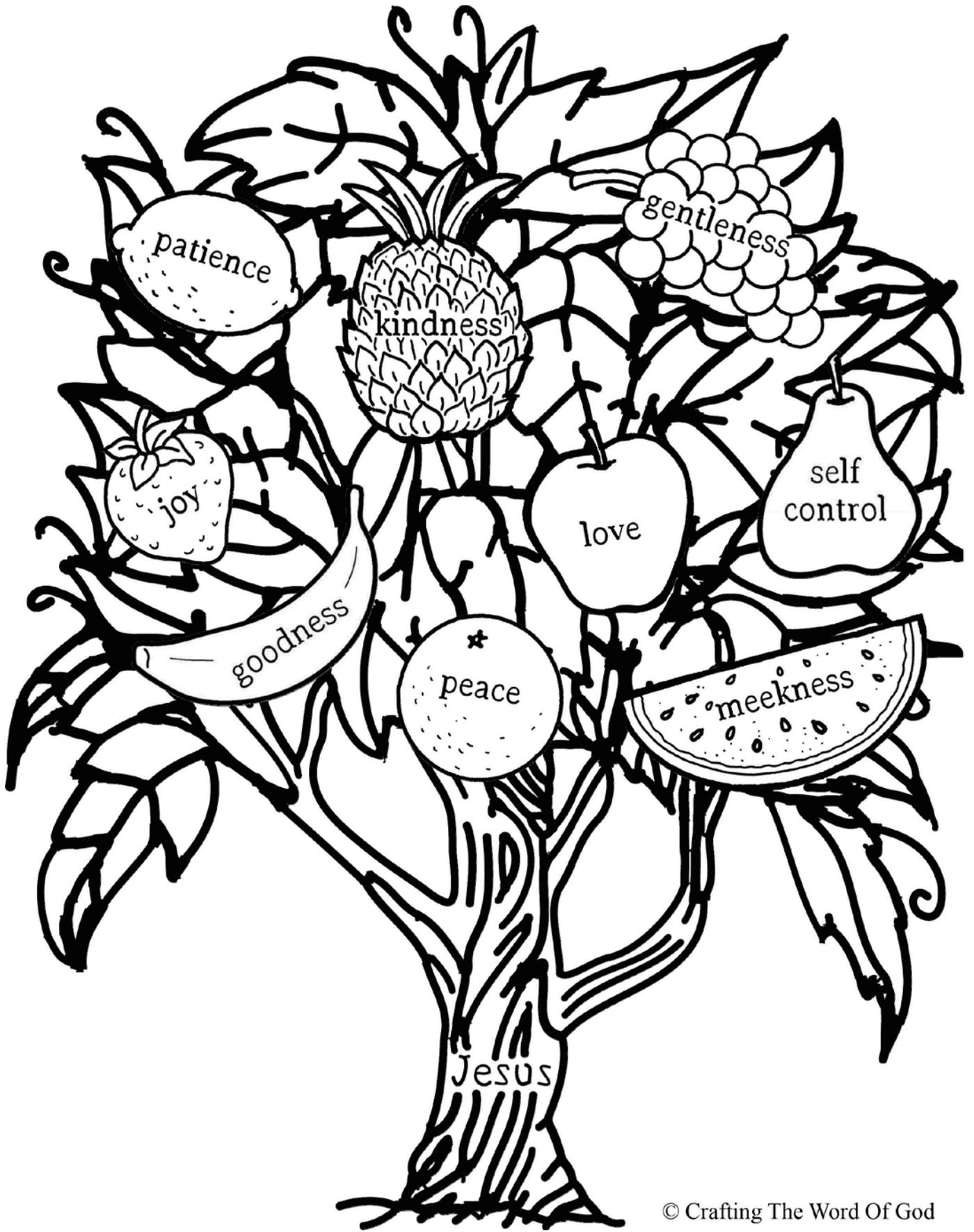
Being a Fruitful Vine

Have you ever seen someone cut the branches off of a tree or bush, so that the branches grew back stronger and with more fruit or flowers? This is called pruning. It allows the plant to focus all of its energy on growing bigger and better branches with fruit and flowers on them. Read *Secrets of Fruitbearing* to learn more about how we can be the most fruitful branches for Christ.

Read *Secrets of Fruitbearing* beginning on page 110. Discuss as you read the passage. While Jesus loves us and knows that we may not be perfect branches, He makes it clear that we are expected to do our best. Branches that are not producing are pruned in order to allow those that are producing fruit to get the best nutrients. We need to make sure we are not "lazy" branches, expecting to get the nutrients without delivering results.

What fruits might you add to the vine you have sketched? Be sure to label them on your drawing. Pass out the hand outs, *Fruit of the Spirit*. Discuss each fruit with the participants and indicate that these are the fruits that the Holy Spirit provides for us to use to be "fruitful".





© Crafting The Word Of God

Additional Activities:

Family Activity: Invite your participant's family to join you at a certain time. Conduct this activity provided by Orthodox Education Blogspot <http://orthodoxeducation.blogspot.com/2011/02/icon-family-tree.html>

Vine Cross:

If you still have good weather, go outside and trim some pliable vines or branches (ferns work well!) If you find ferns, strip of the feathery leaves. Then you will want to wind the stem into a cross. Utilize some natural twine or decorative ribbon to hold the cross together.





Session Seven

The Resurrection and the Life

How does Christ's Resurrection change our lives?
How can we make sure to live our lives so that we can benefit from His sacrifice?

15 minutes: Quickly review past sessions then spend a minute introducing today's theme with the quote below. Then read the section about examples of Christ raising people from the dead and have participants try to remember examples.

John 11:25 – 26

Jesus said to her, "I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Key Words:

Resurrect - to bring back to life after death

Sin - actions that go against God's instructions, making wrong choices

Life - being alive, breathing, acting, thinking,

Examples in the Bible

Jesus performed many miracles, even including raising people from the dead. Can you think of any examples from the Bible in which Jesus saved someone from dying or raised them from the dead? Make a list here.

Participants may describe the funeral procession that Jesus stopped and raised the widow's son from the dead or the story of raising Jairus's daughter. Jairus was a leader in the synagogue and while many were skeptical, the parents believed in Jesus' power to bring their daughter back to life. Save Lazarus's story for last if the participants bring it up.

10 minutes: Read the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead and discuss the special circumstances surrounding Lazarus's resurrection. (John 11: 1- 44)

Lazarus

Lazarus was one of the people who Jesus raised from the dead. His story is special for several reasons. Lazarus was a special friend and relative of Jesus. When he came to see his friend who had died, Jesus wept. Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus came to see him. People at that time believed in resurrection, but only at the final judgment. When Lazarus's sister Martha says, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day," Jesus tells her "I am the Resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Jesus is telling Martha that HE is the Resurrection, they do not have to wait for the final judgment any more.

Discuss with the class what the Final Judgment is. Younger classes may have more difficulty, but the important thing to understand is that Jesus's death and resurrection open up the gates of heaven to us now. We have no idea when the final judgment will be, but we do not have to wait for it any longer.

10 minutes: Make sure participants have a basic understanding of Christ's Resurrection. What happened? Did the disciples believe in his Resurrection? To whom did Christ appear

The Resurrection and the Life

What does mean that Christ is the "Resurrection and the Life"? We are told that if we believe in Christ, if we Live by his example, Live by his rules that we will Live with him eternally. The goal is to Live with Him FOREVER in heaven. Sin is a way of pulling away from Him a little each day. But, we have been given a way to "Resurrect" with Him through repentance. Through the Sacrament of Holy Confession/Reconciliation we are resurrected into a new life and a new chance every time! What a gift!

Have you ever seen a caterpillar become a butterfly? Let's watch and see.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AUeM8MbaIk>

After watching this transformation, why do you think that the butterfly has become a symbol for Christians? Because Christ died and was resurrected. We are like the butterfly, we start one way and through a life like Christ, we must "die" or transform into something better and more beautiful. We are "born" into a new life. Can you think of something that happens to you in church that is similar to the lifecycle of a butterfly? The Sacrament of Baptism!! When we enter the water we are one person, and are submerged three times. Can you guess why? Yes, because Christ was three days in the tomb. When we emerge after three "dunks", we are now born into Christ with a new promise to life eternal!

The butterfly can be seen as the insect who 'dies' as a caterpillar, is buried in the cocoon for a length of time, and emerges in a new life-that as a creature who has the ability to transcend the ordinary and take flight into the heavens. In many spiritual circles the butterfly represents the spirit or soul. Denise Handlon

20 minutes: Work through the Paschal Sermon, stopping as needed to summarize and clarify. Have participants make notes in the margins about passages that are related to the power of Christ's resurrection.

The Paschal Sermon Of St. John Chrysostom

If any man be devout and love God, let him enjoy this fair and radiant triumphal feast. If any man be a wise servant, let him rejoicing enter into the joy of his Lord. If any have labored long in fasting, let him now receive his recompense. If any have wrought from the first hour, let him today receive his just reward. If any have come at the third hour, let him with thankfulness keep the feast. If any have arrived at the sixth hour, let him have no misgivings; because he shall in nowise be deprived thereof. If any have delayed until the ninth hour, let him draw near, fearing nothing. If any have tarried even until the eleventh hour, let him, also, be not alarmed at his tardiness; for the Lord, who is jealous of his honor, will accept the last even as the first; he gives rest unto him who comes at the eleventh hour, even as unto him who has wrought from the first hour.

And he shows mercy upon the last, and cares for the first; and to the one he gives, and upon the other he bestows gifts. And he both accepts the deeds, and welcomes the intention, and honors the acts and praises the offering.

Wherefore, enter you all into the joy of your Lord; and receive your reward, both the first, and likewise the second. You rich and poor together, hold high festival. You sober and you heedless, honor the day. Rejoice today, both you who have fasted and you who have disregarded the fast. The table is full-laden; feast ye all sumptuously. The calf is fatted; let no one go hungry away.

Enjoy ye all the feast of faith: Receive ye all the riches of loving-kindness. Let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shown forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Savior's death has set us free. He that was held prisoner of it has annihilated it. By descending into Hell, He made Hell captive. He embittered it when it tasted of His flesh. And Isaiah, foretelling this, did cry: Hell, said he, was embittered, when it encountered Thee in the lower regions. It was embittered, for it was abolished. It was embittered, for it was mocked. It was embittered, for it was slain. It was embittered, for it was overthrown. It was embittered, for it was fettered in chains. It took a body, and met God face to face. It took earth, and encountered Heaven. It took that which was seen, and fell upon the unseen.

O Death, where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are overthrown. Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life reigns. Christ is risen, and not one dead remains in the grave. For Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen.

Optional Activities:

Caterpillar to Butterfly Craft -

http://www.daniellesplace.com/HTML/bible_themes_s.html (about half way down screen)

Resurrection Cookies:

<http://www.orthodoxmom.com/2012/04/11/resurrection-cookies-recipe/>

Paschal Icon:

Utilize a Paschal Icon and walk through the icon explaining its meaning.

http://lent.goarch.org/holy_pascha/learn/

http://orthodoxinfo.com/death/resurrection_icon.aspx

Fun Snack ideas for after this session:

Butterfly cookies -

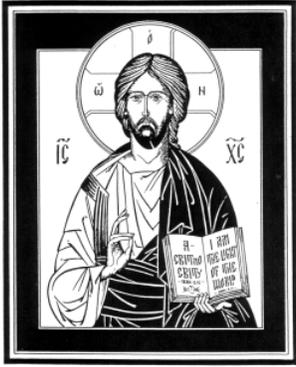
<http://www.bakedecoratecelebrate.com/projects/butterflysnacks.cfm>

Butterfly Snack bags -

<http://www.twosasters.com/2012/06/butterfly-preschool-snack.html>

Session Eight

The Light of the World



Where does Christ's light shine in our world?
How do we make sure that we let the light in?

Needed Items:

Copies of Participant Sheets

One Votive Candle per family

One taper candle per participant (and one for each family member of that participant)

15 minutes: Introduce theme of the session with the Bible verse below. Ask the participants what would be different if there was no light. No sun, no electricity, no candles....nothing. Now ask them what types of lights help people in the dark (encourage them to think in bigger picture, stars, light houses, runway/landing strips at airports, etc.).

Have the participants sit at one end of the room. Ask them if they have ever been afraid of the dark. How did they feel, what made or makes them feel better? Tell them "At one time or another, most people are afraid of the dark. We wonder what is hiding in the dark, and it makes us feel insecure or unsure of ourselves. We can't make this room totally dark, but we can close our eyes to symbolize being in the dark. Keeping your eyes tightly closed, see if you can feel your way all around the four sides of the room and back to where I'm standing. When you make it back to me, I'll tap you on the head and you can open your eyes. Don't peek before I tap you, or it won't be like walking in the dark!

Let the participants walk slowly around the four sides of the room, feeling their way as they go. Remind them not to peek. When each person makes it back to you, tap him or her on the head and say, "Open your eyes and let the light shine in!" When everyone has been tapped, have participants sit down and ask:

How did it feel to try and find your way in the dark? Were you unsure of where to go or how to get there? Why? How is this like trying to find our way in life without Jesus Christ?

10 minutes: work through the next few sections highlighting that the darkness is not a place we usually like to be, and it is harder to navigate.

John 8:12

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Being Without the Light

Being in the dark is a little scary in many ways. We may become lost and even end up getting hurt. It's the same when we're in the darkness of sin. We become lost and hurt ourselves. When we're in the dark and without the light of truth we can't find the right way to God. We need light!

John 3: 19

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

5 minutes: Read through the following section and *Light and Life* and *Light and Health* in the book. Highlight the fact that light is pretty essential to the life of plants and animals.

Finding the Light

We need a special light to shine away the darkness of sin, but what kind of light does this? You need to be close to the base of a lamp if you want to be in its light. Jesus shines His light of truth, love, and forgiveness into our hearts and lives. *Light and Life* and *Light and Health* help us to learn more about the importance of Light in our lives.

10 minutes: Have participants follow the same course around the room as before, or if short on time just have a few demonstrated. Read through the following section and *Light Guides* and look up Bible verses.

The Light that Guides

Try traveling around the room again with a flashlight. A lot easier this time, right? Whether we've been to a place a hundred times, or never before, having light to guide our way is always helpful. *Light Guides* tells us that Christ is the Light that provides guidance in our lives at all times. Whether we've faced a problem many times before or are facing it for the first time, thinking about the guiding of Light of Christ helps us to follow the right path.

At this point, all participants will proceed to the church building. Invite the parents to join you for this section of the session. There will be a special votive candle in front of the Icon of Christ. Each participant will be given a taper candle and a votive for their home. If family members are unable to join you, have instructions ready to send home with the candles. Have any participants without family members present conduct the activity with you as you are their spiritual family. Say to the participants:

From page 43 *You are Lights* " He who lives with Christ not only has light but also becomes light for others. The same Jesus who said, "I am the light of the world." also said, "you are the light of the world." It is not our light. It is Christ's light that is reflected in our lives as the moon reflects the sun."

Ask each participant to come up and light his or her candle from the votive in front of the Icon of Christ. As they are doing this, ask them - "Is the flame of your candle any different

from that of the flame on the votive candle?" The flame is almost exactly the same - it is not the original flame but it was made from the original - just like you. Continue from the book, "True, compared to Jesus our light may be only a candlelight but it is still light. It still shines and provides light in the darkness. Thus we may say that the light of God shines in:

1. the Savior: "I am the light of the world." (John 8:12)
2. The Scriptures "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105)
3. The Saints: "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

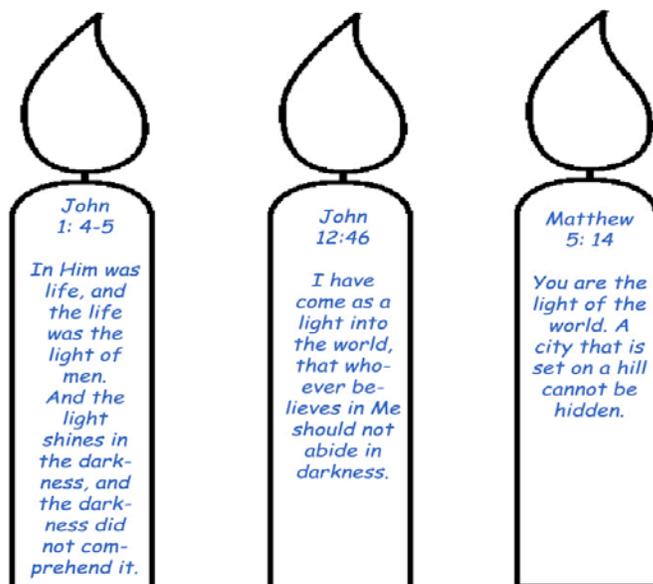
In a world where men create hate and dark things, surely it is part of our responsibility as God's children to be lights in that darkness.. lights that cannot be put out. By your actions, living like Christ, how many people might be able to see the light, who might have never had the opportunity without you. Look at your candle, is it a steady flame? No, it flickers - the wind is like life - we are tested, but the closer we are to the way Christ wants us to walk in his ...path, the stronger our flame will be and the brighter the flame for all to see.

St. Peter tells us, "But you are a chosen a holy race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Read paragraph four from page 44.

Give each family one of the votive candles - Instruct the families to light the votive together with their tapers when they arrive at home and place it in their icon corner. They are working together to shine the light of Christ brighter and stronger. This candle will be taken to their cabin and kept on the front porch as light in the darkness. Before they leave, read them the fable on page 45.

How can we act as lights in the world, guiding others closer to the light of Christ?



Session Nine The Bread of Life

What does the Bread of Life provide for us?

How do we learn to fill up on Christ, instead of on the things we want in this life?

Note: This session must be done after Divine Liturgy or prior to a major meal.

Opening Activity: Once gathered after Divine Liturgy, inform the participants that there was an unfortunate accident and that there were no snacks and no coffee hour/parish fellowship available. If you get grumblings, just say you are sorry but they will just have to wait to eat. Ask them to be patient while you get a few items for the session. When you return, ask them for their forgiveness because you told them a small white lie - there is a snack and there is coffee hour! They will ask questions but indicate that all will be revealed soon!

10 minutes: Have participants finish workbook section from the end of The Light of the World and review previous lessons. Then introduce topic of the day with the Bible verse below.

John 6:35

“And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’”

10 minutes: Begin the session by asking the participants - have they every really, really wanted something that it was almost like they were hungry for it - that they wanted it so bad? Ask them to give some examples. Ask them if they ever got that thing. If any say yes, ask them how long they used it before they got bored with it and put it on the side and started wanting something else.

Ask them how they felt when you told them that something went wrong with snack/coffee hour and that they would have to wait almost another hour to eat? Did they feel even hungrier at that point? How did they feel when she said that she was just kidding? Did they feel less hungry? How did their breakfast taste that morning? How do they feel if they don't eat for a long time? Tired, grumpy, irritable? How do they feel after they eat? Better, happier, their usual self?

The Bread of Life

Our life is a little like that thing we really wanted, received and then got bored with - only to move on to the next thing. Nothing really make us filled up forever. Sometimes we don't even know what we want, we just know that we want something. Only Christ can fill us up forever. When we are feeling grumpy, tired,



disappointed, frustrated with life lots of things may distract us for a short time - but only Christ can make us feel better, happier, safer, less frustrated in the long run. Getting closer to Him means getting farther away from those feelings.

15 minutes: At this point ask the class to just sit for three minutes - in silence, not moving. When the time is up, ask them how they felt.

Being unsatisfied

Did you ever feel like you just had to DO something, ride your bike, get out of your house, yell or you would go crazy. When we feel restless it is because we are not finding the important things in life and are becoming bored and need to DO something to liven it up. What we don't realize is that all we need is Christ to fill it up. Think about all of the ways we could be helping others AND doing what God wants us to do to fill that time!

Ask if any of them took those three minutes to pray!

Do you know anyone who has everything that they could think of but still is not happy? Things are nice, but they can't fill us up and make us happy in the long run- only Christ, living in His way, showing His truth by doing good deeds, following His Light, and reading His words will truly fill us up. He tells us "I am the bread of life - if you come to me you will never be hungry or thirsty." This can mean physical hunger and thirst, but it also means those feelings of restlessness and dissatisfaction.

10 minutes: Ask the participants if they know the story of the loaves and fishes. Review the story. Ask them - How is this like what Jesus tells us about Him being the Bread of Life? The disciples doubted Jesus and yet what happened?

Matthew 14: 15-21

When it was evening, His disciples came to Him saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me.: Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Why Bread?

Why does Jesus so often use bread as an example? There are many reasons. Bread is a staple food that is easy to make with just a few ingredients. It makes you feel full easily, and you could live on bread and water alone if necessary. Just about every culture or country around the world incorporates some form of bread in their meals on a regular basis. At the time that Christ lived bread was a necessity to live. Can you think of other ways in which we associate Christ with Bread? [The Lord's Prayer, Holy Communion](#)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father Who Art in ___[heaven](#)___, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your ___[will](#)___ be done on Earth as it is in ___[heaven](#)___. Give us this day our ___[daily bread](#)___ and forgive us our trespasses as we ___[forgive](#)___ those who trespass against us. And lead us not into ___[temptation](#)___, but deliver us from the ___[Evil One](#)___.

Holy Communion

Following the Lord's Prayer early Christians would receive Holy Communion every day. Why? Because the Sacrament of Holy Communion is a gift for the healing of our souls and bodies. Just as we eat food and drink liquid to keep our bodies healthy, Holy Communion keeps our soul and body healthy by receiving Christ, the Bread of Life. If unable to partake of Holy Communion every day, early Christians would take home the Antidoron(Holy Bread) and eat a little bit every day.

Receiving the Bread of Life

Approaching the chalice to receive Holy Communion is one way to partake of the Bread of Life. Any time that we welcome Christ into our lives, we are receiving nourishment from the Bread of Life. Can you think of other ways to allow Christ into your life?

[In their workbook, have them write all of the different ways that they can come to Christ.](#)



Wrap up class by reading last paragraph on page 20 ("I am the bread of life....) to the end on page 21, which gives some examples as well.

Activity:

Prosphora baking. Ask your priest if he would be able to come and teach the youth how to bake prosphora.



Resources:

Prosphora Baking Website - <http://www.prosphora.org/>

Lesson on Baking Prosphora - Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Youth Department

<http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/departments/youth/youthworkers/sessions/prosphora>

<http://orthodoxeducation.blogspot.com/search?q=bread>

Optional activities:

- Ask one of your parish family to come and teach the group how to bake paska bread.
- Bake regular bread together and donate it to a local soup kitchen
- Ask your choir director to teach the group how to sing a communion hymn and then have them begin singing it during Divine Liturgies. A perfect hymn to learn might be Bread from Heaven, which may be found in the book of Ukrainian Orthodox Hymns published by the Ukrainian Orthodox League

Session Ten

The Alpha and Omega



How is Christ the starting point and point of destination for us all?

Needed Items:

Participant worksheets

5 minutes: quickly review I Am's so far. Introduce Alpha and Omega with the verse below.

Revelations 1: 8

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

The Alpha and Omega

Do you know what the words alpha and omega mean? Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter, just like A and Z in our alphabet. Of course Jesus isn't saying that he is a letter in the alphabet. He is the beginning and the end of everything. He was there when the world was created and will be there when it ends.

20 minutes: Discuss Christ as being both the beginning and end of all life. Start with *Creator and Consummator of All* on page 113, then follow through work book.

The Beginning

We read in *Creator and Consummator of All* that Jesus created everything and has complete control over the creation of anything new. As humans we sometimes forget that nothing could exist without God and that everything that does exist was created by God when He decided to create it, not a minute sooner or later. Christ's role in the creation and beginning of all life is obvious- if the Will of God was not part of creation, everything would have been created by coincidence or accident. Our beautiful planet where plants need the carbon dioxide that we breathe out and we need the oxygen they give off; our amazing bodies that keep breathing and pumping blood without thinking; the beauty of a rainbow of light bouncing off of water droplets in the air... were all created by the power of God,

not coincidence. What other clues show us how God is involved in the creation of everything?

The End

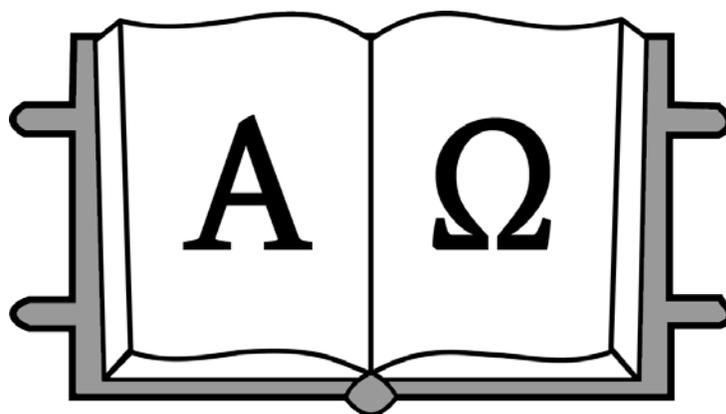
If Jesus was there in the beginning, we believe that He will also be there in the end. Jesus is the end goal in our lives. In *What is Your Omega?* We are told that everyone has a goal that they are trying to reach, no matter how big or small. We are all on the path, with Christ waiting for us to join Him in heaven.

Read *What is your Omega* Read on page 116 (Start with paragraph #3 "In contrast...") through the third paragraph on page 117 ending with "who is the Alpha, is also the Omega."

Life's a Race

Life is like a race - there is a starting line and a finish line. Christ is at both ends. He was there when each of us was created, and He gets us started on our way in life. He is waiting for each of us at the finish line in heaven. Along the way we might stumble, we might get tired, we might get thirsty, it might get dark, we might want to give up, but we know that if we just keep trying we will reach the end. And of course there is a prize at the end - life in heaven that never ends. Christ is waiting for us at the finish line, we can't let Him down.

This lesson is a bit shorter in case more time is needed on a particular lesson. If you finish all material with time to spare. Participants can go back through their lesson book and review their answers to questions. Have them prepare a short presentation about what they might tell their parents or the members of their parish or friends if they ask what was learned they learned. Putting together a parish presentation of the I Am's will not only solidify what they learned but will bring the parish family together allowing the youth to teach what they know!



Appendices:

To Be Used in Session 1

The Glorious Prophet and Forerunner **John the Baptist**

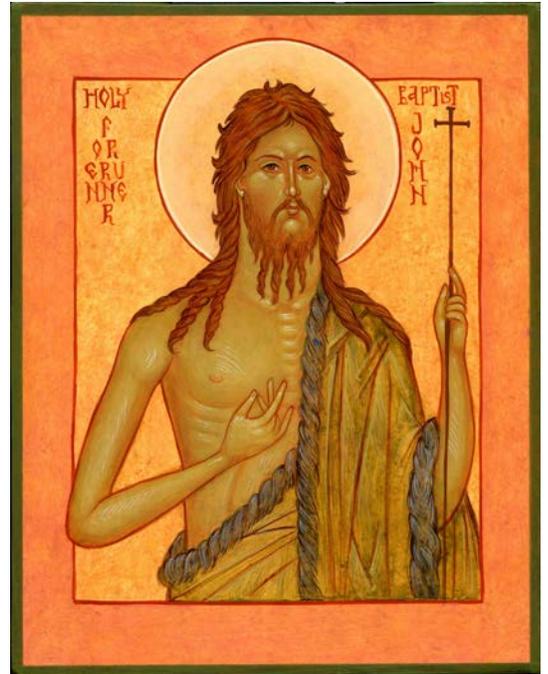
Saint John the Baptist was a monk and a great prophet, who baptized Jesus and became one of the most well-known saints in the Orthodox Church. John was a cousin of Christ through his mother Elizabeth. Because he baptized Christ, Saint John is the patron saint of godparents.

Saint John was born six months before Jesus. As a young man, he lived a very simple life in the woods, wearing simple clothes and eating what he could find in the land.

As an adult John started to preach in public, and people from many places came to hear his message. The main idea of Saint John's preaching was that people needed to keep their lives focused on God and to repent and ask forgiveness when they lost their focus. Many people came to hear him speak near the Jordan River, and he baptized thousands of people there.

The fame of John reached the ears of Jesus, and he came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized by John. Once Jesus had been baptized, John did not need to prophesy, or tell people about what would happen when Jesus came, because He was there! He did continue to speak to people, telling them about Jesus and what he had seen. Many people continued to come to Saint John, which made the king of the land very angry. They were listening to Saint John, not the king.

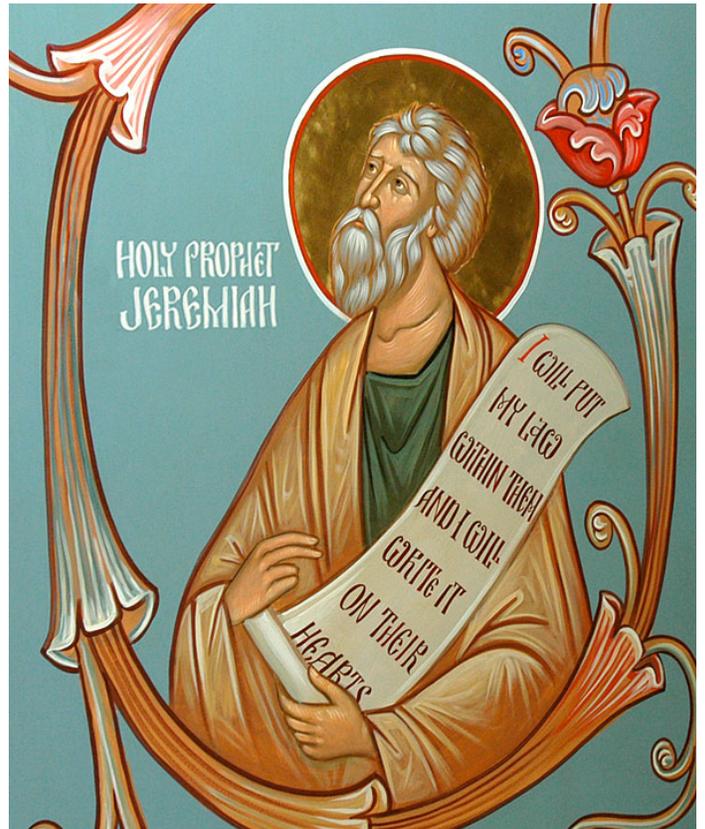
Jesus himself said great things about Saint John, saying that he was a "burning and a shining light" (John 5:35). John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and he got to see Jesus during his lifetime.



Prophet Jeremiah

Commemorated on May 1

The Holy Prophet Jeremiah, one of the four great Old Testament prophets, lived 600 years before the Birth of Christ. He was called to be a prophet when he was only 15 years old. God told Jeremiah that even before Jeremiah was born, He had chosen him to be a special prophet. At first, Jeremiah told God he could not do the job because he was too young and didn't know how to be a prophet. God promised to always be with Jeremiah and to show him the way. He touched the mouth of the chosen one and said, "Behold, I have put My words into your mouth. Behold, I have appointed you this day over nations and kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to rebuild, and to plant" (Jer. 1:9-10). From then on Jeremiah prophesied for twenty-three years.



His words were not always popular. He often had to remind the Jew that they had forgotten about God and weren't listening to Him anymore. They were worshipping idols and praying to fake gods of water, earth, and sky. He told them about bad things that would happen such as war because people had turned away from God. Jeremiah prophesied anywhere he could, the temple, the gates to the city, in the street, etc, but the people made fun of him and sometimes even hurt him because they didn't like his messages. He was even thrown in jail.

Throughout his life, Jeremiah would warn his people about the bad things that would continue to happen if they chose to ignore God. Unfortunately, many of these things happened because they did not listen to Jeremiah. But Jeremiah continued to teach the people that if they turned back to God and asked for forgiveness, they could live a wonderful life again. Although many ignore Jeremiah, there were people who followed him during his life and after his death, people were healed at his grave site.

Elijah

The glorious Prophet **Elijah**, also called **Elias** in Greek, is a prophet of the Old Testament. His name has been translated in several ways like "God the Lord," "the strong Lord," "my God is the Lord," and "the Lord is my God." His feast day is celebrated on July 20.



The first time we hear about Elijah in the Bible is in 1 Kings when he was asked to deliver a God's message to Ahab, the harsh king of Israel. He told King Ahab that there would soon be a time when there would be no water in his kingdom. After he delivered his message, God told Elijah to go to a hiding place near a brook called Cherith. Elijah relied on ravens who brought him food to eat while he was living there. When the brook dried up God sent him to a city called Zarephath, where a woman who owned a small store took care of him for two years. While Elijah was living there, the woman's son died, but through the power of God Elijah was able to bring him back to life (1 Kings 17:2-24).

During same time that Elijah lived in Zarephath, there was a famine. This meant that it was so hot and dry that people were unable to grow food and their animals became sick. People were very hungry. One day Obadiah, one of King Ahab's officers met Elijah in a field. Elijah asked him to tell King Ahab where he was and to send him to Elijah. King Ahab came and blamed Elijah for the famine. The people believed that the "god of storms," Baal wasn't taking care of them anymore and the King said it was Elijah's fault. Elijah knew that God was on his side. The people wanted proof of which God was stronger.

The people built two stacks of wood, one to make a sacrifice to Baal and one for Elijah to make a sacrifice to God. Each group would ask their God to light the stack of wood on fire for them. The people who worshipped Baal prayed all day long, but nothing happened. Elijah had the people pour four buckets of water on his stack of wood, and then he asked God to come and show Himself to the people. The stacks of wood caught on fire! Many people stopped believing in Baal and began to believe in God!

Elijah went on to travel to different places teaching people about God and His power. He traveled through the wilderness often eating very little food. In some cases angels visited him and God sent him small bits of food to eat. God gave him knowledge to prophesy about what would happen in the future.

Later in his life, Elijah anointed a man named Elisha to be his helper and follower. They spent time together and Elijah taught Elisha many things. When Elijah knew that it would soon be time to leave the earth and go to God in heaven, he told Elisha who was very upset. He would miss his friend and teacher and was worried about what he would do without him. Elijah took Elisha on a long walk to talk about what would happen and to give him encouragement. He even showed Elisha the power of God by using his mantle (which is sort of like a scarf or cloth he wore around his shoulders) to part the waters of a river. As they walked they were suddenly separated by a chariot and horses of fire; and "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." As Elijah rode into heaven, his mantle fell down to Elisha.

Additional Resources:

Music

Fight the Good Fight by Gigi Baba Shadid

- Light of the World
- Photini

Icons

Icons in this curriculum provided by Archangel Icons. Additional icons of the I Am's may be made available by them at their website www.archangelicons.com

Line Drawing

Most line drawings contained within are available from the Department of Religious Education, Orthodox Church in America. www.oca.org

Fruit of the Spirit Tree provided by Crafting the Word of God

