

Sunday School Syllabus

Year 4



COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE *of* LONDON

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The Characteristics of the Angels and their Role

The Guardian Angel

Lesson Aim:

To always remember that the angels protect us.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: God loves us and commands His angels to guard us.

Feel: Happiness and not to be afraid of anything because your Guardian Angel is with you.

Practice: To ask for the intercession of the Guardian Angel.

Memory Verse:

"For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

(Psalm 91:11-12)



Background Information for the Servant

Some of the Church Fathers believe that angels were created on the first day when God created light, but others believe that they were created before then, i.e. before the creation of the Earth. The nature of the angels is spiritual, as they are spiritual beings. The Bible teaches us that the roles of the angels are:

1. Worshipping God.
2. Fulfilling His will.
3. Serving the heirs of salvation.

It is also said that they are surrounding Christ, and they are always ready to fulfil every service asked from them for the progress of His Kingdom. In the Old Testament, they appeared many times to God's servants to manifest to them His will. They hit the Egyptians with plagues, and they were present with God when He gave Moses the law on Mount Sinai. They accompanied the Children of Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness and destroyed their enemies and encamped around them with a wall during the time of danger. They announced and celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:20, Luke 1:31, 2:13). They served Him during His temptation in the wilderness, and during His sufferings of his trial and crucifixion (Matthew 4:11, Luke 22:43). They preached His resurrection and announced his ascension into heaven (Matthew 28:5-6, John 20:12, Acts 1:10-11). They released Peter from prison (Acts 5:19, 12:7) and they are always serving the believers (Hebrews 1:14) and guarding the children (Matthew 18:10). They carry the souls of the dead to Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22) and they are going to accompany Jesus Christ in His second coming, and gather His people to His kingdom (Matthew 13:39, 16:27, 24:31).

In addition, we conclude from the Holy Bible that the angels are:

1. Able to do things both inside and outside our world, according to the will of God. And since their nature is higher than ours, they can do things above our understanding, for example, only one angel killed in one night the firstborn of the Egyptians.
2. Able to work in our minds, as they can move us to do good things according to the law of our nature, using suitable ways. There is a difference between their effect and the effect of God and the Holy Spirit in us, in that the angels show us the truth and guide our thinking as if a human is changing our thinking. The Holy Bible says that God has granted the angels authority, some for general guidance and protection and others for giving inner strength and comfort. Just as an angel strengthened our Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane during His passion, and was also able to strengthen the believers. As the fallen angels are able to tempt men with sin, God's angels are able to attract them to holiness; they protect the believers from their enemies, and they protect children (Matthew 18:10) and help everyone (Psalm 34:7) and transport the believers to paradise (Luke 16:22). God promised us to be protected by them: "For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." (Psalm 91:11-12). All of this is true and not exaggerated, as proven by what Jesus Christ said (Matthew 26:53).
3. Serving for the progress of the church. In the Old Testament the law was given by the direction of the angels (Acts 7:53, Hebrews 2:2). And God commanded them concerning His people (Psalm 91:11-12) and in the New Testament it was said that they were attending the meetings of the saints (1 Corinthians 11:10) and they fought the dragon and his angels (Revelation 12:7).

The teaching of the Bible of the service of the angels is comforting to the believers and makes them joyful, because it is proven to them that the angels are encamping around them as soldiers of the Most High, day and night, protecting them from their invisible enemies and surrounding dangers.

Guardian Angels

Some say that every believer has their own guardian angel, according to what Jesus Christ said, "I say to you that in heaven their [the children's] angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 18:10). Furthermore, according to what the people gathered in the house of Mary (St Mark's mother) said about St Peter: "It is his angel." (Acts 12:7-15).

In the first verse, it appears that for children there are angels who guard them and stay awake for their good and their best interest but it doesn't prove that for every child or believer he/she has their own guardian angel.

We say that the second verse doesn't prove that Peter hasn't got his own guardian angel, because what is said about Peter's angel wasn't said by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (although the Holy Bible itself is inspired by the Holy Spirit), rather what is mentioned in the Bible about this was a general thinking between two groups of people in the house of Mary. So, it's not proper to assign to it certain education.

Most interpretations say that God appointed special angels to take care of certain kingdoms according to what is stated in the book of Daniel by mentioning two angels: one the head of the Persian kingdom and one the head of the Greek Kingdom. This is also a point of doubt, according to the following:

- It is not mentioned in either the old or new testaments of the Bible, except for the book of Daniel in which it says that there is a guardian angel or evil spirit appointed for each pagan nation.
- The forces that stood against the angel who appeared to the prophet were called Persian kings (Daniel 10:13).
- It is concluded from Daniel 11 that the counter forces which were mentioned are not angels of good or evil but are merely earthly kings.

Angels are distinguished from humans by being exalted in their highness, strength, holiness, greatness and ability. So, we find David the prophet saying in the Psalms: "Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word." (Psalms 103:20). The roles of the angels are various and many, some of them have got roles which are specifically for God, such as praising, worshipping and glorifying God, doing God's orders and delivering messages from God to the humans or on the Last Judgement. Other roles of the angels relate to the service of the believers, such as taking care of them and guarding them, saving them from trials, encouraging them, relieving them, raising their prayers, and carrying the souls of the faithful people to heaven.

Lesson Content

Present the lesson in the form of a Role Play. Two servants will be needed, one of them should dress as an angel.

Servant: I want to tell you today about a strange thing that happened to me last week. I was watching TV and on the news I saw a big envoy of cars for a very important person in the country. When the VIP got out of the car I saw his bodyguards who also came out of the car to guard him. While I was watching the TV I started imagining if I were to have a real bodyguard for myself, what would I do? I would make him wake me up every morning and dress me up to go to school, and to prepare my bag for school every day. Not only that, but I would also make him write for me during the class, and after school to help me with my homework, and prepare for me all the games that I have got at home to play with. Oh, that would be nice, wouldn't it?

(A servant dressed as an angel enters the class in a very happy mood while singing).

Who is this who has entered the class? His face is bright and beautiful, and his voice is so nice and looks very happy? What is the secret of his happiness? I need to know many things about him. Let us go and ask him.

(The servant walks closer to the angel).

Excuse me, who are you? Where do you come from and what's the secret of your happiness? Can you tell us about yourself please?

Angel: You don't know me?! I wish you all day in every place you go, and everything you do, I pray to God that He may help you, and also, I make you to take heed when you stray that you may not fall in a hole or anything in the way that may harm you.

Servant: I have never seen you. How come you say that you are always with me?

Angel: Don't you know me?! I'm your guardian angel and God appointed me to be with you and take care of you and raise your prayers to God every time you pray. I help you in your life, maybe you can't see me, but I am always with you. Also, I am so happy when your behaviour is good and become sad when I see your wrong behaviour.

Servant: Okay, but how are you with me and helping me but I don't notice you at all? And why do you get upset from my behaviour?

Angel: We angels always like to work quietly and to help people without them noticing us. We like to help them with many things in their life like making people who deal with you be nice to you and when you're afraid of anything we will be beside you to guard you, but those who don't have enough faith will feel afraid and alone, that's why you have to have very strong faith that God has sent us, angels, so that we are always beside you and guard you. We also raise your prayers to your father Jesus Christ, and all the prayers in church we take up, along with the nice smell of incense, and raise it up to the Lord Jesus Christ - and when we see someone do bad things we become sad because we can't believe that the son or daughter of the great King can behave in such a way.

Servant: That's wonderful! This is the first time I have heard about the guardian angel. But how can I get you to help me in all things in my life like doing my homework?

Angel: No, we don't do your things instead of you, but we help without you noticing us, for example, when you study a subject at school you don't like, what do we do? We try to help you understand it and study it quickly and easily even if it's so difficult. If you pray before you do anything we help you with it. Even during playing we take care of you, when you're playing, running or going anywhere.

Servant: Wow, that is amazing! Thank God! I have never thought about our guardian angels before and how they are always with us, they are very important and today we have learnt more and more about our guardian angels. From today, I'll always ask God to send His angels to help me and will also ask my guardian angel to pray for me in front of my father Jesus Christ at all times. Thank you, my guardian angel, please stay beside me always and help me and pray for me in front of Our Lord Jesus, and also when I'm afraid or done something wrong alert me so that you are always beside me, with me and supporting me.

Angel: The peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you and protect you and your brothers and sisters who are with you today, and their beautiful angels who are standing beside them. May God protect them all!

Application



Comprehension Questions

- What makes our Guardian Angel happy?
- What makes our Guardian Angel upset?
- What does our Guardian Angel do for us?



Exercise

- Ask for the intercessions of the Guardian Angels in your prayers.
- Thank Our Lord Jesus Christ because He loves us and dedicated His angels for each one of us to look after us.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, O God, Your love is greater than everything. Your love is greater than the sand of the sea, and the stars of the sky. You love us. that's why You help us in everything in our life, and You command Your holy angels to protect us in our lives. Protect me, O Lord, through the intercession of the Guardian Angels and all the saints and martyrs. Amen.



God Loves Me and Gave Me Friends

The Healing of the Paralytic Man

Bible References: Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26.

Lesson Aim:

To appreciate God's gift of friendship.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: We are all members in the body of Jesus Christ.

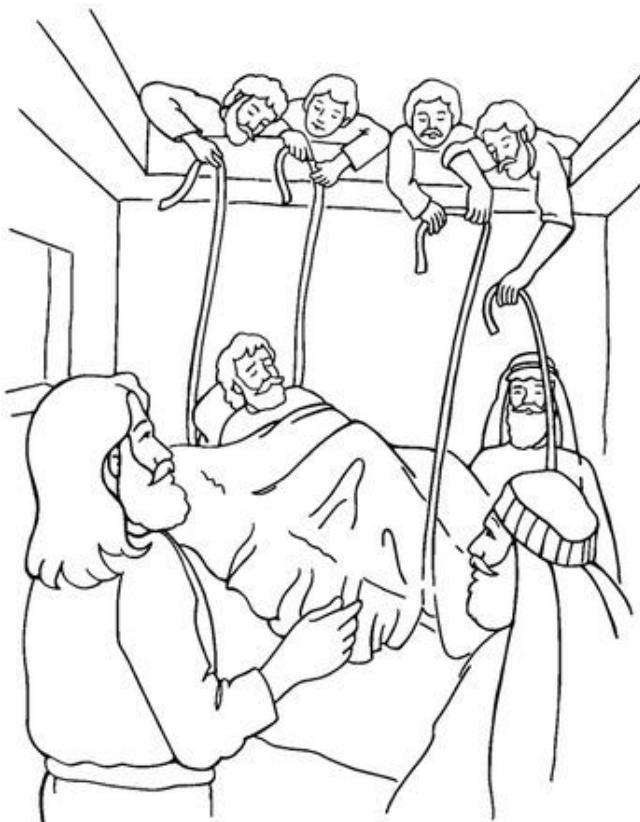
Feel: Love towards all your friends.

Practice: Offer love to all your friends.

Memory Verse:

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.' "

(Matthew 9:2)



Background Information for the Servant

One of the miracles of Our Lord in Capernaum and its surroundings, located North West of the Sea of Galilee (also known as Lake Tiberias or the Lake/Sea of Gennesaret), is the miracle of healing the paralytic man. The Lord and His disciples got into a boat and crossed over to Capernaum and entered one of the houses where he used to teach, preach and heal. It might be the house of Peter and Andrew or the house of Matthew.

The Bible mentions the miracle very briefly. A summary of the story is that there was a paralytic man, not able to move, and there was a barrier between him and His healer. The barrier was the crowd of people who were gathered around Jesus Christ. Due to his paralysis, his friends strove to reach Jesus. They carried him on a bed, but they were faced by the crowd who came to listen to God's word or to seek healing, so there was no way past the crowd, not even near the door. Nevertheless, they had it in their heart that they wouldn't go back disappointed and defeated by the crowd. They thought of an idea which involved going on the housetop, and removing the tiling of the roof (Luke 5:19). They made an opening wide enough to let their sick friend down with his bed to be in the midst before Jesus.

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic: 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.' " (Matthew 9:2). The Bible mentions that immediately, even while the paralytic man and his friends were awaiting his healing, the scribes and Pharisees were shocked by God's words, and reasoned in their hearts, objecting saying, "**Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?** (Luke 5:21). However the One who searches hearts and knows the hidden perceived their thoughts and answered saying, "**'Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Arise, take up your bed and walk?" But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'**—He said to the paralytic, '**I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.**' Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, '**We never saw anything like this!**' " (Mark 2:8-12).

"Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men." (Mark 2:3). In our life today, we have:

1. The Church.
2. The Church, represent by a Bishop, Priest or Servant.
3. A true friend.
4. Yourself.

We must ensure that we are like one of the four friends.

The church, together with you, can present the paralytic to the Lord Jesus Christ: the paralytic could be anyone in our lives who may be spiritually or physically paralysed, be it yourself or a friend. However, the church can't present the paralytic against your will, it must be a decision you make and take part in.

A Comparison Between the Paralytic and the Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5).

We find that when our Lord Jesus healed the Paralytic, He waited in the house for a very long time, not only did He wait for the Paralytic's friends to bring him to the housetop but He also waited for them to make an opening in the housetop and let him down. However, for the Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda, the Lord Himself went to him and asked him if he wants to be made well.

In the case of the Paralytic, his soul was healed first from sin and then after that he took up his bed and walked; but in the case of the Sick Man, his body was healed first, after that God asked him not to sin again.

So, does that mean that God shows favouritism? There is no doubt that our Lord Jesus does not discriminate between humans, but He differentiates in the approach suitable for each one. The Paralytic Man had his own friends who could love him and carry him. That's why the Lord waited for them to carry him inside, each of them having a caring spirit for one-another, so that they can receive the crown of communal love. One of the reasons why Jesus started with the healing of his soul is because the Paralytic already knew a lot about the Lord God from his friends whom He provided to him.

In the case of the Sick Man at the Pool of Bethesda, the Lord cared about healing his destructed soul. The Lord approached the situation differently: as a result of not having anyone to take care of him or support him he needed the Lord God to come to him and show him love. He healed his body first and showed him His love, so that he would be ready and more willing to receive inner guidance.

Friendship

The greatest friendship is one in which each person brings the other to Christ, because He knows their true needs.

The Holy Bible on Friendship

True Friendships: Serves, supports and strengthens. In this type of friendship, each person helps their friend and says to his brothers and sisters in Christ: "Be strong". It's a permanent friendship and not seasonal or temporary, and continues in the time of tribulations and poverty.

False Friendships: Deceives and has hidden, bad motives. It is not driven by compassion and consolation. Job said that his friends "scorn" him (Job 16:20) and this is the opposite of what Onesiphorus said about Paul (2 Timothy 1:16-17) for he "refreshed [him], and was not ashamed of [his] chain".

Unfaithful Friendships: Seeks personal benefit, getting closer to the rich man and getting away from the poor. An example of an unfaithful friendship is Judas' relationship with Christ; he betrayed the Lord and was unfaithful to Him (Matthew 26:49).

Thus, we notice:

- The importance of having true friends in our lives, and how this is God's gift to us because he loves me.
- The discernment that we must carry inside us and pray for when choosing our friends.

Let us realise the deep love of God, who provides us friends who are helpers comparable to us, who can help us in our daily lives, and offer for us before the throne of grace, to shape our Christian foundation and live a heavenly life.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Story

There was once a king who used to love hunting, and he had a very close friend who was a minister, going out with him in all his trips, his wars and so forth. One day, the king went hunting as he was used to doing, when he saw an animal far off. He ordered all the people with him to throw their arrows towards this animal until it gets tired. So, the people around him did what he ordered, but the minister had a bad aim, and his arrow injured the king's finger badly. As a result, the doctor's opinion was to cut his finger.

The king was very angry at the minister, and he ordered him to be put in prison. His life had drastically changed from being a great minister and friend of the king, to a humiliated prisoner. But, one day, when the king went out hunting as usual, he saw an animal far off which he followed until the king had disappeared from the site of his guards. Think was alone. He was found by Cannibals and they took him as their prey.

Day by day passed by and everyone in the royal palace thought that their king was dead: maybe he was murdered, maybe a wild animal had eaten him; but they all thought that he was dead. But, there was one guard who was persistent and kept on looking. One day, during patrol while the guard was searching for the him, he found the king thrown at the entrance of the city and saw that he looked awful. When they took him back to his palace, the first words he uttered was to question about his minister's well being. Everyone thought that he was asking about the minister so that he can hand him over the leadership of the kingdom. However, when he became well they brought the imprisoned minister to him and the king ordered his release from chains, and the king rose up from his throne and kissed him and asked him to forgive him for putting him in prison.

The minister wanted to know the reason for the king's transformation. The king told him that when the cannibals captured him and noticed his injured finger they deserted him, because they did not eat anyone with an incomplete organ in their body. The king was saved from definite death because of the injury which was accidentally inflicted upon him by the minister.

That's why with our friendships, which are established on the love of God, we have to submit ourselves to God and ask Him that our friends are the ones who carry us on the path of victory; the path of our Saviour.

Lesson Content

Present the lesson in a form of a Role Play. Seven roles are needed: Jesus, The Narrator, The Paralytic, Friend 1, Friend 2, Friend 3, Friend 4, and a group to act as The Scribes and Pharisees (The Religious Leaders). You may

involve the children in the acting:

- The Narrator:** When Jesus was in Capernaum, many people came to the house in which He was staying. The house was totally full and the door was blocked with people. In another house, not too far away from the house that Jesus was in, there were five friends talking together.
- Friend 1:** *In an ecstatic voice:*
Did you hear the news? Jesus is here! Jesus is in Capernaum!
- The Paralytic:** *In a sad voice:*
Oh, I want to see Him so much... but I'm not able to move. How about you go ahead without me. You go to see Him, I'll wait here. When you come back, tell me about everything please. Tell me what He is like. Go on, go to see Him! I can't wait till you get back!
- Friend 2:** No, there's no way we can leave you behind. I've got an idea! I heard that Jesus can heal the people who cannot see, or hear, and He can even make people walk! We all must go to see Jesus and we can ask Him to heal you!
- The Paralytic:** *In an excited but confused voice:*
But how can I go to Jesus?
- Friend 3:** *In a courageous and happy voice:*
Easy! We are four strong people, so we're going to carry you on the bed. Come on, let's do that!
- The Narrator:** And the four friends carried their friend and took him to the house where Jesus was preaching... but there was a surprise waiting for them.
- Friend 1:** Look at all these people coming to see Jesus! I can't even see Him.
- Friend 2:** We have to get closer to Jesus. Let's try the housetop.
- Friend 3:** *The five friends struggle to get to the housetop.*
We still can't see Jesus. What shall we do?
- Friend 4:** I know! Let's make an opening in the housetop and let our friend down on his bed through the opening, and then Jesus will be able to see him!
- Friend 1:** *The four friends work hard to remove a section of the housetop.*
Great idea! Let's try it!
- Friend 4:** Amazing work, my friends! Now the opening is big enough!
- Friend 1:** Everything's ready! Let's do it!
- The Narrator:** Indeed, his friends started letting him down through the housetop so the Lord could heal him.
- Friend 2:** We are sorry, Jesus, that we have done this.
- Friend 4:** When we couldn't enter through the door because there were so many people, we decided to make an opening in the housetop and let our friend down through it. Please Jesus help us.
- Friend 1:** Please Jesus, we know that You heal people, that's why we brought our friend to You. Please heal him so that he can walk again.
- Jesus:** I am very happy with your faith. My son, your sins are forgiven.
- The Narrator:** When the religious leaders heard what Jesus said, they became upset and aggravated.
- The Religious Leaders:** *The Scribes and Pharisees act angry and annoyed at Jesus.*
What? This man says that He can forgive sins? How dare He say that? No one can forgive sins except God! Who does He think He is?
- The Narrator:** But Jesus knew what they were thinking.

Jesus: Why do you think evil in your hearts? which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Arise and walk"? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins.

My son, Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.

The Paralytic: *Gets up and cries tears of joy:*
Look I can stand! I can walk! Jesus healed me! Thank You so much Jesus. Oh thank You.

The Narrator: The four friends were so happy that they came and saw Jesus and that their paralytic friend became well. They went to tell all the people about the Good News!

Application



Comprehension Questions

- Where was our Lord Jesus teaching?
- Who was the hero of the event? Were his friends the reason for his healing?
- What did his friends do to reach the Saviour?
- What did Jesus do when He saw them?
- What were the paralytic's feelings before and after being healed?
- What's the verse of the lesson?



Exercise

- The servant makes a deal with the children to write a letter, email or text to their friend to explain why they befriended them and how much they love them. The writer explains how they are going to reach their eternal salvation through their friendship. The servant reads the letters and displays the best one in the next lesson.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, two are better than one because if one falls, his companion will lift him up. O Lord, make my friend my second heart, one who feels my pain and is happy for my happiness. Make him love me because "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." (Proverbs 27:6).



I Am Special and Have Feelings to Express

David and Jonathan

Bible References: 1 Samuel 20

Lesson Aim:

To understand the importance of good friendships.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The meaning of friendship.

Feel: The importance of friendship.

Practice: Choosing a true friend.

Memory Verse:

"Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul."

(1 Samuel 18:3)



Background Information for the Servant

King David

- "David" is a Hebrew name which means "beloved".
- He was one of the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite, and the youngest of his brothers.
- He lived for 70 years: 30 years before being anointed king and 40 years after.
- He was born approximately 1000 years before the incarnation of our Lord Jesus.
- His life can be divided into three stages: as a shepherd; in exile, (being chased from place to place by King Saul); and as king of Israel.
- He was the second king of Israel after Saul.
- He came from the tribe Judah, from Bethlehem.
- The Coptic Church celebrates his feast day on 23rd day of the blessed month of Kiahk.

Jonathon

- "Jonathan" is a Hebrew name which means "Yahweh has given".
- He was the firstborn of King Saul.
- He was one of the most noble people in the Old Testament. He was loving and held David close to his heart, and David held Jonathon close to his heart.. He knew the meaning of true friendship.
- David's soul was so attached to Jonathan that upon Jonathan's death, David wrote a lamentation in 2 Samuel 1:17-27 saying, "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women."
- The deepness of the friendship between them was proof of the nobleness and love of Jonathan to David. It is one of the most ideal friendships in history, especially because it was opposed by Saul's jealousy but still stood strong. Jonathan's loyalty was a great encouragement for David during the years of being refused. There is nothing in history that compares to what Jonathon did: he gave up his throne for the sake of David, who should have been a competitor and rival to him.

Jonathan's Nobleness

In spite of Jonathan's great loyalty to David, he didn't provoke David against his father Saul, who was still "the Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel 24:6). He was totally the opposite of his father; since Saul hated David and tried to kill him by any means. Jonathan loved David and tried to help him by saving him from the incentive of Saul the killer.

The brotherly love of David and Jonathan had a strong foundation due to their common faith. Both of them were heroes and warriors, but their bravery was sourced from their knowledge that God is always loyal (1 Samuel 14:6, 1 Samuel 17:47), so their friendship started on the day when David defeated Goliath and continued until the death of Jonathan, when David talked about the depth of their friendship (2 Samuel 1:26).

Jonathon's Great Faith

Jonathan's great faith appears in 1 Samuel 14, when he gained a great victory against the Philistines because of his great confidence in God. Jonathan was carrying his weapon behind the rows of the enemies without informing his father, King Saul: "Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armour, 'Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.'" (1 Samuel 14:6). Jonathan's faith was based on his knowledge that God will save His people, based on his past experience. And indeed, God delivered the Philistines to the hands of the Israelites (1 Samuel 14:12).

Jonathon and David's Relationship

Jonathon and David's friendship began when David defeated Goliath. The secret of David's (external) victory in his battle against Goliath may have been because of the following:

- David's internal victory: When his father asked David to go and check on the safety of his brothers and bring back news of them, the Holy Bible says: "So David rose early in the morning... and went as Jesse had commanded him." (1 Samuel 17:20). Obedience to one's parents and spiritual fathers in God is an inner victory of one's self-will, and this will be followed by outer victories. Therefore, many were defeated externally because of internal failure. So, David obeyed his father without hesitation and with joyfulness, as we can see he was quick to accept his father's early-morning request. He also had inner victory when his brother Eliab's anger was "aroused against David" (1 Samuel 17:28) and so he answered him calmly and wisely.
- David recognised that every victory is for God Himself and His church, and every defeat is against God and His church. David asked, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26). So, he considered the battle a fight between God, Himself, and Satan, the enemy of good.

He might have asked, for example, of the reward for killing Goliath, but without doubt there was no reward that could have convinced a man's heart to take on a battle with a man like Goliath who was a giant and a trained fighter - David only needed to know that God was with him. King Saul became weak before Goliath and all the men of war and David's elder brothers were terrified of him however David realised that God Himself gives victory so that He is glorified in the midst of His people. This mindset meant David went down to the land of battle comforted by God and confident in Him.

- St Ambrose thinks that the secret to David's victory is that he never waged the war, but rather Goliath did, and David was driven to it because of his spiritual zeal. He didn't carry Saul's armour but rather his own slingshot and stick, and only entered the war after first asking God. St Ambrose says, "David never waged war unless he was driven to it. Thus prudence was combined in him with fortitude in the battle. For even when about to fight single-handed against Goliath, the enormous giant, he rejected the armour with which he was laden. His strength depended more on his own arm than on the weapons of others. Then, at a distance, to get a stronger throw, with one cast of a stone, he slew his enemy. After that he never entered on a war without seeking counsel of the Lord." Let us, in our spiritual fight, be committed to these three things:
 1. Not to start a war by ourselves but to run from anything that will cause us to stumble in our journey.
 2. If we enter into a war, we must carry with us our personal experiences of God and depend on His grace working inside us; we should not just rely on the prayers and skills of others without us first having our own relationship with God.
 3. Not hastily entering into a war without first seeking counsel of the Lord and His support through prayer and speaking to your spiritual father.
- St Ambrose thinks that David was victorious because he gave himself to the service of the people and asked what he could do for the other, thereby putting others before himself. St Ambrose said: "David followed in the steps of Moses who was chosen from among the people to govern them. How great was his meekness, kindness and humbleness of spirit! And how great a fighter was he, ready to show love. Before he ascended to the throne, he put himself for the service of all. As a king he considered himself equal to everybody else whilst fighting, sharing in the tire of his people. He was brave in battle, kind in judgement, and patient in tolerating insult, and most of all tolerating others' mistakes rather than acting in a tit-for-tat manner. He was precious to everyone, and although he was only a youth, he was chosen against his will to govern the people. When he became older, his people asked him not to fight in battle, as everyone preferred to face danger for his sake than for King David to face danger for their sake. The people were attached to King David, because he did everything for his people. Firstly, when there was division between the people, he preferred to live in Hebron as if he was in an exile (2 Samuel 2:3) than to be a king in Jerusalem. Secondly, he showed bravery, even towards his enemy."

Jonathan and David's Covenant

"Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armour, even his sword and his bow and his belt." (1 Samuel 18:3-4). The covenant they made means that they will stick together and each one will help the other. It is difficult to find a friendship like this. When David was a young shepherd, he didn't have clothes to suit his new position as a national hero. For this reason, Jonathan gave him his robe, his sword, his bow and his belt. He deprived himself from everything he had for David's sake.

Jonathon's Intercessions for David

We see in 1 Samuel 19:2-7 more of the true friendship between Jonathan and David and how Jonathan warned David of the danger of being killed by King Saul (Jonathon's father), and advised him on how to avoid Saul's hands. Jonathan acted as a peacemaker and interceded for David before Saul and begged his father for David's sake. He reminded his father that David, by saving Israel from the Philistines, saved his throne. He also reminded his father that he had never done anything wrong to him, so, he warned his father not to sin by killing innocent blood. Jonathan's intercession had a temporary effect on his father, for Saul swore that he would not kill David, however after a while he tried to kill him with a spear (1 Samuel 19:9-10).

We are the losers when we fail to know God in all our ways. When our unity with God is broken, we surrender to temptation and sin. While David agreed with Jonathan to lie for him, so, it was expected the presence of David in the palace during the time of the eating, but he was afraid of going, so he took permission from Jonathan that he may hide for three days, telling him: "If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked permission of me that he might run over to Bethlehem, his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.' " (1 Samuel 20:6).

Love

Many people claim they have love for others, but often such a statement of love is only verbal and is not accompanied by feelings from their hearts, which is apparent in their dealings! They might say that they love God, but then break

His commandments every day! That is why St John the Beloved wrote: "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:18).

Lesson Content

Today we are going to talk about King David. God was with David and gave him great power and wisdom, which he used in killing the lion and the bear, as well as defeating the giant Goliath the Philistine, of whom all the children of Israel were afraid. The king and all the Israelites were so happy when David killed Goliath (which was before he became a king). The king at the time was called Saul and he had a son called Jonathan. Jonathan was so happy with David and loved him so much and they became best friends.

On this day, the people kept singing and dancing and were cheering for David more than Saul. When Saul heard these cheers, he became very angry and jealous of David and thought of killing him, because Saul was afraid that David would become king instead of him. So, King Saul wanted to kill David with his spear twice, but God saved David from him. So Saul thought of a plan to kill David: "Then Saul said to David, 'Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles.' For Saul thought, 'Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.' " (1 Samuel 18:17). So, King Saul's plan was to let David die in battle however David said to him: "Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" (1 Samuel 18:18). David was expressing how he felt that he did not deserve this position and so Merab got married to another person, and King Saul began thinking of a different plan. He said to his servants: "Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. So Saul said, 'I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.' Therefore Saul said to David a second time, 'You shall be my son-in-law today.' And Saul commanded his servants, 'Communicate with David secretly, and say, "Look, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now therefore, become the king's son-in-law." ' " (1 Samuel 18:20-22). Then David became convinced to marry the king's daughter and he went to Saul to marry his daughter, Michal, and Saul agreed but he said to him that he must first fight the Philistines expecting that they would kill David but David fought the Philistines and defeated them because God was with him. King Saul was very very angry. Can you think of why?

So Saul went to gather his servants again and Jonathan was with them and told them "that they should kill David" (1 Samuel 19:1) but who remembers who David's best friend is? So Jonathan went and warned David and said to him: "My father Saul seeks to kill you. Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a secret place and hide. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you. Then what I observe, I will tell you." (1 Samuel 19:2-3). David obeyed what Jonathan told him and hid himself, and Jonathan went in the morning to his father Saul and said to him: "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works have been very good toward you. For he took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the Lord brought about a great deliverance for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?" (1 Samuel 19:4-5). Saul listened to his son Jonathan and said: "As the Lord lives, he shall not be killed" (1 Samuel 19:6) and so he agreed not to kill David. Jonathan was so happy and went to David telling him what happened, and Jonathan took David and entered into the presence of King Saul who didn't harm him. Thus, Jonathan saved his friend David from the hands of Saul, his father.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- Who was the king that killed a lion and a bear when they were younger?
- Who did David marry?
- Who was David's best friend?
- How did Jonathan save David?



Exercise

- Thank God for the feelings he has given me to express, and made me distinguished from other creatures.
- Express my feelings with truth and honesty, love my friends, be happy with the happiness of others and be sad for their sadness (remembering always to keep them in your prayers).

 **Prayer**

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

My Lord Jesus Christ, I thank You for Your love to me. O my loving God, thank You for distinguishing me from all the other creatures. Thank You for making me able to express my feelings, and to know how to choose my true friends. Thank You, my Lord Jesus, because You always guide me with nice examples from the Holy Bible of true friends. Like Jonathan and David a long time ago, help me God to love all people and to be able to help my friends and be a good example for them, because I am Your child made in Your image and Your likeness. Amen.



The Five Loaves and Two Fish

Bible References: Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:12-17 and John 6:1-14.

Lesson Aim:

To understand the importance of orderliness in our lives.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The importance of orderliness in our lives to serve our community.

Feel: How being organised and following a routine makes God happy.

Practice: Organise our daily life more by prioritising.

Memory Verse:

"For God is not a God of disorder but of peace – as in all the congregations of the Lord's people."
(1 Corinthians 14:33)



Background Information for the Servant

The Christian Social Life

Every Christian should strive to give Christ first place in their private life and in the community around them. The means we use to enhance the state of a community and strengthen justice between people can't be useful in a true and permanent way unless we are renewing ourselves in God's saving grace, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And the Christian must oppose, in the same spirit of Christ, any type of greed, selfishness and vice. They should work to fulfil the needs of the orphans, the poor, the elderly, the sick and the outcasts.

Every Christian believer should make an effort in building-up their country, its government and its whole society to master the principles of righteousness, truth and brotherly fellowship. To reach this, we should be ready to work with those who are righteous, always taking care to act in a spirit of love, but without compromising their loyalty and love for Christ.

The Patriotic Christianity:

While the Christian is a patriot of the kingdom of God, they are also a patriot of their country. They should be a good patriot of both. "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God." (Romans 13:1). It might not be possible for the person to always agree on a law of the land, but as long as the law doesn't violate the relationship of the Christian believer to God, they must obey it. The believer may aspire to petition for certain laws to be changed, but they must obey the law as long as it is functioning, not being afraid of the punishment, but driven by Christian conscience.

Christians lived for many years under many different types of governments. Under some governments, they faced persecution and under others they enjoyed protection. Whatever the stance of government, Christ's words are clear: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16).

The Five Loaves and Two Fish

This miracle is the only event, considered in the general service of the Lord Christ, mentioned in all four Gospels: Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:12-17 and John 6:1-14. This shows the importance of this miracle. This event took place before the last visit of the Lord Jesus to Jerusalem when He was to be crucified there.

St John the Evangelist the Lord Jesus to us as the heavenly Bread who feeds the soul and satisfies it to remain alive and nourished. He is the Incarnate Word; through His word, He raises us to have new life, and by His Body, which is the heavenly bread, renews us and roots us in Him. In the Gospels, we see the Lord Christ feeding the multitudes with two fish and five loaves, which were presented by a boy:

1. Jesus lifted up His eyes seeing the hungry multitudes. He didn't wait for someone to ask for food but pre-empted the needs of the people.
2. He accepted an offering from a small boy. As He gives He takes; this is the sign of mutual love between God and man. He also raised the boy's morale and value; the boy's offering was small, but it satisfied all the multitudes, and there were leftovers of food which filled twelve baskets.
3. God honours every person, and asks for an offering from a boy, a kid or a child, however little it is! This lets people feel they are playing an active role in serving humanity through their input.
4. One interpretation of this miracle: The two fish represent the Old and New Testaments, and the five loaves represent the five books of Moses. How different it is to receive the Word of God with understanding from the hands of Jesus Christ, than from reading it with our limited human understanding. God's word satisfies and fills us when our Lord Jesus presents it to us through our church.
5. The multitude came back the next day looking for Him; not to enjoy, not for the sake of witnessing miracles or for being fed bread and fish, but because they were filled by the Word of the Lord. Therefore, the Lord Jesus presented to them a new and different table: His body and blood given as food, which gives us eternal life.

Then Jesus said, "Make them sit down in groups of fifty." He sat them down in order because:

- He is the creator who likes order, and created everything in order according to certain system.
- He wants to teach us to do our work in a fitting and orderly manner. According to the commandment "But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." (1 Corinthians 14:40).
- He wants to help the disciples distribute the food to the multitude quietly. So, each disciple was assigned to distribute to specific groups of people.
- If He didn't do so, people would have rushed towards the food and many people (such as the weak or elderly) would have been deprived of it.

- He wanted to collect the leftover fragments, before the crowd had left and trod on the fragments and wasted food.

From this event, it shows that the orders and rites the church follows during its services was handed to us from the disciples, who in turn learned this from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Story

My mum always used to repeat the following sentence to us: "Organise your stuff! Tidy your belongings to be able to find things easily! A little bit of order will make life easy." We always remembered these words but never actually did it.

Every morning, in our house, there was a contest between my siblings and I to find all our school things, and so we would be constantly shouting: "Where's my book?", "Where's my notepad?", "Where's my pen?", "Where's my bag?", "Where are my shoes?", "Where are my socks?", and the list went on. We kept looking around and spent a lot of time preparing ourselves for school or for our weekly outing. All of that, and our poor mum would look with us here and there to help us find our stuff.

We were three children who didn't maintain any order and who never put our stuff in its correct place. My mum decided to help us by putting everything back in its place after us, hanging up our clothes and organising our school bags; but not one hour would pass before the mess of our toys returned, and the house would be void of order. My mum eventually lost hope, and just left us to bear the consequences of our messiness.

When Grandma came to live with us, she noticed the mess we were living in, so she decided to help my mum by tidying up after us. One day, I heard my elder brother asking, "Where are my sports clothes?! I took them off here yesterday!"

So, Grandma asked him, "Did you hang them up?"

My brother replied, "No, I put them on this chair!"

Grandma smiled and said: "So it will be in the barrel." We all looked in amazement at her!

"Barrel? Which barrel?!" My brother replied.

My grandma said, "The barrel in the storage room at the top of the house."

"In the storage room?!" We all shouted in astonishment and denial.

We quickly went up to the top of the house, opened the storage room, and found it: a big barrel at the back of the room. With great difficulty we tried to reach inside it as the barrel was so deep, and it was about twice our size. So, we tried to tip the barrel over, but it was fixed to the floor. My brother dangled himself down inside the opening of the barrel and then he saw his clothes lying at the bottom of the barrel. The next day I was looking for the book that I was reading just the day before, but I didn't find it. I remember putting it down somewhere just before going to bed. I thought to myself, "Where did I leave it? Or perhaps, where did I throw it?! Could it be here in my room? No... Here in the living room? Oh, I remember, I was sitting at the dining table." Then I shouted asking, "Mum, where is my book?" Mum didn't answer; she had stopped helping us to find our stuff. So, I shouted even louder, but again she didn't reply. Then, I asked grandma, "Didn't you see my book, Grandma?"

Grandma smiled and said, "Where do you usually keep your books?"

I hesitated and replied, "In... in... in my bag!"

So I looked in my bag but it wasn't there.

"Where else could it be?" Grandma wondered.

I said, "On... on the desk!" So I looked on my desk but it wasn't there.

"So it must be in the barrel. Look for it in there." Grandma advised.

So, I moaned and shouted, "The barrel again?!"

I hurried to the storage room and there I saw it at the bottom of the cursed barrel. I tried to reach for it, but the barrel was too deep, and I was too embarrassed to ask for help. I looked around and found an old chair by the wall. I quickly dragged it next to the barrel, stood on it, and dangled myself inside the barrel, until I could just about reach the book. Then I tried to straighten myself up to get myself out of the barrel, but I couldn't! I shouted for mum, but she couldn't hear me because I was all the way at the top of the house. I shouted again and again, but there was no hope; no one could hear me. So, I struggled and struggled until I eventually managed to get myself out of the barrel. "Ugh, this is exhausting!" I shouted, trying to catch my breath.

A few days later, my younger brother came crying looking for his favourite toy which he was playing with only the day before. I looked at Grandma and saw her smiling. I knew straight away where to find the toy. I told my brother, "Come with me, we'll find your toy." We went up to the storage room, and there again, in the bottom of the barrel, we found the toy. So, I helped my brother to grab it.

After two months of visiting the barrel, we decided to start putting our stuff in its place to avoid having to visit this barrel again and going through the ordeal of trying to reach to the bottom of the barrel to grab our stuff. We eventually realised the lesson that Grandma wanted to teach us, and understood the advice that our mum gave us: "A little bit of order will make life easy." It wasn't long before being organised felt like less of a chore and more of a habit. Every time one of us thought to put something where it didn't belong, we remembered the barrel and then hurried to put it back in its right place, thinking "A little bit of order will make life easy." Therefore, keeping order helps us to reach our goal in the easiest and shortest way, especially when we consider that the goal is our eternal life in Heaven. I wonder, have you ever dreamt about eternity?

Lesson Content

Our story today is about a boy whose whole life changed in the space of a day. He was just a normal Jewish boy living close to Bethsaida, but he became one of the most famous people in the Holy Bible. This boy asked his mum to go out to listen to the words of Jesus Christ, so, his mum gave him permission, and she gave him food to take with him: five loaves and two fish.

The boy went out on his journey, and when he arrived he found a great multitude of men and women, old and young, and Jesus was in their midst teaching them and guiding them and healing every sickness and illness in them. The day passed very quickly, and before the boy realised it, the Sun had already started to set. The disciples of our Lord Jesus asked the Lord to stop teaching and send the multitude away for everyone to be able to find their way back home before it had gotten too dark.

By this time, the people were very hungry but there was not enough food to feed everyone. Jesus had pity on the multitude, who numbered approximately 5000 men (not including women and children) and asked His disciples to serve food for them, and when they told Him that they haven't got any food except for these "five loaves and two fish" which belong to this boy which he is offering to You. Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, and then asked His disciples to start organising the multitude into groups of fifty, and for every group to organise themselves, sitting on the ground and staying within their group.

Jesus started by a prayer, asking God the Father to bless what was offered to them, and to make it sufficient to fill them in every way. After the disciples had finished dividing the multitudes into groups of fifty, they started to distribute the food to them. Everyone ate and was filled, to the extent that the fragments that remained had filled up twelve baskets. Therefore, when we ask God to bless our work and fill us with His grace, He will do so in the same measure of our orderliness and organisation, so that the result is excellently successful and surpasses what we could have done our own.

We can conclude that orderliness is a way that guides us to our Lord Jesus Christ. Organising our daily life is important, so we have times of retreat with our righteous God. Through our orderliness and setting our priorities, we can succeed in our studies and serve our communities in the right way.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- Where was Jesus?
- How big was the multitude?
- What was Jesus doing with these multitudes?
- What was the request of His disciples to Him?
- How did Jesus resolve the problem of feeding the multitude? What is the main condition for this solution?
- How much food did Jesus pray on?
- What is the verse of the lesson?



Exercise

- To ask the kids to create a daily timetable with the help of their parents, arranging their time for prayer, studying, food, playing and sleeping; so that they can start to get in the habit of following routine and order in their daily lives.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

Our good Lord Jesus, the God of orderliness and peace; Oh, the One who took bread and wine upon His pure hands, And thanked, blessed and broke; we believe confess and glorify. Give us from the abundance of your warm heart, blessings according to our order, So that You may guide us into Your Heavenly Kingdom. Amen. (The Divine Liturgy)



Obedience

Ruth

Bible References: Ruth 1-4

Lesson Aim:

To learn that Ruth was faithful to her mother-in-law and God rewarded her for her faithfulness. She was very polite in her dealings with everyone, as we should be.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: How God blessed Ruth and Naomi.

Feel: The selflessness and love that Ruth had.

Practice: Doing good deeds to all those around you.

Memory Verse:

"But Ruth said: '...For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge' "
(Ruth 1:16)



Lesson Content

Opening Question: How does God expect us to treat all people and what does He promise us in return?

- The book of Ruth is known to be written by the prophet Samuel.
- A Moabite girl named Ruth was married to a Jew who was a believer of God. When he died, she went back with her mother-in-law and worshipped God, as her mother-in-law did. Her mother-in-law was an old lady who needed help. Ruth put her future on the line and went with her mother-in-law.
- This is the only book in the Bible that is named after a Moabite girl's name because of the very significant role that she played.
- The Lord Jesus came from the descendants of Ruth (read Matthew 1:1-16). Ruth married Boaz; she had a child and named him Obed. "He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." (Ruth 4:17).
- This book shows us the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ, by flesh, to both the Jews (represented by Boaz) and the Gentiles (represented by Ruth) and to all people in the world.
- Ruth was very polite when speaking to her mother-in-law, to Boaz and to the harvesters. We must also be very polite and kind when we speak to other people.
- Ruth showed a lot of love to her mother-in-law. See the memory verse.
- When Naomi and Ruth entered Bethlehem, the whole city was moved and they asked, "Is this Naomi?" (Ruth 1:19). They all expected Naomi to come back to her land with her husband, her children and all her belongings, but she came back with nothing except her daughter-in-law. But the Lord worked with her and the Bible says "for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons..." (Ruth 4:15).
- Boaz became Ruth's husband and Ruth gave birth to Obed. God rewarded Ruth. She was polite, she had love and she sacrificed her own life to accompany her mother-in-law.

Application



Exercise

- We must do good things to others, God looks from up above; when we do good for others, He will reward us generously.
- We have to be polite when we deal with all kinds of people.
- As God worked with Naomi and Ruth, He is willing to work with us. The church prays saying to God "participate in the work of thy servants". Let us also pray in our personal prayers asking God to work with us.



Respectful Discussion

Meeting of the Canaanite Woman with Jesus

Bible References: Matthew 15:21-28

Lesson Aim:

To be able to participate in respectful discussions with everyone.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The way and art of dialogue with others.

Feel: The importance of choosing our words.

Practice: Having a discussion with God at any and all times and having a discussion with people by choosing the right time.

Memory Verse:

"A gentle answer turns away wrath."

(Proverbs 15:1)



Background Information for the Servant

Anger and its Treatment

Holy anger: is anger for the sake of righteousness; and is not loaded with ego, nervousness or ignorance; and it is not quick-to-act anger. The Holy Bible gives us examples of the anger of God and the anger of the apostles and the prophets. History also gives us examples of the anger of the saints. So, we need to be able to differentiate between firmness and anger, as the Bible says: "Be angry, and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26).

Vain anger: is anger for personal reasons, or for materialistic or worldly reasons, and not for holy reasons. Often, vain anger involves someone losing his or her temper and is a sin. About this kind of anger, the Bible says: "An angry man stirs up strife, and a furious man abounds in transgression." (Proverbs 29:22).

Anger is not a simple sin. As a consequence, or extension, of anger, many sins are committed:

With anger there is:

- Sharpness and nervousness.
- Lack of forgiveness.
- Hard-heartedness.
- Hatred, which is opposed to meekness and kindness.
- Lack of humility.
- Judging of others.

An angry person falls into the sin of:

- Injustice.
- Swearing and humiliation of others.
- The tongue.
- Hatred and revenge.
- Intolerance, leading to disputes and quarrels.

Angry people can:

- Cause others to stumble.
- Lead to rushing and haste.
- Lose their Godly character.
- Lose their relations with others.

Therefore, the sin of anger is opposed to the virtue of peace.

The negative consequences of anger are:

- It blinds the vision of the soul and doesn't allow us to look at our personal sins, and the person cannot see the dignity and the value of people.
- It leads to many other sins as the Holy Bible says: "A furious man abounds in transgression." (Proverbs 29:22).
- It is harmful from a medical perspective.
- It causes one to stumble and lose his reputation.
- It leads to bad relations with others.
- It hinders our prayers and having Holy Communion.

Treatment of anger:

Being humble of heart: St Dorotheos of Gaza said, "Where there is sympathy and love and humility, how can wrath and other passions develop?" A humble person always places the blame on himself in everything, and doesn't consider that someone did something wrong to them, but sees that whatever happens to them is because of their own sins.

Consider the abuser as a doctor: the Church Fathers say that whoever speaks in a bad way about us, might be seeing in us flaws we hadn't seen before, and so our sins are revealed to us to know to avoid it. Therefore, we should consider and reflect on the comments which have made us angry as they may be true.

Replying with verses: memorise the Bible verses particular to teachings against anger. Repeat them always, and let them be the focus of your contemplation and remember them every time you are tempted by anger. For example:

- "The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." (James 1:20)
- "Anger rests in the bosom of fools." (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

- "Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel!" (Genesis 49:7).
- "Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go." (Proverbs 22:24).
- "He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly." (Proverbs 14:29).
- "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; Do not fret—it only causes harm." (Psalms 37:8).
- "The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression." (Proverbs 19:11).
- "An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression." (Proverbs 29:22).

Be slow to anger: anger is a fast action, being triggered especially when one is rushed, so being calm in our actions can keep us from getting angry.

Practise silence: keeping silence in situations of anger is a virtue. When harsh words are exchanged, this causes anger to grow lead to rage.

Use gentle answers: the Divine Inspiration in the book of Proverbs says: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1). If anger rages, it will never get treated with hurtful words, as it was said by the saints: "Fire doesn't extinguish fire but gets extinguished by water." That is why gentle words are more powerful to put out the fire of anger.

Pray for wisdom: wisdom is needed to know when to talk and when to be silent. Here we find the wise Solomon puts before us two different types of behaviour to deal with different types of people and says: "Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes." (Proverbs 26:4-5). Therefore, it is according to the circumstances of the case whether you should speak and how you should speak or even be silent.

Consider the consequences: consider what consequences your actions and words may have before reacting to a situation.

Do not stoop down to a low level: put boundaries to anger in every stage, and don't let yourself reach the level of hatred and malice.

Purity of heart, not seclusion: some people escape from society to avoid anger thinking they are practising solitude, but this is a type of seclusion. Solitude is that which is practised by those who are already successful in their social lives, loving everyone and being loved by them. Therefore, the one who practices solitude practices it so that they can spend more time in contemplation, busying all their time with God in prayers and the reading of scriptures. It is not because they're unable to adapt to society, and not because of a hatred for people or lack of sympathy towards them. If the angry person goes to practice a life of solitude, their anger will accompany them! Therefore, that person should first calm his heart from inside, and purify his heart from anger and rage.

Love: always show love, kindness and gifts and remember what our Lord Jesus said: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27) and "love your enemies" (Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:27).

Understand: be understanding and consider that the other person may be going through a tough stage, respond to their anger with understanding, care and love.

Treat anger with six virtues:

1. Forgiveness.
2. Asceticism.
3. Gentleness.
4. Reconciliation and peacefulness.
5. Praying and praising.
6. Patience and open-heartedness

Follow God's example: when people hurt us and we get angry, then we do not follow God's example of being long-suffering and patient: as the people hurt Him with all hurtful things by breaking His commandments and sometimes getting angry with Him and blaspheming Him, He forgave them and did not reply back with the consequences of their mistakes. So, if we are provoked to anger, remember how many times we sinned against God and yet He did not get angry with us! Let's learn from God: patience, tolerance, forgiveness, not becoming angry and not treating others like for like.

Calmness of voice: we should train the level and pitch of our voices. This way, our speech may never mistakenly be perceived, or transform, into shouting and quarrelling. By raising our voices, we will be trying to change people by

force, and not by gentle convincing! As for the person who has a strong opinion, they will be confident in the proof for their opinion, and therefore will not need to raise their voice. Nor will they feel inner weakness or deficiency that they would want to fulfil by raising their voice.

Various practices:

- Train yourself not to get angry, and don't provoke others to anger.
- As much as you can, get away from the causes that trigger anger and don't magnify the issues that you face and take everything to heart.
- If you find fire, don't add fuel to it.
- Mix with the meek, to learn from them calmness and self-control. Take things in a simple way, and do not be easily triggered to anger.
- Don't get into discussions with people while you are exhausted physically, irritable, or tired emotionally or psychologically.

From all of the above we may realise the importance of the gentle answer which turns away wrath. Let us be overflowing with the Holy Spirit who grants us wisdom to be fishers of men by gentleness and love.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Group Workshop

Divide the class into two groups, and give each group a large sheet of paper. On one paper, write: "What causes a successful conversation?" and on the other, write: "What causes a failed conversation?". Let them brainstorm within their groups the points related to their heading. At the end, hang up the sheets and go through the points. Example points:

Reasons for a successful conversation:

- Listening carefully to the speaker.
- Choosing your words, and saying "please" and "thank you".
- Speaking with a calm voice.
- Be understanding and considerate.

Reasons for a failed conversation:

- Interrupting the speaker.
- Being emotional while speaking.
- Not listening.
- Choosing the wrong timing.



Drama / Pantomime

Two servants act out the following two sketches and the kids to compare between them:

First Sketch

Son: Dad! Dad! Dad! I want a new mobile!

Father: (*Father is working extremely hard, exhausted from a long day at work.*)

Son, I have just come back from work and I have got a lot of work to finish. Shall we talk about this later tonight?

Son: No. I don't care. I want a mobile today!

Father: Okay my dear son, wait till the beginning of next month so I can save up enough money to buy it.

Son: I still don't care! When I ask for something, I should get it!

Father: Okay son, that's it. So you can learn to speak nicely, there will be no mobile at all.

Second Sketch

Son: Excuse me dad, sorry to bother you. I know you're busy, but may I speak to you about something?

Father: Of course my dear son, go ahead.

- Son:** I just wanted to ask if it was possible for you to get me a new mobile because my mobile is not working anymore.
- Father:** Of course my dear son, but would it be okay if you wait till the beginning of next month until I put together the money for it?
- Son:** Of course my dad, and if it is not possible, don't worry, I know our circumstances.
- Father:** Thank you, my son, that you are so polite and considerate, and I promise by the beginning of next month you will have a new mobile.

Discuss the two dialogues with the children, and how calm conversation can lead to a positive result, while the opposite will lead to failure.

Lesson Content

The Canaanite woman was a Gentile, she was not from the Jewish people (the people of God). She was from the people who worship the idols and there was enmity between the two people. So, our Lord Jesus had to examine her faith to be a role model for all gentiles and Jews.

"And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' " (Matthew 15:22-27).

- What do you think of this conversation? If we were her, would we have responded as wonderfully as the woman did?
- Did the Lord Jesus respond to her immediately? What did Jesus Christ mean by these words?
- Did our Lord Jesus know that her faith was strong? Yes, but He wanted to announce this faith to everyone to be a role model for all, and to prove to the Jews (the chosen people of God) that He came for both the Jews and the Gentiles and He came to save all who believe in Him.
- What do you think if this woman became upset from Jesus' words, and left and didn't continue her conversation with Him? For sure she would have lost a lot!

Let's see what she did: with all humility, love and confidence she talked to Him about her need of the crumbs. What did she mean by crumbs? She was needy for a lot of things but in that instance she left everything to God's will and as He permits, even in the simple things. She didn't ask for all the blessings prepared for the people of God.

What was the result of this calm conversation which was full of humility, confidence and faith. Let's open the Holy Bible and see the result of this conversation...

"Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour." (Matthew 15:28).

With God, we should: speak to Him all the time with a way full of love, confessing that He came down and saved us by His blood. We should ask Him with all confidence because He can do anything no matter what my sins are, because He accepted the Canaanite woman even though she was not of God's people.

With people, we should:

- Choose the right time to talk.
- Not interrupt while someone is speaking.
- Choose decent words which respects our elders and shows sympathy for those younger.
- Talk with an acceptable voice; not too high or low.
- Not nag, rather wait politely.

We have to persist with Him until we receive the blessing, to help us and strengthen us to repent. Pray to Him and ask from Him because He is gracious, and we have confidence that no matter how sinful we are, Christ came for us.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- What was the Canaanite woman's request from the Lord Jesus?
- Did Our Lord Jesus refuse the Canaanite woman because she is not from the people of God?
- Does God love all people, believers and non-believers?
- Did Jesus Christ practice calm and decent conversation with others like the Samaritan?
- Do we ask from God during our prayers to learn from His conversations with others?



Exercise

- The servant makes a deal with the kids to add a phrase to their requests so they are more polite, for example "excuse me" or "please" or any sentence or phrase the servant feels they need to use in their communication with others.
- Use an arrow prayer when you feel like you are getting angry: "My Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me - My Lord Jesus Christ help me", in order to realise that God is the One who helps us and protects us and listens to our continuous requests.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

O My Lord Jesus, O You who teaches us and guides us! Grant us, O God, to enjoy our conversations with You! Help me to speak to others with love and respect, and to reflect Your image in my behaviour. O my dear Lord, please strengthen me and lead me. Amen.



Be Strong and of Good Courage

Introduction to the Book of Joshua

Bible References: Joshua

Lesson Aim:

To understand that God's help strengthens us and gives us confidence.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The general view of the Book of Joshua and how God helped him.

Feel: The strength of God which protects us.

Practice: To ask for God's strength always.

Memory Verse:

"No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you."

(Joshua 1:5)



Background Information for the Servant

The author of this Book is Joshua the son of Nun. He was firstly called Hoshea, and Moses called him Joshua. At first, he was Moses' servant, then he called him to lead the army and fight the Amalekites. Moses anointed him a successor to lead the people and he gave him a last piece of advice, which is to be strong and of good courage and to walk in the way of God.

The Contents of the Book of Joshua

The book has 24 chapters, which can be divided according to its contents into:

- The victories that are achieved by Joshua's in the land of Canaan.
- Dividing the lands among the tribes.
- Instructions and advice of Joshua and the end of his life.

The First Part (Chapters 1-12):

God gave Joshua the responsibility of leading the people after the death of Moses to cross the Jordan river and take possession of the land of Canaan. Moses commanded Joshua to hold unto the holy law and to do according to it; "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." (Joshua 1:8). Thus we can say that the word of God is the weapon of every servant.

The people prepared to cross the River Jordan. In chapter 2, Joshua sent two spies to Jericho. They went and entered the house of Rahab the harlot who proclaimed her faith by the strength of the Living God and asked them to spare her and her family from death when they enter Jericho. The two spies asked her to tie scarlet-coloured cord in the window so that it would be a clear sign, and no one will intrude her house. Here the scarlet represents the blood of Christ; without bloodshed there is no forgiveness and redemption.

The people crossed the River Jordan. The river was too deep, but God dried it for Joshua and the children of Israel to cross. They took from it twelve stones as a remembrance for the people. Following this, in chapter 6, the collapse of Jericho took place.

In chapter 7, the children of Israel were defeated at the city of Ai, because of the unrighteousness committed by Achan, the son of Carmi, of the tribe of Judah. It is because of such people King Solomon said: "Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines" (Song of Solomon 2:15).

Chapter 8 talks about the fall of Ai: After Achan repented, the Lord was with the children of Israel, and they were able to take Ai. While they were fighting, Joshua stretched out a spear that was in his hand toward the city of Ai as the Lord had commanded him, and the people utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. This is an image of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ in which there is salvation and deliverance. Joshua then built an altar to the Lord in the Land of Canaan.

Finally, chapters 9 and 10 talks about the deception of the Gibeonites, and conspiracy of the five kings.

The Second Part (Chapters 13-22):

These chapters talk about how the Land of Canaan was divided amongst the tribes of Israel, which was done by casting lots. Each tribe was pleased with their inheritance.

The Third Part (Chapters 23-24):

When Joshua became old, he gathered all the people at Shechem and reminded them of all the works that God did for them. He commanded them to fear the Lord and serve Him with sincerity, and warned against worshipping foreign gods, lest they be deprived of the land that was given them. Then Joshua said to them: "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15), so the people showed their readiness for worshipping the Lord.

Joshua wrote the words of the holy covenant in the Book of the Law. He took a large stone and set it up to be witness to their words and then Joshua died being one hundred and ten years old and leading the people with honesty and righteousness.

Joshua as a Symbol for the Lord Jesus Christ:

- Joshua shares his name with the Lord Jesus' name, which means "Yahweh is salvation".
- Joshua defeated the enemies of the people who were pagans, and the Lord Jesus defeated the world and gave the victory to the believers.
- Joshua was an ideal shepherd and the Lord Jesus was the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep.
- God gave us the freedom, and it's possible for a human to choose for themselves the track of obedience or the track of disobedience and this appears also from the final words of Joshua. God's promises for the people was conditioned by their walk in His way, so if they abandoned Him, His promises will be less for them.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Exploration

Equipment: A cup of water, an empty plate, black pepper and some washing up liquid.

Get a cup filled with water and put it on a plate and put black pepper on the water, put your finger in the water and notice the nothing happens. Then try again but after putting washing up liquid on your finger. You will notice that the black pepper will move away from your finger. Joshua was the same, he was filled with God's strength which pushes away the evil.

Lesson Content

The servant gives an explanation of the Book of Joshua using the following points:

Chapter 1: "Joshua", which means "Yahweh is salvation", led the people of God after the death of Moses the Prophet. The book starts with handing over the leadership to Joshua and fighting the Canaanites.

Chapter 2: Joshua sent two spies to Jericho. They went and entered the house of Rahab the harlot who proclaimed her faith by the strength of the Living God and asked them to spare her and her family from death when they enter Jericho.

Chapters 3-5: Joshua and the people crossing the River Jordan while carrying the Ark of Covenant of the Lord, and taking 12 stones from the river as a remembrance for their crossing the river.

Chapter 6: The collapse of the walls of Jericho by going around it for seven days and at the seventh day they went around it seven times, after which the wall collapsed by the Divine power.

Chapters 7-8: The people were defeated at the city of Ai. This was because Achan the son of Carmi sinned against the Lord by taking some of the livestock of Jericho of which God said not to take. When Achan repented, they conquered Ai.

Chapters 9-12: The people of Gibeon visit the Israelite camp in disguise, claiming to be travellers in the land and requesting peace with Israel. Joshua does not inquire with God and makes a hasty treaty with the men, only to discover later that the Gibeonites are natives of the land to be conquered. The Israelites refrain from attacking the city, but five other local kings attack Gibeon for making peace with Israel. The Israelites come to Gibeon's aid and destroy the five armies. Joshua helps by commanding God to make the sun stand still during the fight. God listens and stops the sun's movement.

Chapters 13-22: Joshua divided the lands between the tribes. The tribe of Levi is the tribe of priesthood and the service of the Tabernacle, so they have no inheritance in the lands. The tribe of Joseph has two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim.

Chapters 23-24: Joshua gathered the people and reminded them of what has happened from the exodus of the people from Egypt and God's works with them, and their role of obeying God's commandments. Then Joshua died at 110 years. Joshua remained confident, till the end of his life, that his victory was by God's strength and work, with a condition that he kept the commandments. So, no one could stand before him all the days of his life

Application



Bible Verse Memorisation

Memory Verse: "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:5).

Method of Memorisation: Write the verse on a board with missing words. The words are put under the chairs of the children and when they find them, they go and put it in its place on the board to complete the verse.



Game

Get the children to form a circle and choose a child to step outside of the circle. The children in the circle decide on a leader and the child outside the circle shouldn't know who the leader is. The child outside of the circle then moves to the centre of the circle. The leader begins an action that the other children in the circle should copy and the child in the middle tries to work out who the leader is. Open a discussion about who is our leader? How we should follow His steps? "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (1 John 2:6)



Comprehension Questions

- How did Joshua solve the problem of Jericho?
- Who was Joshua listening to?
- How did Joshua face Ai's problem?
- How many kings made an agreement against Joshua? What was Joshua's reaction to the kings?
- What was Joshua's job before leading the people?
- What is the name of the river which they crossed? How did they cross it?
- What did Joshua do with the stone?



Exercise

- When we open our eyes in the morning, we should ask for God's help and strength to do whatever is asked of us. Before we sleep, we should thank God for His strength that helped us throughout the whole day.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

We thank You, our Lord Jesus Christ, that You are our leader who looks after us and whom we follow. Our Lord, we trust in Your strength and Your help for us. Amen.



Personalities from the Old Testament

David was Chosen by God to Serve

Bible References: 1 Samuel 16:4-13

Lesson Aim:

To study the life of David with God. In this lesson, we learn that God looks at the heart of the person not his appearance. This is the reverse of what the world does.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: God looks at the heart rather than the appearance of a person.

Feel: God's love for us because of our heart, rather than our outward appearance.

Practice: Not judging others by their appearance and appreciating their heart.

Memory Verse:

"For I have provided Myself a king among his sons."
(1 Samuel 16:1)



Background Information for the Servant

The Shepherd King

The prophet Samuel anointed Saul to become the first king of Israel. But Saul was not faithful to the responsibilities which God gave him and he did not obey God's commandments.

God sent Samuel, his prophet, to bring a new King. Samuel came to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem and saw his sons, one after the other, but none of the seven pleased God. Then he asked Jesse if he had other sons. There was only the youngest, who was with the sheep in the fields. Samuel asked to see him.

The young shepherd, David, came in and God said to Samuel: "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" (1 Samuel 16:12). Samuel poured oil on David's head from his horn in the midst of his brothers and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from then on. God was pleased with David because his heart was pure and he followed the ways of God, as God says: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." (Acts 13:22).

Lesson Content

God Chose David

The people of Israel were affected by their neighbours and asked prophet Samuel to appoint a king for them. They selected a king called Saul and the prophet came and anointed him with the holy oil. He advised him to follow God's commandments. Saul was the first king of Israel, but he did not keep his promise to God and did not follow His commandments, so the spirit of God left him. God asked the prophet Samuel to go and select another king from Bethlehem from the house of Jesse. With the guidance of God, Samuel chose David, the youngest of all the sons of Jesse. The spirit of God came upon David and blessed him after Prophet Samuel anointed him. God chose David from among his brothers, although he was the youngest and was not even invited to attend the celebration when Prophet Samuel visited his father's house. Why? God looked at David's heart and found him to be good for God to work with.

David the Shepherd

David was a shepherd; he was looking after his father's sheep. Many of the prophets who were chosen by God were shepherds; for example, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Shepherds usually have special characteristics of kindness, courage, and patience staying up late to look after the sheep. Those are the same qualities that are required from a leader.

David the Singer

David was well known for his talents in playing music and writing songs that praise the Lord. Some of his very popular psalms are: Psalms 93, Psalms 103 and many more. The servant should explain these two Psalms to the children. In our church we sing the Psalms of David. St James said, "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms." (James 5:13).

Application



Exercise

- God told Samuel not to look at the appearance in his selection of a new king for Israel. Today too, God looks at our hearts. Let us keep our hearts clean. The world looks at external appearances, but God looks at the heart (the feeling and thoughts of the individual). Let us also not judge people.



The Life of St Matthew

Book References:

- HH Pope Shenouda III, "Words of Spiritual Benefit - Vol I"

Lesson Aim:

To learn that when we love God, we will be ready to give up all materialistic things for His sake. As God called Levi to become His Disciple, He is also calling every one of us to follow Him.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: Our worldly life is temporary and we should be focused on the everlasting life.

Feel: Keenness to be with Christ for eternity.

Practice: Making sacrifices to bear our own Cross and live for Christ.

Memory Verse:

"As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him."

(Matthew 9:9)



Background Information for the Servant

'Your Eternity' by HH Pope Shenouda III

Most people think only of their lives on earth, all their wishes are concentrated on this earthly life. All their efforts and struggle are for its sake, but as for their eternity, perhaps they never think of it. Your whole life on earth is not even worth a twinkle of an eye, if compared with endless eternity. Your life on earth is just the preparation for such an eternity: the immortal life.

Perhaps sticking to worldly honour makes you lose all the respect that the saints receive in the everlasting glory. Nevertheless, you still stick to this worldly honour and sacrifice your eternity, as if you do not care! Perhaps your sticking to some of the temporary or passing worldly pleasures deprives you of eternal happiness. Therefore, you have to be convinced with the importance of eternity, put it always in front of your eyes. Everything becomes of small value compared to it.

How wonderful is the saying of the Apostle, St Paul, to the Corinthians: "While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18). Truly, in this view, the main difference between a wise person and an ignorant person is quite clear: the ignorant is short sighted, his look does not proceed beyond the visible things. But the wise person looks far beyond, even to after death and keeps thinking: What will become of me after I take off this body? Where shall I go? What shall I be? And you, brother, with what are you busy? Where did you leave your heart? Here or there? For where your heart is, there your treasures will be also.

The wise feel they are strangers on earth and do not concentrate their hopes on earth, but they wait "for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10). He who gives importance to his eternity is raised above the earth and all earthly things. Nothing in this world attracts him. The whole world is behind him and not in front of him.

St Matthew

St Matthew is known by two names: Levi and by St Matthew the son of Alphaeus. It is probable that Levi was his original name and that he took, or was given the name, Matthew (meaning "the gift of Yahweh") when he became a follower of our Lord. He seems to have been a Galilean by birth, and was by profession a publican or gatherer of taxes for the Romans, a profession which was not liked by the Jews, especially the Pharisees; they were generally very greedy and extortionate that they were no more popular among the Gentiles. The Jews abhorred them to the extent that they refused to marry into a family that had a publican among its members, banished them from communion in religious worship, and shunned them in all affairs of civil society and commerce. However, it is certain that St Matthew was a Jew as well as a publican.

The Story of St Matthew's call is told in his own gospel. Jesus had just shocked and surprised some of the Scribes and Pharisees by curing a man who was sick with palsy. Passing on, He saw the despised publican in his tax office. "And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So [St Matthew] arose and followed Him." (Matthew 9:9). Matthew left all his interests and relations to become our Lord's Disciple and to embrace a spiritual life. We cannot assume that he was not totally acquainted with our Saviour's person or doctrine, especially as his office was at Capernaum, where he had resided for some time and where our Saviour had preached and wrought many miracles, which no doubt had an influence upon him. However, the great cause of his conversion was, as Venerable Bede's remarks, "He who called him outwardly by His word at the same time moved him inwardly by the invisible instinct of His grace." The calling of St Matthew happened in the second year of the public ministry of Christ, who adopted him into the holy family of the Apostles, whom are the spiritual leaders of His Church.

Lesson Content

What's your favourite activity? What would you do if the Lord Jesus came and called you during your favourite activity?

Our church celebrates the feast of the martyrdom of St Matthew on Baba 12 (around October 22). His name was Levi and he became one of the 12 Disciples. He followed Jesus and left everything. Can we give up something we like because of our love for Jesus? Can we stop playing to pray? Can we save some money for the poor?

Levi was his old name and he became St Matthew because he loved Jesus and gave up a lot for him and our Lord Jesus Christ has given him a new life, along with his new name. St Matthew's new life is much happier as he is with Christ for eternity.

St Matthew wrote the Gospel according to St Matthew that we read in our Bible. He preached in the land of Palestine and Tyre and Sidon. Then he went to Ethiopia. In Ethiopia he entered the city of the priests who worshipped idols. He taught them about Jesus and convinced them that He is the true God. While he was preaching to them a table came from heaven and a great light appeared with it. They believed in Christ and he baptised them. One time the son of the Governor of a city in Ethiopia died and St Matthew prayed for him and gave him life again.

After he had preached in other countries, he went back to Jerusalem. Some of the Jews which had been preached to, and had believed and been baptised by him, asked him to write down what he had preached to them. He wrote the beginning of the Gospel attributed to him in the Hebrew language but he did not complete it. It was said that he finished it during his preaching in India, in the first year of the reign of Claudius and the ninth year of the Ascension. His martyrdom was consummated by stoning by the hands of Justus the Governor, and his body was buried in Carthage of Caesarea by some believers, in a holy place.

St Anthony the Great also gave up all his possessions to the poor for the sake of God and to concentrate on the life of prayer. He became the first monk.

May the prayers of St Matthew be with us all. Amen.

Application



Exercise

- I will follow Jesus and give up some of my comforts, some of my toys and I will also help my parents in doing the housework, even if they do not ask for my help, as I must carry the Cross after Jesus.
- We are also called by Our Lord Jesus to become Christ-like and be able to attract others to become Christians.



When It Comes to God, Do Not Say “How?” as Zacharias Did

Bible References: Luke 1:5-25

Lesson Aim:

We must trust the promises of God and not question Him; understand that when the Lord Jesus came He fulfilled His promise and that God has His own way.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: God has His own way that surpasses our understanding.

Feel: Trust for God's plan in your life.

Practice: Putting your faith in God in every condition.

Memory Verse:

“For he will be great in the sight of the Lord.”
(Luke 1:15)



Lesson Content

Please read Luke 1:5-25 from the Bible, and explain it to the children as you go along.

Describe the conditions in which St John was born to the children. His parents were too old to have a son, but they kept praying. God promised that when we pray in faith, He will give us what we need and much more. Remember that God is our heavenly Father who loves us very much. We must trust God's promises and always pray with faith.

Archangel Gabriel appeared in the Altar. He was shining and brought good news, but Zacharias was afraid. Zacharias remained silent because he did not believe the message of God. He could not comprehend God's love and instead questioned Him. What God was about to do was above Zacharias' understanding -that is why he questioned Him.

Ask the children to list what they know about St John the Baptist from what is mentioned in Luke 1:5-25 concerning his life, his personality and his role. Explain that before the Lord Jesus came, St John the Baptist told the people that Jesus is God incarnate, the Lamb of God and the Saviour. This was the job of St John the Baptist: to tell people about Christ.

Ask the children what they would like to do when they grow up? Would any of them like to be involved in the church to serve God? Remind them that even if we do not understand what the Bible is teaching us, we must trust God, obey God and say no to the devil. As we grow older, we shall understand more.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God promised them that He would save them again. Many centuries passed by, but God's promise held true. Let us be happy these days. Why? Well, it is nearly Christmas. What is the main purpose of this occasion? The main purpose is the birth of Jesus Christ; we celebrate this because He came to save us.

Application



Exercise

- As God fulfilled His promise, we must also fulfil our promises to our parents, friends and all people. Let us only question the devil. Never question God Who loves us.
- When we pray, let us only submit our requests to God and not question Him. God has His ways which are above our understanding.



Let us be Obedient

The Birth of the Lord Jesus was Announced

Bible References: Luke 1:26-38

Lesson Aim:

To let the children rejoice for this joyful news and know these events by heart.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The saints were all obedient, most of all the Virgin Mary.

Feel: Happy to follow God's commandments.

Practice: Obeying God; and listening to your parents, teachers and father of confession.

Memory Verse:

"Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord!' " (Luke 1:38)



Lesson Content

Start by reviewing the story of the birth of St John the Baptist. The children will notice that the conversation between the Angel and Zacharias was different from the one with the Virgin Mary.

When the Angel greeted the Virgin Mary, she was very surprised. Whereas Zacharias did not believe the message of the Angel, the Virgin Mary believed and obeyed.

Ask the children to talk about the main characteristics of the Virgin Mary: simplicity, like when she said "let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38); humility; and obedience like when she said "behold the maidservant of the Lord!" (Luke 1:38).

Discuss: What is the meaning of the word 'obedience'? It means that we should follow God's word, even if we don't understand it now. Similarly, we have to obey our parents, teachers and father of confession. When we do so, we are winners.

The Holy Spirit granted the Virgin Mary the greatest gift. She gave birth to a child who is the Holy one. He is the Son of God. This happened because of God's love for her and her obedience to Him. As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit who can work in us and give us great gifts, but we must be obedient as St Mary was.

What are things that make us happy? Is it more toys? Is it more food? Is it more clothes? What should make us rejoice? It must be true peace and to share in the eternal life. This can only be obtained from our faith and life with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Application



Exercise

- Let us be happy and rejoice these days as we prepare for Christmas.
- Let us sing the hymns of the month of Kiahk with the church that remind us of the Virgin Mary's obedience.



St Mary the Servant and Mother of God

Bible References: Luke 1:39-56

Lesson Aim:

To show that we must take the initiative to serve others and be good to them.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: How St Mary loved to serve others.

Feel: Eagerness to serve others, as by serving others you are serving Christ.

Practice: Helping others in your daily life, like your parents and your church.

Memory Verse:

"And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house."
(Luke 1:56)



Lesson Content

Please start by initially reviewing with the children all that they know about St Mary, the Mother of God and her help to St Elizabeth. Then let the children read Luke 1:39-56 and explain as you go along. St Mary went into the hill country with haste to serve St Elizabeth by her own initiative. St Elizabeth was a very old lady and was pregnant. How did St Mary serve St Elizabeth? Ask the children to think of all the housework she might have done. We too have to help others especially around our own house or apartment.

After St Mary served St Elizabeth for three months, she went back to her home and did not attend the party of St John's birth. She refused to be praised. We too must serve without asking or expecting any reward. As St Mary refused any praise from people, God rewarded her handsomely:

- The Lord glorified St Mary and gave her the title, "Mother of God."
- The Angel cheerfully greeted her.
- St Elizabeth greeted her and received her in her house with joy.
- St John the Baptist jumped for joy and was filled with the Holy Spirit inside Elizabeth's womb when St Mary arrived.
- St Joseph honoured St Mary and supported her as the Angel asked him to.
- All generations call St Mary blessed.
- When St Mary departed from this world, the Angels took her body away to Heaven.
- St Mary performs many miracles through her prayers to God.

With all this glory in St Mary's life, she was a servant of God. Even the Lord Jesus Himself did not come to be served but to serve others and die on the Cross to save us. When we serve others, we should help the needy and the elderly in order for us to follow the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Mother St Mary.

Application



Exercise

- Take the initiative to help others at home, school and in the church.
- As St Mary refused any praise from people, God rewarded her very well. We too, when we do something good to others, we must thank God and wait for His heavenly rewards rather than earthly praise.



Birth of Christ

Why did God Incarnate?

Bible References: Luke 1:26-38

Book References:

- HG Bishop Moussa, "Questions on the Incarnation"
- HG Bishop Mettaous, "Certainty of the Divine Incarnation"

Lesson Aim:

Why did God incarnate? Because of His fatherly love.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: Why God incarnated.

Feel: God's abundant love in his plan for our salvation.

Practice: Keeping a diary each day of God's blessings and His love.

Memory Verse:

"Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh."
(1 Timothy 3:16)



Background Information for the Servant

When a great king enters a city and stays in one of its houses, the city is held in high regard by other, and its enemies no longer attack it, all because of the king's residence in a single house there. So it is with the King of all; He has come to our realm and made His home in one body among His fellow people. As a consequence the whole conspiracy of the enemy against mankind was foiled and the corruption of death, which previously overcame them is finished. The human race would have gone to ruin if the Lord and Saviour of all, the Son of God, had not come among us to meet the end of death. (St Athanasius)

The meaning of "God incarnate" is that the unseen God took for Himself flesh of our human nature, and the meaning of "God became man" is that the unseen God became human like us and was made like us in everything except for sin alone. The unseen God became seen in the person of the Lord Jesus who dwelt among us, and the Holy Bible says: "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." (John 1:14) And when He dwelt among us, we dealt with Him tangibly, and St John the Beloved witnesses to this in his epistle: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life." (1 John 1:1) God has come down to the level of our sense and awareness and dwelt among us in a visible way and revealed Divine secrets because: "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." (John 1:18)

From the blessings of the Incarnation:

- We taste the salvation of humanity;
- We experience renewal and blessing of the human nature;
- We are adopted to God;
- We know God;
- The dignity of humanity is returned.

The blessing of Christmas revolves around the phrase "Emmanuel" which means "God with us". So, if you feel that you are with God, and that God is with you, then you have indeed enjoyed the blessing of Christmas.

The continuous feeling of God's presence with me in all my works and movements is a true sign of the Divine Incarnation, and that our deeds and our very movements are done in Him: "For in Him we live and move and have our being," (Acts 17:28). (Fr Bishoy Kamel)

God doesn't want anything from you except your heart in which to dwell; never think that God wants anything from you other than that. If you tell Him: "Oh God, I will give all my money to the poor," He will reply: "My dear, I want your heart, I want to dwell inside you." If you tell Him: "Oh God, I will fast," He will reply: "I want your heart." If you tell him: "I will pray all night," He will reply: "If you prayed all night and didn't give me your heart, your prayers would be of no use." (Pope Shenouda III)

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Exploration

Get an icon or a picture of a saint and ask the children: "If something dropped on this icon/picture and deformed it completely, what would you do?" Discuss their answers.

The best answer is: go to the artist who painted this picture in the first place, as he is the only one who is able to fix it in the right way.

God created us in His image and likeness. When Adam and Eve fell and their image was deformed, God came to us Himself to restore our image to its original form without destroying humanity or creating a new humanity.

Lesson Content

A king had a Christian minister who was honest, faithful, rational and mindful. That's why the king always used to sit with him and ask him for advice.

One day while they were discussing together, the minister said: "Jesus came from heaven to save us."

The king told him: "If I want to fulfil a mission, then I order one of my servants to carry out specific tasks to accomplish this mission, without even having to move and tire myself. So why would God Himself who possesses power to save the world with one word, come and take flesh from a virgin and be born in a lowly manger amongst animals, suffer and be crucified?"

The minister asked the king to give him three days to answer his question.

So, the minister went to a master sculptor, and asked him to create a life-size wooden statue of the two-year-old son of the king. He took the statue and went secretly to the servant responsible for looking after the young prince and talked with him in the gardens of the palace.

The minister said to the servant: "Please take this statue and dress it with the prince's clothes, then put it in a small royal carriage. The king and I will walk around the palace gardens tomorrow evening at 5pm; when I raise up my left hand, overturn the carriage and drop the wooden statue in the lake. Do so without fear of punishment."

Indeed, the next day at 5pm, the king was talking with his Christian minister beside the lake. The king asked his minister to answer the question he posed to him three days ago. At that moment, as the servant was pushing the royal carriage which had the statue of the small prince sitting in it, the minister raised his left hand.

So, the servant overturned the carriage and the statue fell into the water.

The king, thinking that it was really his son, the prince, couldn't hold himself back, ran quickly to the lake and threw himself into the water to rescue his son from drowning. However, he quickly found out that what fell into the water was just a statue, not really his son. He was surprised and questioned the servant angrily.

The minister calmed the king down, saying: "All of this was done by my instruction and planning." But then the minister asked him: "Why, your majesty, didn't you order me or any one of the servants to go down to the lake to save your son from drowning?"

The king answered: "I was too overcome by fatherly love; I could not bear to delay saving my son by ordering someone else to save him and putting his fate in their hands."

Then the minister told him: "This is my answer to your question; "God loves us more than the love of a father to his children. That's why He came down to Earth, was born in a lowly manger, suffered, was crucified, and arose from the dead, all in order to save us. No one could have accomplished this mission of our salvation except Him.

God incarnated, which means He took the body of a human: "**And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.**" (**Philippians 2:8**)

That's why Christ came; God was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became like us in everything except for sin alone.

By the Incarnation:

- Christ abolished death by the cross, and so humanity was saved from death.
- Human nature was renewed and blessed. By baptism we receive this new nature, and by chrismation we receive the Holy Spirit inside us. Indeed, we sin after baptism, but there is a difference between the one who sins before baptism and the one who sins after it. The one who sins after being baptised will feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and his spirit refuses the sin and can prevail against it.
- We receive adoption to sonship of the Father, "who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (**Ephesians 1:3**)

Our Lord Jesus loved us with great love, that's why He left His glory and went down to Earth and accepted to be born in a lowly manger and to endure suffering and lashings and death in order to save us. That's how much God loves us. But do we also love him very much?

Application



Comprehension Questions

- What requirements did the Saviour need to have to save mankind?
- Why did God need to Incarnate as a human to save us?
- Why did the king throw himself into the water?
- What are the blessings we received from the Incarnation?



Exercise

- Every night we should sit in a quiet place and write what blessings God gave us throughout the day (e.g. He gave me a new day as a chance to get closer to Him, He led me in a certain situation, etc.)
- What did I offer to God this day? (Even if I'm busy, my heart would always remember Him throughout the day; I would follow His commandments; I would help someone, even just by offering that person a smile...)



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

My Lord Jesus Christ, my Good Lord, I thank You for Your love which is indescribable.

Thank You that You always take care of me and my salvation.

Thank You that You came O God and took flesh to save me from sin.

Thank You, O God, because when You incarnated, You made me feel that You are closer to me and You feel my weaknesses. Please God make my body and thoughts holy for You. Teach me to thank You and be joyful with Your incarnation, because it is the greatest gift.



God does not Leave Himself without Witnesses

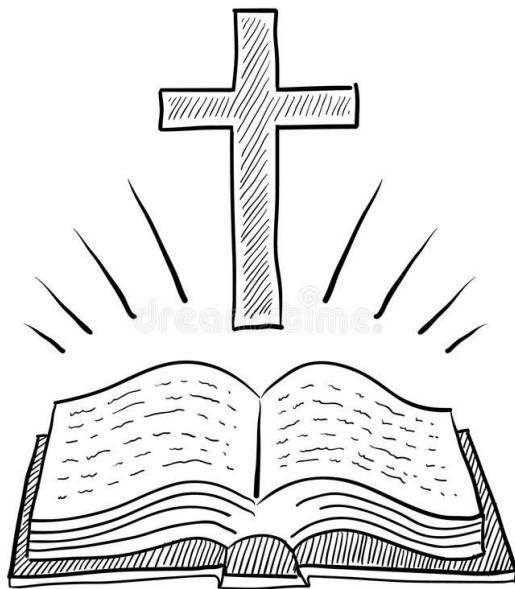
Bible References: Matthew 2:1-12

Lesson Aim:

To show if we can be as good of witnesses for Our Lord Jesus Christ as Christians who saw Him during the time of His birth?

Memory Verse:

"He did not leave Himself without witness."
(Acts 14:17)



Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Discussion

Review some of those good witnesses with the children.

Note: Please tell each story briefly.

St. Mary Please read—Luke 1:35

St. John the Baptist—Luke 1:15

St. Zechariah and St. Elizabeth—Luke 1:6

St. Joseph the carpenter—Matthew 1:19

St. Simon the old man Luke 2:25

Prophetess Anna— Luke 2:36-39

The shepherds— Luke 2:8-20 (Tell the story in detail.)

The Wise Men—Matthew 2:1-12 (Tell the story in detail.)

Lesson Content

When we review the events during the birth of Our Lord Jesus, we can learn many things. One of the things we can learn is that while the majority of the people at the time of Jesus' birth were living in the darkness of sin, there were some people who were good. This is why it was said about the years of Jesus' coming: "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John 1:5)

Before the coming of our Lord Jesus to the world (i.e. in the Old Testament), the world was living a very corrupt life. Yet God did not leave Himself without witnesses. There were many examples: Moses, David, Elijah...etc.

Through those small number of witnesses mentioned in the 'Discussion', including the Disciples of the Lord; Christianity spread in the whole world and it became the largest religion.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- Even though we may see many people who do not believe in the Lord Jesus, we must show our belief through our behaviour. As good Christians, we should not shout, lie, or hit, and should be kind to other people even if they do bad things to us. This way we show our Christianity in our daily lives. This is the meaning of being a witness.
- Being a witness of Christ has a very large effect in spreading Christianity all over the world. Please do not think it has a small effect.



The Second Birth

The Sacrament of Baptism

Bible References: Matthew 3:13, Colossians 2:12, 1 Peter 3:21

Book References:

- HH Pope Shenouda, "The Heresy of Salvation in a Moment"
- Fr Tadros Yacoub Malaty, "The Holy Spirit: The New Birth and Constant Renewal"
- Fr Dawood Lamey, "Explanation of the Seven Church Sacraments"

Lesson Aim:

Explain the rite of Baptism.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The sacrament of baptism and Biblical references to this great sacrament.

Feel: The blessings of Baptism.

Practice: Keeping the blessings of Baptism by practising the sacrament of repentance and confession.

Memory Verse:

"But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."
(1 Corinthians 6:11)



Background Information for the Servant

In Baptism we receive salvation, forgiveness, washing of our sins and renewal. In it we are buried with Christ; we die with Him to be raised up with Him. We have become in baptism children of God and have become members of the body of Christ. Moreover, as St Paul the Apostle says: "For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:27)

We have died with Christ and have been raised up. Our old man that has been judged for death has died, and a new man has been raised up with the restored image and likeness of God, but we still sin after baptism. Baptism has granted us renewal in our nature, but it didn't grant us Infallibility. A baptised person has become a new man, but he is a free man, and with freedom he can sin. The grace of renewal which we have received in baptism, doesn't take away from us the grace of freedom which we have been granted as a result of being made in the image and likeness of God, raising the esteem of humanity. The new nature we receive from baptism is a pure nature, although it is susceptible to sin. The same is true of Adam's nature before the fall. But without doubt, there is a difference between one who sins before baptism whose life is in evil, and one who sins after baptism. The latter is convicted by the Holy Spirit and by his conscience, and his spirit refuses sin and he can have victory over it. However, the Holy Spirit who is in us doesn't compel us to do good, neither does He prevent us from committing sin. Rather, He guides us and strengthens us, and convicts us of sin. We have been given free will, so if we use this free will unwisely, we may fall into sin.

You might say: "All my sins have been carried by Christ on the cross!" But which sins has Christ carried? To be totally honest, you need to know that Christ doesn't carry any sin except that from which you have repented; as He Himself says: "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3) And the Bible also says: "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4) Repentance is not something that is done in a moment, but it is something we continue to do throughout our lives for every sin we commit.

St Basil the Great talks about the action of the Holy Spirit in us, saying: "The Holy Spirit is present as a whole to each and wholly present everywhere. He is portioned out impassably and participated in as a whole. He is like a sunbeam whose grace is present to the one who enjoys Him as if He were present to such a one alone, and still He illuminates land and sea and is mixed with the air. Just so, indeed, the Spirit is present to each one who is fit to receive Him, as if He were present to him alone, and still He sends out His grace that is complete and sufficient for all. The things that participate in Him enjoy Him to the extent that their nature allows, not to the extent that His power allows."

St John Chrysostom elaborates on our role in the life of holiness by differentiating between two types of death. The first death is a spiritual death that is given to us as a Divine grace in the waters of baptism without any effort on our part and through which we emerge with a renewed nature and holiness. The second death is a physical death, and is also a Divine grace from the Holy Spirit given to us irrespective of our desire for it; and so we must continuously persevere in the life of holiness.

Our holy forefathers strived to keep the holy white garment of Baptism through Divine grace which became ours. This is what caused the fathers of the church to instruct us to strive even after baptism: "You who have put on the white garment of baptism, therefore, flee iniquity lest your garment is torn off you. This is what you have been entrusted with. The Son of God has granted you this glorious garment, so do not neglect it, lest it gets dirtied by your sins. Don't devalue the grace that was given to you because it was given to you for free, but rather accept it and treasure with respectfulness."

Lesson Content

Important points on which the servant should focus:

By Baptism we have become:

- Children of God.
- Temples of the Holy Spirit (through the anointing of the Myron).
- Buried and raised with Christ so we took the power of victory over sin.
- Seated with Him in the heavens, so our thought have become heavenly.

Man is born once but repents many times; for this reason, the church believes in the baptism to be once in a lifetime.

A quick introduction about the sacraments:

The sacraments are very important in our church: **Sacrament** in the church doesn't mean it is something we shouldn't know about, but rather it means that God does something we don't see and we will gain a lot from it and it will make us very joyful. It is like a miracle; God does it for us every day at church.

Sacraments are a grace: this means that a sacrament is a gift from God, but it needs a priest to perform it, and it needs a rite (prayers at church) and a substance such as oil, water, bread; the sacrament occurs through one of these substances.

The seven sacraments are: Baptism, Holy Myron, Repentance and Confession, Holy Communion, Unction of the Sick, Marriage, and Priesthood.

In all sacraments there are two important conditions for receiving them, and no one can take them without the following:

- **Faith:** Believing that God performs a miracle.
- **Repentance:** To have repented and to hate the sin from all his heart. And having sinned again, to return back to God, saying "forgive me".

The rite of Baptism:

When a child is born, God grants him to be born again from heaven, which means through the water and the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of Baptism.

The basin of baptism is a big basin, and in it there is water. We pray the liturgy of baptism and Abouna immerses the child into the water three times in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Liturgy of Baptism starts by Abouna praying for the mother and giving her absolution (prayer for God to forgive her all her sins). He then prays for the child, so that any attacks of the devil against him/her may cease. Following this, Abouna anoints the mother and her child with an oil called Simple Oil, or Apocalypse Oil.

The term of Simple Oil means normal oil or natural oil without any prayers upon it (most probably it is the same oil that is used in the Apocalypse Service on Bright Saturday). Then his father and mother confess their faith on behalf of the baby, until he grows up and can confess his/her faith in every liturgy when he says the Creed (We believe in one God...).

The person responsible for raising him in God's ways, teaching him how to pray and read the Bible is his/her father and mother. And the one who is responsible in teaching the child the Christian faith is called the Godparent.

His mother and father and anyone who is going to raise him will stand to confess the faith. But before that they must do a prayer called "Renouncing of Satan" which means they say to Satan that we don't want you, get away from our family, like what Jesus Christ said to him: "Get away from Me, Satan." We belong to God and will keep the faith all our life.

After that, Abouna anoints him with oil called "Ghaliloun Oil" which means "Oil of Joy", so that the baptised person may live joyfully with God all his life until s/he goes to Heaven.

After that he gets undressed to be immersed three times in the water. This is to say that the one being immersed dies and is buried with our Lord Jesus and is then raised up again with Him. So s/he becomes:

- A new man
- A son of God
- Born from above
- Christ-like

After baptism, the child receives the sacrament of Holy Myron, in which s/he receives the Holy Spirit. Abouna holds the Myron oil and asks the Holy Spirit to bless the child. He then anoints each part of his/her body: head, ears, eyes, back and stomach, hands and legs, in order for his/her whole body to be consecrated for God. This is similar to the consecration of an altar, which is anointed with the Holy Myron before we can pray in it.

Then s/he is dressed in white, becoming like an angel. A red ribbon is tied around the child in the shape of cross to remind him/her that s/he became white by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which He shed on the cross.

After that his/her mother prays the liturgy with him/her and both receive Holy Communion together. And since it is the first time for the child to receive Holy Communion, the church makes a procession around the church after the liturgy, because the whole church celebrates the addition of a new member of Christ's Body, whose head is the Lord Jesus to Whom is Glory.

Repentance and Confession: As baptised children grow older, attend church and receive Holy Communion, they will learn that there are things one shouldn't do. So their mother and father, and the church will teach them to stop these bad things. Through the sacrament of repentance and confession they start to pray and ask God to forgive them. Then each one sits with Abouna and tells him the sins that s/he has committed, and that s/he will try his/her best not to do it again. Abouna then gives him/her guidance and prays the absolution on him/her by putting a cross on his/her head, looks up to God and asks Him to forgive him/her for all these sins, for our Lord Jesus is the only One who can lift up all these sins.

Confession makes us very joyful, because we come out as if having just been baptised. That's why the church calls repentance and confession a second baptism, and for sure you know that we can't get baptised more than once, because our Lord Jesus died once and arose from the dead once.

So repentance and confession is exactly like us taking a shower to become clean after we have played a lot and become sweaty.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- Who performs the sacrament of Baptism?
- Why do we get baptised by immersion and not by sprinkling?
- What is a Godparent?
- How many types of oil did we mention?
- How can we continuously look after the sacrament of baptism in our lives?



Exercise

- The child should know the importance of the sacrament of repentance and confession, and to practise it.



Paper Activity

Workshop for the lesson of baptism.

Materials:

- A plastic cup for each of the children.
- A line art picture of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ printed with the same size of the cups.
- A line art picture of a dove.
- Tongue depressors.
- White sheets of paper.
- Colouring pencils, scissors, and glue stick.

Method:

- Colour the picture of the Baptism then cut it and stick it on the cup.
- Fold white paper around the tongue depressor and cut out the picture of the dove and stick it on the tongue depressor.
- Cut out a slot at the bottom of the cup for the tongue depressor to pass through.
- They may also write the verse and stick it on the picture.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

You who were baptised in the Jordan and washed us of our sins, and confirmed us in You by our consecration and sanctification by the dwelling of Your Holy Spirit in us; please God do not forget us. Make our feasts, true feasts of our heart, so that we may be able to meet with You on a personal level in each feast, and delight in your Holy Spirit inside us and with us, O Son of God, so that we may have eternal life with You. Amen.



God is Fair

Bible References: Matthew 13:1-9

Lesson Aim:

To learn that God is fair. He gives equal opportunity to everyone. In return, he wants a fruitful life from everyone.

Memory Verse:

"But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."
(Matthew 13:8)



Lesson Content

Our Lord Jesus spoke in parables to explain certain ideas about the Kingdom of Heaven to the people and make it simple enough for them to understand.

In this parable, the seeds represent the word of God, the land represents the heart of the person who receives the word of God, and the sower represents God who gives His word to us.

God loves everyone and He is fair. When He sends His word, He sends it to all types of people, similar to the sower who puts seeds in all types of land. God gives everyone an equal opportunity. Hence, the usefulness of the Word of God in our lives depends on our approach in receiving the word of God.

Please Discuss: the seeds which fell on the wayside:

When people listen to the word of God and do not understand nor apply it in their life, the devil then comes and picks up all the blessings from their life. In this manner, the birds that came and picked up the seeds represent the devil.

Please Discuss: the seeds, which fell on stony ground:

We have to think of God's love. We have to put the word of God in our hearts. The seeds which fell on stony ground represents people whose hearts are rough, have no feeling or kindness, and who do not think of God's love.

Please Discuss: the seeds, which fell among thorns:

For people who are too involved in the world's activities and do not give time for God. We have to learn to think about heaven, pray, go to church, and participate with others in God's work.

Please Discuss: the seeds, which fell on good ground:

Christians are supposed to have good hearts. God Has given us His spirit to help us lead our lives, understand His word and bring fruits in our lives. But we have to repent and be humble for the Holy Spirit to work in us.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- God loves each one of us and He gives us many gifts and blessings. But God is also fair and wants to see that we are doing well and benefiting from these blessings. This is just fair.
- As Christians, we can lead a very happy life if we maintain our hearts pure through regular repentance and reading of the Holy Scriptures. We have to maintain the purity that we obtained after our Baptism.



The Cross is a Sign of Life

Raising the Son of the Shunammite

Bible References: 2 Kings 4:8-37

Book References:

- Fr Tadros Yacoub Malaty, "Commentary on 2 Kings 4"
- Matthew Henry, "Commentary on 2 Kings 4"
- HG Bishop Youannis, "Christianity and Cross"

Lesson Aim:

To know about the signs and symbols of the Cross in the Old Testament.

Lesson Objectives:

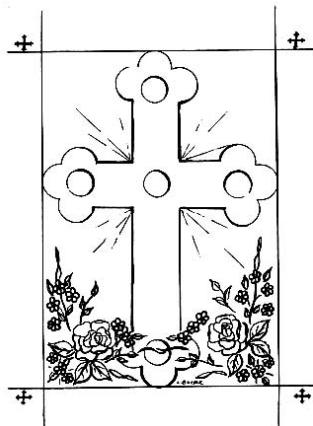
Know: The signs and symbols of the Cross in the Old Testament.

Feel: The extent of God's love to humanity through the plan of His long preparation for our salvation through the Cross.

Practice: To memorise verses of the signs and symbols of the Cross in the Old Testament.

Memory Verse:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."
(John 3:16)



Background Information for the Servant

The Cross is the place of Divine Love to the whole of humanity, in which God showed the peak of His love to us, so He gave His only begotten Son, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

The word "Cross" means every work of salvation that our Lord Jesus completed by His death for our sins, being nailed on the shameful Cross to give us a life of glory and honour.

The word "Cross" also means work of reconciliation, for our Lord reconciled Heaven with Earth, and reconciled the Jews with the Gentiles, but ultimately He reconciled all of mankind to Himself through the blood He shed on the Cross.

The Cross is the sign of victory in which the beloved Son disarmed the evil spiritual powers from having any authority over us, publicly triumphing over them by the Cross, "having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross." (Colossians 2:14-15)

The Cross and Self-sacrifice:

The sign of the cross points to self-sacrifice or complete obedience. So, if we want to strike through or cancel any line, we put an opposite line against that line to be cancelled. So, the Cross in itself proclaims the life of total submission to God.

Christ the Lord in His appearance on the cross was standing. By this, the Lord Jesus wants to tell us to "crucify the body with its illusions and lusts saying: 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.'" (Galatians 2:20)

As there were many prophets who symbolised the Lord Jesus through aspects of their lives, some aspects also pointed to the power of the Cross. For example, the prophet Elijah had strong symbols of the blessings of the Cross: the wood that made the iron to float.

During the time of the prophet Elijah, when they arrived to Jordan, they cut wood, "But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was borrowed." So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float. Therefore he said, "Pick it up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it." (2 Kings 6:5-7) We see here that the stick of wood changed the properties of the iron, and likewise the wood of the Cross changed the sinful human nature which fell in the sea of sin, and the Lord Jesus is the One who rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His love (Colossians 1:13) "knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." (Romans 6:6)

From the sayings of Saint John Saba the Hermit, the spiritual elder, on doing the sign of the Cross:

Before this accursed giant (Satan) gets closer to you, do the sign of the Cross before you, and he will be cast away at that very moment. Through the power of Christ, he becomes ashamed and escapes.

A trusted brother once told me: Whenever I kiss the cross, a star of light shine forth from it onto my face that is both glorious and awesome, and my heart rejoices. And when I stretch out my hand and make its sign in the air or on my body, I look and behold something like a light ingrained in this body, and with these visions an indescribable joy moves in my heart. And when I do the sign of the cross, all the powers of Satan and his works stop, but I also see the Devil getting tortured by the sight of the cross!

From the Fathers' sayings about the power of the cross:

"Through the Cross we are reconciled with God, such that we have become a dwelling of the Holy Spirit (through Baptism, which is death with the Crucified One, and resurrection with Him). And if we have been reconciled with God, by fellowship it becomes for us the life of victory over Satan, for wherever light is found, the dark is extinguished; wherever truth is manifested, vanity is destroyed, and wherever true righteousness is, sin and evil die." (Saint Shenoute the Archimandrite)

"The fathers say that whoever makes the sign of the cross on himself in haste and without care or order, the Devil is happy. But the one who is slow and steady in making the sign of the cross on himself from his head to his abdomen

then from his left shoulder to the right, upon him the power of the cross comes, and the angels are happy with him!"
 (Saint John of Kronstadt)

"The Devil gets scared from the sight of the Cross, even just from the sign made by the hand, for Christ our Lord, to whom is glory, defeated the Devil and all of his powers and principalities on the Cross, and disarmed them from their authorities and exposed them publicly. Then the sign of the cross became a remembrance of their shameful exposure, and a sign of the torture in to which they will be cast."

(Saint John of Kronstadt)

"The Lord Jesus gave us the Cross as a mighty weapon which can penetrate fire, air, water and earth, and nothing can stop it. Its power cannot be resisted, and the devils escape from its sight whenever he gets signed with it! The Cross is a banner of Christ and the angels like the banner of their king and run towards it upon seeing it being signed, to help the one who made this sign."

(Saint Athanasius the Apostolic)

"By the sign of the cross...all magic is stayed, all sorcery confounded, all the idols are abandoned and deserted, and all senseless pleasure ceases, as the eye of faith looks up from Earth to heaven."

(Saint Athanasius the Apostolic)

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Story

Once there was a youth called Samy, and although his name means "high up", he wasn't concerned at all about his eternal life. He had many bad friends, and did very bad things. But he had a good friend called Fady, and he was someone who loved God very much and who remembered all His commandments. Fady had advised Samy on countless occasions, but it seemed to be all in vain.

One day both of them were travelling on a ship and suddenly the ship crashed into a huge rock and began to sink.

The rescue boat arrived and started taking the passengers in stages because of their huge number, and Samy and Fady were left on the ship to be rescued in a later stage.

After several stages, the ship was almost completely submerged, yet there were still many passengers left to rescue, so they cast lots to know who to take onto the rescue boat in what was to be the last stage before the ship completely sinks. The lot fell on Fady but not on Samy.

Samy was frightened of death because of his many sins, so he started crying, and when it was Fady's turn to get on the boat, he refused, and instead made his friend Samy get on it instead of him.

Samy was amazed at what his friend did; how can someone give up his life for another person regardless of how much is his love for him?! But Fady calmed him down from his amazement, saying: "My friend, you get on the boat as I am not afraid of death, because I will meet with God; I am ready and have been waiting for this moment, however you are not ready now. Don't be amazed, as what I am doing now is nothing but a shadow of what Jesus Christ has done with me and with you before."

Tears were falling from Samy's eyes seeing the ship sinking and his friend Fady dying to save him to be able to live, but this time to live in a different way. Samy left his sins and left all his bad friends, and lived in God's fear as he realised that two people died for him.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

Lesson Content

Our lesson today is about one of the men of God in the Old Testament: the great prophet Elijah:

Elijah was passing through a city called Shunem, and in this city there was a very rich and generous woman, and she was preparing food for Elijah as he passed through the city and made him rest at her house from the journey.

Then she told her husband one day, "Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly. Please, let us make for this great prophet a small place with a bed, a chair and a lamp; so it will be, whenever he passes by the city, he can come to rest in this small house." And they indeed set up for him this small house on the roof which they called "Upper Room", and Elijah was resting in it whenever he passed by the city of Shunem.

Elijah wanted to do a favour for this Shunamite woman who was very generous in hosting him, so he asked her if she wants anything. But she answered that she is content with what she has and is already happy and doesn't want anything from the king, and she is happy with her life among her family and her own people, and she is happy with what God has provided for her. But Gehazi, Elijah's servant said to him, "This lady has no son, and her husband is old." So, Elijah ordered him to call this woman to him, and when she came he told her: "About this time next year you will have a son." So, the woman thought that he is not telling the truth and asked him not to lie to her, but indeed the next year she had a son in spite of her husband being old, so she was overjoyed.

Years passed by and the boy grew up, and one day he went to his father who was with the reapers and after a while he started feeling dizzy and shouting, "My head! My head!" and he fell down and passed out. Then his father asked the servants to carry him to his mother. And when the boy arrived to his mother she carried him on her lap and he died. Then his mother carried him and went up to Elijah's upper room and laid him on his bed with calmness and faith. Then she accompanied one of the servants and went to Elijah.

When the man of God knew about her coming, he sent Gehazi to meet her to ask her: "Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?" And the woman answered in strong faith, "It is well." In spite her son died, but she had faith that Elijah would raise her son by the power of God which was with him. When she arrived to Elijah, she fell on his feet and asked for her son, so Elijah sent his servant Gehazi with Elijah's stick to put on the boy, but the woman insisted on Elijah accompanying her, and Gehazi has went on ahead of them but he failed in raising up the child by putting Elijah's stick on him.

Elijah went by himself alone with the boy and kept praying intensely to the Lord, then Elijah went up **and lay (slept) on the child, and put his mouth on the boy's mouth, his eyes on the boy's eyes, and his hands on the boy's hands; so he looked like the Cross stretched out on the child's body**, and indeed the flesh of the child started to become warm. Then Elijah kept walking in the room praying to God and went up again and stretched himself out on the boy; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called his mother then she took her son alive after she fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground thankful and joyful.

Notice with me the signs which this story carries:

- Elijah the prophet laid on the child as a symbol of the Cross, so the boy rising from the dead is a symbol that the cross is a sign of life with which God has saved the whole world from the death of sin and granted us life.
- Elijah the prophet in this event was a symbol for Christ our Lord, to Whom is glory, when He stretched out his arms on the Cross and gave the world life and salvation.
- When the boy was raised from the dead, "he sneezed seven times" then opened his eyes. This symbolises that we live with Christ, and our relationship with Him is lived out through our practising of the church's seven sacraments.

Do you think this is the only event in the Old Testament that carries symbols and signs of the Cross? To know, let's dive in this Biblical trip. Open your Holy Bible and read the following passages: Genesis 22:1-19, Exodus 17:8-16, Numbers 21:4-9, Exodus 12:1-14. Write a card for each event with the title "Jesus' Cross in the Old Testament" and distribute to the kids and discuss with them each event.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- In which city did this event happened? What was the name of the man of God and the name of his servant?
- What do you conclude from the woman's answer to Elijah when he asked about her son after he died, saying, "It is well"?
- What are the good characteristics that you see in the Shunammite woman?
- In what way did Elijah raise the boy? And what does it symbolise?
- Is there any other story in the Old Testament that has signs and symbols of the Cross?
- In your opinion, why did God allow these events and these signs before His crucifixion by many years?



Exercise

- Ask from your kids to write in their personal diaries times in which they were touched by the cross in their life as a sign of blessing ... or as sign of healing .. or as a sign of salvation .. etc.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

Oh You who hanged the whole Earth with one word of Your mouth, and prayed for our sins, and trampled the power of death by Your Cross. Oh You who have the strongest power. Remember me O Lord, when I come into Your Kingdom. (From the prayers of the sixth hour in Good Friday)



The Lord Jesus did these for Me not for Himself

Lesson Aim:

To explain that all the actions that Jesus did when he was on earth in the flesh were done because He loves me. He did those actions for my benefit only.

Memory Verse:

"I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:20)



Lesson Content

From the life of the Lord Jesus, give examples of how Jesus Christ showed His love for me?

The Lord Jesus is God Incarnate. All actions, teachings, and miracles have an everlasting effect i.e. they can happen again in our lives today even though the Lord Jesus is not on earth, in the flesh.

God became man and was called Emmanuel, which means “God is with us.” He is with me as He promised “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

He was baptised so that we are reborn and can defeat the devil. He was baptised to open the door for us to also be baptised. He taught His Disciples to baptise all nations. (Matthew 28:1)

On the mountain, He defeated Satan to show us how to defeat Satan: by prayers, fasting, reading and meditating on the word of God in the Bible.

He wants me to lead a victorious life over Satan. In the wedding of Cana of Galilee, He changed the water into wine to change sadness to happiness. The Lord Jesus did it for me. He wants me to be happy. He blessed the sacrament of marriage by attending the marriage at Cana of Galilee. This miracle was done for me.

He fed 5,000 people from 5 loaves and 2 fish. He satisfies all my needs. He wants me to have no need for anything. I just have to ask Him. I have to present all that I have to Him and He will bless it and give it back to me more blessed.

Our Lord Jesus opened the eyes of the one born blind; He can open my eyes to see that living with God is so good. The Lord Jesus did it for me.

As the Lord Jesus gave life to Lazarus, He gives me a new life. Jesus Christ loves me. As He raised Lazarus from the dead, Jesus Christ gives me strength to be better and to overcome my sins. He performed this great miracle to enhance my faith that Jesus is God incarnate.

Even when I make mistakes and come back to Him saying, “I have sinned”, the Lord Jesus opens His arms and hugs me. This encourages me to repent.

The Lord Jesus offered His life on the Cross by His own free will to save me. Lord Jesus did it for me. Nothing can prove Lord Jesus' love more than His death on the Cross for me so that I can live. He did not deserve to die on the Cross. But He did it for me.

The Lord Jesus rose from the dead so that I can say, “O Death where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55) I can now defeat death. I know that even after I die, the Lord Christ will raise me again in His second coming.

The Lord Jesus ascended to heaven to prepare a place for me. I have a place in paradise.

When the Lord Jesus comes back He will take me with Him. I will live with Him forever. The Lord Jesus Christ did it for me.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- Everything good in our lives is from God. God came for us, became one of us, taught us, blessed us, saved us and He is with us now. Let us feel His presence with us in everything we do.
- The Lord Jesus is God and He never needs anything. He does all things for our benefit.



Disobedience and Obedience

The Book of Jonah

Bible References: Book of Jonah

Book References:

- Henry M. Morris, "The Remarkable Journey of Jonah"

Lesson Aim:

To learn about the disobedience of the prophet Jonah and the obedience of nature to God.

Lesson Objectives:

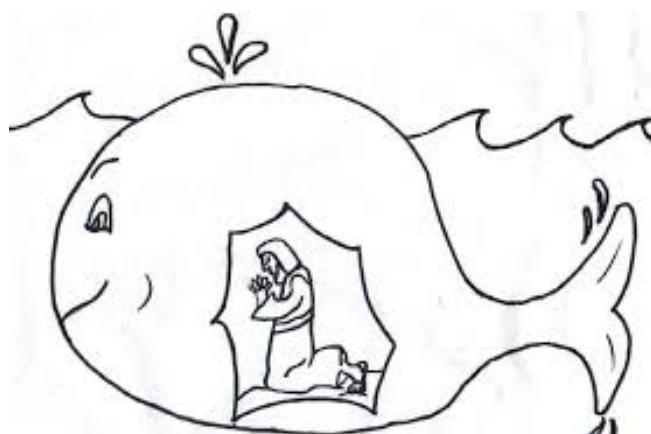
Know: The story of the book of Jonah.

Feel: The effect of obedience in one's life.

Practice: Obeying God's commandments.

Memory Verse:

"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."
(2 Corinthians 10:5)



Lesson Content

In Israel, there was a prophet called Jonah. A prophet is a man with whom God sends His message to inform the people and invite them to repent, leaving behind their sinful life and evil deeds. God used prophets to communicate His message to the people. Many prophets such as Hosea, Isaiah and Daniel told the people about God's message, and about the salvation He was to bring through His Son, in order to save mankind from death.

Jonah spoke with God directly, and God sent him to carry out a certain task. But Jonah was human like us, so at times he was weak and disobeyed God.

But God in His love to us doesn't leave us at the time of our weakness and disobedience. Instead, He tries in any way to help us return to Him and fix our shortcomings and mistakes. How beautiful, kind and merciful is our God!

One day God called to Jonah saying "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me" (Jonah 1:2).

God saw that Nineveh was a great city despite its people's sins and evil doings. And we know that God is plenteous in mercy and compassion. But Jonah didn't obey God and go to Nineveh to preach to them, maybe because the people of Nineveh were Gentiles (i.e. not Jews) and so they didn't deserve God's forgiveness. He was sure that since God is merciful and compassionate, He would forgive them and have mercy upon them. But if this happens, Jonah's word of destruction wouldn't be fulfilled, and he won't be dignified in front of all the pagan people. So, Jonah decided not to obey God's command, and to avoid facing God, he decided to flee from Him.

What could Jonah have possibly been thinking?! How he could flee from God who is present everywhere and unlimited?! Did he not remember the verse in Psalm 24:1 which says: "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein."?

But he made his decision to disobey the Lord. He went to the city of Joppa and boarded a ship going to Tarshish and paid its fare; he paid a fare to disobey God!

When he got on the ship, he was reassured, being in the middle of the sea, that he had managed to flee from God, so he slept very heavily. But while Jonah was disobeying God, God was planning for his salvation and the salvation of others as well. So, God ordered nature to action His plan, and nature obeyed.

He ordered the wind to blow, so it obeyed and blew strongly. He ordered the sea to become unsettled, so it obeyed, and the waves became very high. In the face of the strong wind and unsettled water, the ship was going to break, so the sailors were shouting and they started to throw all the cargo off the ship. When that didn't help, they all cried out to their gods; pagan sailors cried out to their gods! What about the great prophet Jonah who is sleeping?! Often, others would embarrass us with their commitment while the children of God are sleeping!!!

So, the sailors woke Jonah up to cry out to His God too. Jonah looked at the waves, the sea and the wind and he was the cause of this. He knew that God had ordered this because of his disobedience, for how can he run from His face when God is everywhere?

The sailors cast lots to know who caused this trouble, and the lot fell on Jonah. Through the lot, God was asking Jonah: why do you run away? Where are you? So, Jonah realised the situation and asked them to throw him into the sea so that the waves would settle. Out of their kindness, the sailors tried hard to make take the boat to safety, but however much they tried it was no use. Finally, they threw Jonah into the water, and for the second time God ordered nature to obey Him by causing a great whale to swallow Jonah. But the whale swallowed Jonah not to eat him but to keep him safe inside.

Jonah found himself in the belly of the whale, in complete darkness with the sound of the sea outside. So, he returned to his senses and realised his mistake, and prayed to God a great prayer full of repentance, hope and faith that God will save him. And for the third time God ordered nature to obey Him, and caused the whale to spit out Jonah onto the shore. Then God called to Jonah a second time, saying: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city..."

How wonderful You are God, for You didn't lose hope in Jonah who disobeyed You. You didn't even remind him of his mistake! This is our great God who treads our sins underfoot, and casts them into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:19)

Jonah went to Nineveh and proclaimed God's word in it, and His word was very strong and active and effective in the people of Nineveh. So, they all repented and fasted; everyone from the eldest to the youngest; from the king to the smallest human—even the animals. And they covered themselves with sackcloth (rough cloth) and cried out to the Lord to forgive them. God heard their cry and accepted their repentance and forgave them; this is our God, Who is plenteous in mercy and compassion.

But apparently Jonah didn't learn from his first experience of disobeying God, and he was all too concerned about his dignity. He became angry and upset that God saved the people of Nineveh. But because of God's patience and mercy, He didn't get angry with Jonah, but tried to bring him back. So, for the fourth time, God ordered nature, and caused a plant called a kikayon to grow to provide shade for Jonah, and Jonah was very grateful for the plant. Then God ordered a worm to chew the kikayon, and it obeyed and the plant withered. And He ordered a scorching east wind to blow, so the wind obeyed the sun blazed on Jonah's head so he became faint. And the heat was too much for Jonah, so he became angry and wished death for himself. But God was kind to him and talked to him very lovingly and told him: "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. 11 And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" (Jonah 4:10-11)

The story of Jonah is a story of obedience and disobedience. The obedience of nature and disobedience of the prophet Jonah, but our God Who is full of mercy and compassion, helped Jonah to discover his mistakes and correct them. How beautiful is our great God! So, you can also pray that God helps you correct your mistakes.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- What was the main reason Jonah fled to Tarshish?
- In your opinion, why did God take away His anger from the people of Nineveh?
- What ways can we hear the word of God?
- Who/what am I?
 - The sea was unsettled so we prayed to our gods for the wind to stop blowing.
 - As soon as I heard God's warning, I ordered the whole city to fast and pray for three days.
 - I saved him from death and he was praying inside me.
 - On my way to Tarshish they cast off my load.
 - I provided shade, and I was a means for God to demonstrate the love of God to everyone.



Exercise

Every night, while you sit and write your diary, ask yourself:

- What did I do today to upset God?
- What mistakes do I feel God wants me to correct?
- What things will I do to correct my wrong-doings?

Put your diary aside and pray to God a prayer of repentance, asking Him to help you in correcting your mistakes.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

My Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for being a kind and merciful God, and for being in control of everything. You, O God, are in control of all creation and it listens to and fulfils every word you say.

Thank you for being a God who does not wish death for the sinner but repentance and life. Grant us, O Lord, ears that listen to every word You send to us by any means. Because You, Lord, told us that "whoever loves Me remembers my commandments". And help us, O Lord, to obey Your word joyfully, so that we may please You, and so we may hear Your voice full of joy, saying: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord." Amen.



Leadership and Discipline

Nehemiah

Bible References: Book of Nehemiah

Book References:

- Fr Tadros Yacoub Malaty, "Commentary on the Book of Nehemiah"
- Matthew Henry, "Commentary on the Book of Nehemiah"

Lesson Aim:

To learn about leadership and discipline.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: His role to direct his senses and thought in a spiritual way, to rebuild the temple of his spirit and soul.

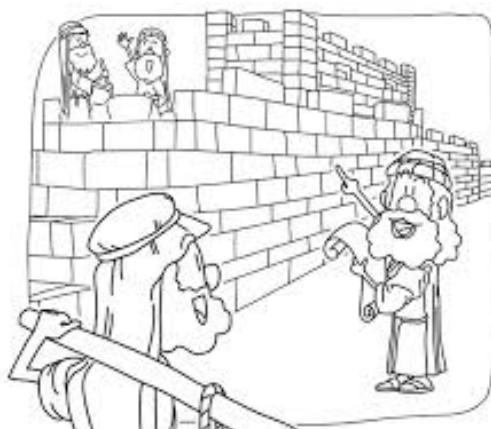
Feel: How that the discipline to God's rules is useful to all the people.

Practice: Dedicate part of his prayers for building his own spiritual walls.

Memory Verse:

"The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build."

(Nehemiah 2:20)



Background Information for the Servant

The children of Israel were captives for 70 years in Babylon, and at its end God used Cyrus the Persian king to make a proclamation, giving them the captives the right to return to Jerusalem. Only part of the people went back to Jerusalem, and they did so in three groups. The first group came back under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the second under Ezra, at the third under Nehemiah, who returned around the year 445 AD in the era of the King Artaxerxes the First.

Nehemiah

We don't know anything about his family except that he is the son of Hachaliah, and he had a brother called Hanani (Nehemiah 1:2; 7:2) They might be from the descendants of the two kings of Judah.

"Nehemiah" is a Hebrew name meaning "God comforts". He was born in captivity and became the King Artaxerxes' cup-bearer. He occupied this great position may be through the effect of Esther who was still alive, and who was the wife of the king's father. But Nehemiah's heart was with his country, and so he returned with a group of Jews in 445 AD, rebuilt the wall and revived the sabbath-sanctification and offerings.

Nehemiah was zealous for the city of his fathers and asked the king to send him to repair its walls. So, he sent him as governor to Jerusalem to build its wall and put in order the affairs of the Jewish government. He went to Jerusalem 13 years after Ezra had returned to Jerusalem. And Nehemiah left all the luxuries of the king's palace which he enjoyed having, all for the love he had for his people and foremost for the love he had for God.

Nehemiah's mission was not easy as he faced strong resistance from various enemies: the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Samaritans, and the rest of the neighbourhood. The enemies took over the land while the people were in captivity. So, when the people returned the enemies were afraid that they would repossess their lands again and take back their possessions. But even the enemies were looking forward to takeover more lands from the people, that's why the people became afraid of building the walls of Jerusalem. And those enemies had natural enmity with the people of Israel.

Nehemiah was concerned with worship and reading and expounding of the law, and writing a covenant to keep God's commandments in which the priests, Levites and all the people signed.

After Nehemiah had governed the Jews for 12 years (compare Nehemiah 13:6,7 with 2:1-9) he returned to King Artaxerxes to give an account to him of all that he had built. So, Artaxerxes appointed him to go back again and by that time he got another deal for the government and went back to rule for 14 years after that.

Nehemiah had a wonderful personality who was prominent in the Holy Bible and an example for which all servants of God should follow. As we find him during his captivity concerned about the state of his people and the state of Jerusalem, and find him crying and praying to God to take away his anger from them. We also find him leaving his high position in the king's palace to go to Jerusalem to motivate the people.

Nehemiah's character is one who was zealous for God's glory, who possessed the personality of a leader. He built the wall in days, and wasn't concerned with the resistances and conspiracies of the enemies, caring only about his people, and not asking for his rights as a governor but spending upon his people. He persevered with God, with the king and with the people by giving them correction, uniting and encouraging them. He also persevered against the enemies.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Story

Has anyone ever heard about the marvellous window? Have you read about it before?

It's about a legend that spread in the middle ages about a British writer who was living in London. One day he bought a window, and after he put it in its place he found something really strange; he started seeing London in a different light. Rather than seeing London as being narrow, crowded, noisy and a miserable place to be for the poor and sick, he saw beautiful wide streets, with palaces, gardens and happy people. He also saw on the top of the

highest castle a white flag, in which a great hero stood beneath it to watch over it and guard the city from a horrible dragon. Every time the writer was fed up with work and the people's sadness, he looked upon the city through the window to see a totally different picture that would encourage, inspire and strengthen him; the picture of a city free from misery and pain.

Likewise, Nehemiah saw the beauty of the city of Jerusalem, how it is going to be, but this time from a real window not an imaginary one. This vision made his dream and the dream of all the people of Israel to be realised when they rebuilt the city.

So, the successful leader has a dream and vision; a target that he always puts in front of his eyes and tries to achieve. I wonder if you have ever dreamed of eternity?

Lesson Content

Nehemiah in the palace:

Persia was a strong nation that reigned the world. There was once a king called Artaxerxes who ruled Persia, and this made him the strongest ruler in the world. The people of Israel were captives in the countries of Babylon which he ruled.

There was one who was from the most important assistants of that king, a Jewish person called Nehemiah. His job was a cup-bearer, tasting from the food and drink of the king to protect him from any attempt to poison and kill him. From this we can learn that Nehemiah was honest to the extent that the king entrusted Nehemiah with his life.

One day he went to the king while he was very sad, so the king wanted to know the reason for his sadness. So, Nehemiah told the king: "May the king live forever. I am sad because the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire."

So, the king Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah: "What do you request?"

Nehemiah implored him saying: "Let me go to Jerusalem, that I may rebuild it. So, the king Artaxerxes kindly approved."

Wise arrangement:

Nehemiah asked from the king letters to be given to all the governors of the regions that he is passing through to permit him to pass safely. He also asked of him wood to build the city. And the king granted Nehemiah official letters from him to protect him during his travel.

The king helped with more than that, by giving Nehemiah a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, ordering him to give Nehemiah the wood that is needed for building the walls of the city.

And when Nehemiah arrived to Jerusalem, he gathered the officials in the city and told them: You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. He also informed them that the king Artaxerxes approves, and the most important of all, is that God is with them.

The leader's characteristics:

Nehemiah's faith and enthusiasm became an inspiration for the people, therefore they accepted saying: "Let us start rebuilding." Nehemiah informed each tribe (family) about the part of the wall they are appointed to rebuild.

But not everyone accepted to rebuild the wall; A man called Sanballat and his two friends Tobiah and Gesham (who were not Jewish) did not want it to be rebuilt nor the gates fixed.

The beginning of troubles:

When the work was under way, Sanballat was greatly incensed, so he and his two friends ridiculed the Jews. So, Tobiah said to the Jews: whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall. But Nehemiah didn't reply to them but prayed to God so that God will deal with them.

And when it happened that their insult and mock didn't affect the work, they plotted together to attack Jerusalem, and create as much confusion as they can. So, Nehemiah went again to God to take refuge in Him by prayer to help him to turn them away. He also posted guard day and night in order not to be attacked unawares.

And the Jewish people worked very hard until they became exhausted, and some of them were afraid that the enemy will come and kill them while they are working. But Nehemiah didn't stop the work and put guards around the workers, reminding them that God is between their lines and that God is stronger than any enemy.

The leader, and the meaning of leadership:

Nehemiah worked to be a role model for others, and when the king made him governor Jerusalem, he had the right to use money and supplies from the people as he pleased. But he refused to do so, rather he strived and did everything in the interest of the workers and in the rebuilding of the wall, buying his food using his own money.

Last, when the wall was completed, all that remained was to fix the gates on the main entrances. When Sanballat, Tobiah and Gesham heard that there were breaks left in the wall, they decided to harm Nehemiah.

Escaping from facing evil:

They sent to Nehemiah asking him to meet with them in a place called Ono. But Nehemiah knew that they wanted to attack him and take him out of the city to harm him. So he sent them a message that he cannot leave the work to meet with them (just as we should not leave our striving and spiritual work to face the evil one).

After that, the gates were fixed, and Nehemiah employed gatekeepers to guard the walls and the gates, and ordered the gates not to be opened before the sun becomes hot, and to be shut at night.

Now the city became safe and fortified, and a great number of the exiled Jews returned to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah remained in Jerusalem and helped the people obey God.

Application

Comprehension Questions



- In which country were the Children of Israel held captive? And what is the name of the king whom Nehemiah worked with?
- What was Nehemiah's job? And what do you understand about him being appointed for this job?
- How did the king help Nehemiah? How did he manage the work and plan for its success?
- What problems did Nehemiah face and how did he overcome them?
- Was Nehemiah a role model for his people? How?
- What characteristics did you like in Nehemiah as a leader of his people that you would want to emulate?
- In Psalm 51:18, David the Prophet speaks about another kind of wall. What do you think this wall represents and how do you think we can guard it?



Exercise

Ask the kids to memorise Psalm 1 and pray it in their morning prayers during the week. From it, they can learn how to become a leader by being a role model and a witness for the Lord Jesus, even by escaping from evil, for "he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." (Proverbs 16:32)



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men who work iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies. (Psalm 141:3-4)

My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to Your word. I have declared my ways, and You answered me; teach me Your statutes. Make me understand the way of Your precepts; so shall I meditate on Your wonderful works. (Psalm 119:25-27)



Pope Kyrillos IV

The Father of Reform

Bible References: Book of Nehemiah

Book References:

- Synaxarion of 23rd Tubah
- HH Pope Shenouda III, "Words Of Spiritual Benefit"
- HH Pope Shenouda III, "Experiences In Life"
- HH Pope Shenouda III, "Life Of Humility & Meekness"

Lesson Aim:

To gain the love of knowledge and edification.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The biography of Pope Kyrillos IV, the Father of Reform.

Feel: The need for education and to love it.

Practice: Reading in all fields (under guidance).

Memory Verse:

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."
(John 5:39)



Background Information for the Servant

Knowledge is not an end in itself, but is a means of benefit. Not all knowledge is useful knowledge, as some knowledge might be harmful. There are various types of knowledge such as sensory knowledge which comes through the senses, and there is knowledge which comes through the mind, and through studying and coming to one's own conclusions. There is knowledge of the spirit, and there is another knowledge which is the knowledge of man to know to him/herself, knowing that he/she is created from dust to be humble and not proud. We want to check this point from two perspectives: **giving teaching and receiving teaching from another.**

Through pride, one usually likes to take the position of teacher and sees in himself the need to always teach others. But the humble person on the other hand prefers to learn or to increase in knowledge. He is ready to receive teaching and accept it, even if it came to him by way of reproach or from someone younger than him; such a person will even ask for this teaching of his own accord.

We have in front of us stories of saints' biographies in seeking and accepting teaching:

- Saint Abba Antony in the beginning of his monastic life, used to sit at the edge of the village learning virtues from the anchorites. One day a woman went to have a shower in the river and she started taking off her clothes in front of him. So, he said to her: "Do you not get embarrassed from being naked in front of me, a monk?!" She told him mockingly: "Who said that you're a monk?! If you were really a monk, you would have entered the inner desert, as this place is not suitable for monks to dwell." So, Abba Antony listened to and received her advice in great humility and considered it as a message from God through her lips. And indeed, he left the place and entered the inner desert.
- Saint Macarius the Great took advice from a shepherd boy. Similarly, Saint Moses the Strong asked a boy called Zachariah for a beneficial word, and when the boy said to him: "Aren't you the pillar and lighthouse of the desert? And you're asking me?!" The Saint answered him, I am sure my son, by the spirit inside you, you speak words for my teaching.

Therefore, if someone thinks that discipleship ends at a certain age or stage of life, then that person is mistaken. Discipleship continues till the end of the age and doesn't end even after a person becomes a teacher; the teacher who is strong in his knowledge is the one who continues in his discipleship, at the very least, he continuously reads to refresh his knowledge and increase it and grow in it, and continuously provides his disciples with new knowledge and benefit.

Contemplation:

Contemplation of Pope Shenouda III on Pope Kyrillos IV the Father of Reform:

I get amazed by those who search for ways to kill time by any means of entertainment, amusement, gossip or enjoyment. Such people don't realise that they by wasting their time, they waste their lives. The one who kills time doesn't value his life, and so he lives without any purpose or any message; his life is cheap in his eyes. But the ones who respects their own lives, every second in it is productive and useful. Therefore, there are people whose lives are short but amazing and deep and well-lived.

Saint John the Baptist started his ministry at the age of thirty, which continued for nearly a year after which he was martyred. From then he was called "the greatest of those born of women". In this short period, he prepared the way before the Lord, preparing the hearts of the people, and baptising thousands of people with a baptism of repentance. On the contrary, Methuselah lived 969 years, and heard nothing about him in the Bible.

The Lord Jesus Himself, for the duration of His service on Earth was three years and four months. And in this short period, He did many works that no one has ever done before, that "If every one of them were to be written, the world itself could not contain the books that would be written." And He achieved salvation and offered the people the restoration of the image of God.

Also, Pope Kyrillos IV, his duration of service was six years and a few months. In spite of his short papacy, he did in it what made him worthy of the title, "Father of Reform". Many lived a short life but offered great works in it, and many attained greatness while they were still kids or young adults, or just youth. Saint Tadros, the disciple of Saint Pachomius of the Koinonia, Saint Misael the Anchorite and Saint John Chrysostom are just a few examples of the greatness at a young age.

So, Saint Tadros in his early days, was a father and spiritual guide of many. He was a founder of monasteries and a disciple of Saint Pachomius. Saint Misael was an anchorite before the age of twenty. And it was said of Saint John

Chrysostom in that Paradise of the Fathers that in his early age he was able to "hang all Scetis from his finger". Such people went from glory to glory in a short time and at the beginning of their lives they increased quickly in virtue because they didn't waste their time, but rather took spiritual lives seriously. Every minute of their lives raises them up and takes them into the inner depths and nurtures them. Their time was rich, and all of it was used to build up both their selves and others, and nothing of it was wasted, such that their time was blessing for others.

There is human whose time is in his favour, which makes him alive and another whose time is against him.

Lesson Content

Our fathers the patriarchs are an important part of the history of the church and its heritage. The importance of us knowing their biographies are not only for historical purposes but to learn from them and look upon them as models of spirituality and strong principles, and so that we can emulate their lives in our own life.

Pope Kyrillos IV, the 110th Pope of Alexandria, is known as the "Father of Reform". He was born in Girga, Egypt in the year 1816 AD, and was educated in reading and writing and in the Holy Bible.

He started his monastic life at the age of 22 years in the Monastery of Abba Antony, and was given the name, Father Daoud El Antony. He was well-known for his good organisation skills.

At the time, there were some doctrinal issues in the Ethiopian Church, so Pope Petros El-Gawli sent him to solve these problems, and indeed he was able to convince the people and correct their thoughts, and so they went back to the Orthodox Doctrine.

The number of monks were few at the time, but two years after becoming a monk, the abbot of the monastery departed. Despite Father Daoud's young age, he was filled with God's grace and favour in the eyes of the people, and so they chose him to become the abbot of the monastery, despite the other monks being more senior than him in monasticism and of course older than him in age.

So, they sent the nomination to Pope Petros El-Gawli and he agreed, so he became the abbot of the monastery at the age of 24 years. As soon as he became abbot of the monastery, he took care of everything in the monastery, especially the library.

At the time, St Antony's Monastery was part of the Diocese of Beni Suef, and so its properties were surrounding Beni Suef. So he created a library and a school in Beni Suef, and from the income of the monastery he worked on many other projects in the country.

Saint Abba Sarapamon Abo Tarha (The Veiled), Bishop of Menoufia, met him once while he was a monk and he said to him: "You will have great importance in the church."

After the departure of Pope Petros El-Gawli, many names were presented in front of the fathers but the name of Father Daoud El Antony had the most nominations. At this time, the khidewy (viceroy) of the country was a man called Abbas. He had a group of magicians and fortune-tellers, who one day went to Khidewy Abbas and told him not to allow Father Daoud to be ordained Patriarch of the Coptic Church, else he will die straight after he gets ordained. It was obvious that they were just afraid of Father Daoud and his holiness, but the governor at that time believed what the magicians said, so he postponed his ordination.

So, the fathers of the church went to the khidewy and suggested to ordain Father Daoud as General Bishop instead of Patriarch. The khidewy liked the idea, as it would satisfy the two sides. And so he was ordained General Bishop with the name, Abba Kyrilos. Straight after his ordination, he put in a tremendous effort to repair and refurbishment many churches, built libraries, and taught the people so many things.

He was General Bishop for one year and two months, and during this time, his favour grew in the eyes of the people. Because of his holiness, honesty and energy, the fathers decided to ordain him Patriarch.

After his ordination as Patriarch, he lives for 6 years and 7 months, and in this short period he made great and important achievements and changed so many things in the church in Egypt, and history is a witness to this and the church learns so much from him.

The following are some of the things we can learn about Pope Kyrillos IV:

1. **He created a college for teaching languages:** the church at that time was in a very difficult state, and the thoughts of many in the church were influenced by mysticism and works of magic. So one of the most important things Pope Kyrillos did was to establish a college next to the Patriarchate which taught all types of languages (Turkish, Italian, French, English...). He oversaw the education, and the college was a great benefit, for by it, many people became educated and were able to teach others.
2. **He built the first school called “The Great Coptic School”:** from which many students graduated and went on to become lawyers, ministers or officials. It delivered a high level of education for at that time there were no schools, although there very primitive ways of teaching in small groups. That's why those who graduated from this school were so proud. The money spent on this school was 6000 Egyptian Pounds, which, at that time, was a large amount of money; to imagine how big it was, the price of a big house at that time was nearly 800 Egyptian Pounds.
3. **He was fond of education:** this is a very important thing, and even in our time, His Holiness the Pope is caring a lot about education, schools and the theological colleges.
4. **Women’s education:** if we asked who is behind woman’s education in Egypt, the answer is Pope Kyrillos IV. At the time, when a girl grows up and gets married, she remains in her husband’s house until she dies. So, he started asking the priests that in their sermons, they make the Copts aware that girls have to be educated. And as a result, he established the first school for girls which enrolled girls from all areas taught them sewing, cooking and other things to benefit them.
5. **He was named “Father of Reform”:** because he cared about education, and study was free and available for Muslims and Copts. He used to distribute books, movies and exercise books all free of charge, so as to encourage people in their education. He had an office in the school despite him being the Patriarch, and he entered the classes daily and supervising the teaching by himself, and it was said that he was sitting with the students in the class and was listening to the lesson and says to the teacher; I benefited from this lesson today.
6. **He cared about teaching church hymns and the Coptic language:** he taught the kids and brought back the teaching of the Coptic language after it started to disappear, and he created for them a uniform to encourage them to continue in their education. Those who are nominated to be ordained deacons were ordained and dressed in the Tonya by the Patriarch himself. He transformed the church greatly in such a short period of time.
7. **He acquired the first typewriter for the church:** At the time, Egypt had only one typewriter, called “The Amiryia”, and Pope Kyrillos knew that the revival of the church would be helped greatly by a typewriter especially for the Coptic Church. So, he imported a typewriter from Germany after he took permission from the Khidewy and after collecting money to pay for it. The typewriter was being transported by sea, but around the time of its date of delivery, Pope Kyrilos was travelling to Abba Antony’s monastery, so he asked the deputy of the Patriarchate to receive the typewriter with his priestly attire, as he wanted to make it clear for everyone the importance of this typewriter and the work of God through it. They received the typewriter with hymns and spiritual songs for the people knew the extent to which this typewriter will serve the church and every home. The first thing to be produced by this typewriter was the Katamerous which was copied and distributed it to all the dioceses. Before it was type-written, it used to be written by hand and so naturally there were mistakes in the text and the writing was not always easy to read. (The Katamerous is a book containing all the readings of the church throughout the year, i.e. the Pauline, Catholicon, Praxis, and the Psalm and Gospel of the Vespers, Matins and Liturgy.) After printing the Katamerous, Pope Kyrilos thought of producing weekly and monthly newspaper. History records that the Coptic typewriter printed the “El Watan” newspaper and this was the first newspaper in Egypt before even “Al Ahram” newspaper. It also printed the Agpeya, so the Agpeya entered all the houses.
8. **He prevented a war between Egypt and Ethiopia:** a problem occurred at the end of his life between Egypt and Ethiopia which brought the two countries on the brink of war. So, the Governor of Egypt asked Pope Kyrilos IV to go to reason with the Ethiopian king. However, Satan interfered, and some people went to the Governor and told him that the Pope is Christian and that he will create a big problem for the government because he will side with Ethiopia, and against Egypt, for Ethiopia is a Christian country. So they asked him to move the army and indeed he came down with the army at the borders of Sudan. Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, some people sent to the Emperor of Ethiopia and told him that the Pope is coming to Ethiopia to trick him. He believed what they purported and imprisoned the Pope and was going to kill him. So, the Pope asked Saied Pasha to withdraw the army, and the Emperor of Ethiopia went back on his word and honourably released the Pope from prison. When the Pope came back from Ethiopia,
9. **He was concerned about making unity** between the different Orthodox churches in the world.

Pope Kyrilos IV, Father of Reform, departed on 30th January 1861 AD

From this story and the Biography of Pope Kyrilos IV, we learn how important a role our church in society. The Christian should be well-educated and clever, and should like useful knowledge. He should also educate those around

him/her and encourage them. The Christian is not only different in his faith and dogma but also in his role on the lives of those around him/her and his/her role towards his/her country. A good example of this is Dr Magdy Yacoub.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- Who is Father of Reform in the Coptic Church?
- Why is he called the “Father of Reform”?
- What did he achieve in the fields of: Printing, Education and Church Hymns?
- How did he encourage girls to be educated?
- How long was he Patriarch?



Exercise

To read a book this week and to tell the servant what he/she benefited from it.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

My Lord Jesus, thank You for giving me a mind that is more distinguished than of other creatures. Thank you for the gift of knowledge and education. Help me to care for the talent which You have given me, and with my ability to read and understand, help me to grow in useful knowledge and allow me and all those around me to benefit from it, for the glory of Your holy name, Amen.



God is Love Therefore He Gave Me My Body and I Must Look After It

Boundaries

Bible References: Genesis 39

Book References:

- Henry Cloud, "Boundaries with Kids"
- HG Bishop Youssef, "Me and The Other"
- Fr Tadros Yacoub Malaty, "Commentary on Genesis 39"
- Matthew Henry, "Commentary on Genesis 39"

Lesson Aim:

God loves me so He gave me my body to look after it.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: How to put boundaries for himself, enclosing his own land to prevent intruders.

Feel: Complete responsibility of his/her decisions and works.

Practice: Saying "No" in the suitable time, as it is not wrong to say "no". And to respect the boundaries of others and to not dominate others.

Memory Verse:

"Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life."

(Proverbs 4:23)

Background Information for the Servant

The servant should be completely aware of the meaning and definition of the “Life of Purity” to be able to transfer this to the kids. Therefore we want to summarise the definition of the life of purity using a few points.

The Christian person in a spiritual perspective: (Book “Life of Purity” – by Hegumen Youhana Nassif)

1. The four important powers that exist inside man and the distinction between them: Spirit, Mind, Emotion and Instinct.
2. The four characteristics of the sexual instinct in man:
 - It is totally different from the instinct of animals.
 - It is connected to the person as a whole, and affects him and gets affected by him.
 - It is an instinct that can be controlled.
 - Its main aim is to express the true love and companionship with another.
3. Christianity is higher than all of these characteristics:
 - Because we are the temple of God and the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us.
 - Our sexual organs are holy just as the rest of our organs because it got anointed with the holy Myron.
 - Our unity with Christ in the Eucharist makes us organs in His body, so we are one Body.
4. We are not able to prevent the birds from flying over our head, but we are able to prevent it from making nests on our heads.

But we fight against the battles of Satan through a **defence** plan and the other is an **attack** plan.

The defence plan:

- Keeping the senses:
 - **Eye:** we have to take care of it to be pure
 - **Ear:** our mission is to satisfy it with the holy words and the music of the church
 - **Touch:** being careful is important, especially in crowded places

Hence we see that keeping the senses holy is important to keep the heart holy.

- Dismissing the evil thoughts upon inception.
- Staying away from bad friends.

The attack plan:

- Filling the heart and protecting it, by:
 - Prayer
 - Words of the Bible
 - Confession
- Loving of purity with all of one’s heart and striving not to fall, even till blood.
- Being prude, for Christ took what is ours and gave us what is His; He took our shame and gave us his purity. So, sons and daughters of Christ ought to love prudence in all its aspects: in appearance, in what one wears, and even in how one moves; prudence gives a person honour.
- “Prevention is better than cure” in hating this work which deprives one from the eternity.
- Confidence that I am able to control myself as a human.

Guidance to speak in this topic:

- It is not a sin or inappropriate.
- The speaker and listener have to feel respect towards this topic so we have to avoid vulgarity or reservation.
- We have to take this topic openly but without going into its minute details.
- We should present the talk with a complete image, and in all dimensions: physical, spiritual and psychological.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Drama / Pantomime

Discussion between a feather and a rock:

Feather: What is wrong with you, rock?! Every time I go or come back I find you are either in your place or moving very slowly!

Rock: So what do you want me to do? I don’t understand!

Feather: You should go out and be free, going and froing, and living your life like me.

Rock: Wait! You want me to go out and come back with any wind, like you?? Of course not!

Feather: Why? It's a very nice life. You'll feel free and love all people, so you can go to any place and at any time and with whomever, and have a nice time.

Rock: Of course not, I have to be settled and know what I want, not just befriend or walk with anyone.

Feather: (Thinking and started to revise herself) What's the problem with that?! I'm not upsetting anyone; on the contrary, I'm a friend to all people.

Rock: There's a BIG problem with that! God gave each one of us a brain and a spirit to distinguish between right and wrong, so that we have to be careful where we go and who we go with! We have to be aware, and if we're not sure about something, we have to ask.

Feather: You are right. Thank you, Rock, that you made me aware of this mistake, and not to do it again.

Lesson Content

An imaginary scenario:

Let us try to imagine that we were not born on Planet Earth but on another planet. Everything on this planet is totally different from Earth: there is no gravity, no food or drink to be nourished with, and we are all like plants, creating nourishment inside us without feeling it!

Then, imagine travelling by spaceship to explore the planet that they call Earth. Finally after a long trip, we reach Earth, and it is a big surprise!

We are amazed: we're not able to fly, as we learn about and experience "gravity" for the first time. After spending some time on Planet Earth, we start feeling something strange in our stomach! Is this what they call "hunger"?! We never felt hungry before! What is the solution? How can we stop this feeling?

One of the inhabitants of Earth then takes us to a place to find food to eat to stop our hunger. So we ate, and the food was very tasty, but after we finished eating, someone comes to ask for the cost of the food we ate! It is a BIG shock! We don't possess any money, we don't know the rules of Planet Earth, and we don't know how to deal with Earthlings! Are they nice and loving or are they trying to trick us?! Should we actually listen to them, or are they trying to mislead us?! What are our responsibilities towards them? To what extent do we allow them to intrude our lives!

Each of us can be likened to a wide strip of land, on which is built many houses. To prevent intruders on the land and in the houses, you need to erect a boundary wall and a gate, so you choose who and who not to allow on your land. These boundaries distinguish you from others and show you what belongs to you. Examples of these boundaries are: My Body, My Thoughts, My Emotions, My Talks and My Behaviour.

So, in our trip to planet Earth we have to beware and answer tough questions. So, let us ask someone who has been through the experience before...

Joseph the Righteous

There was once a boy who lived in calmness in his father's house, enjoying his great love to him and his pampering. His name was Joseph, who we all know about. He went down from a beautiful planet, full of restfulness and happiness, to a tiring place, full of slavery, fear and sin. When his brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites, and the Ishmaelites to Potiphar in Egypt, Joseph had to erect his walls and gates to deal with this new community.

- He had the choice of erecting a high wall all around and not put any gates! That way he can avoid dealing with anyone and everyone, and allow neither evil nor good to enter. As his brothers did evil against him by selling him as a slave, what will others around him do to him?! So he will close in on himself and not deal with anyone, and his personality will be **unchanging**.
- However, Joseph didn't choose this wrong choice which would have surely destroyed him, but he understood that his brothers wanted evil for him but God wanted good. He knew that God would cure him of the wounds of his brothers and prepare everything for him so that he can be cured, so he has to allow Him to enter. Joseph made a gate for God in the middle of the wall for good to enter. As if Joseph heard Him saying: "**Behold, I**

stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” (Revelation 3:20)

Indeed Joseph kept his heart holy for God, as his father Jacob taught him. He allowed the grace of God to enter and heal him, and teach him how to deal with the new foreign community in which he found himself. He learned how to respect and love his master. He was so honest to the extent that Potiphar himself didn't know what was in his house as much as Joseph did. He also respected his master's wife and listened to all her orders, so these were his responsibilities towards his master, and the Lord was with him and gave him success in everything he did.

However, he didn't forget the boundaries of respect when Satan entered the heart of Potiphar's wife and tricked her thoughts and emotions, changing her to have an intrusive personality. This type of personality knows no boundaries, disrespecting others and intruding in their lives as if it were her own property.

So, Potiphar's wife wanted to make Joseph fall into sin with her. She thought that Joseph would not refuse any of her requests and that he, for sure, would fear her and fear the consequences for disobeying her, i.e. prison and possibly death. He is just a slave, so no one would believe his word anyway. So, she threatened Joseph by saying that if he didn't sin with her she would tell his master that he was the one who wanted to sin with her and that she is the one who refused!

Joseph had to decide how to confront this situation. If Joseph had had a pliant (i.e. passive) personality, it means that has no walls at all. This means that his boundaries would be unclear and foggy, and anyone would be able to enter his private land and property, and do whatever they want; make it unclean, pluck out the plants and take away from it any beautiful thing. And so likewise, anyone may intrude his body and emotions and make it unclean with sin.

Most probably for people with such a personality, there may be a number of reasons for the non-existence of clear boundaries in their lives:

- Fearing consequences, which is perhaps the most important reason. So, if Joseph didn't listen to his master's wife, for sure he will die or be imprisoned, and this is a frightening and terrifying thing! So to avoid this, he has to submit to her opinion.
- Losing favour and position before others: for sure, Joseph's master, Potiphar, would hate him and take away from him all the responsibility of his household.

Joseph didn't choose to be of this type of personality (without boundaries), but his gate allowed love and respect to enter and leave, and intrusion to be kept out. Despite Joseph's father teaching him obedience, he thought about what his father told him about Abraham, his grandfather, who obeyed, and said “Yes, indeed”, but to God only, even to offer his son as a sacrifice.

So, Joseph understood that there are different types of obedience; what his master's wife asked him was not obedience to God, but obedience to the body and to lusts. This type must be addressed with a bold “**No**”, not fearing death, and not worrying how others would see him, as if he is saying with Saint Paul the apostle: “**If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.**” (Galatians 1:10)

So, Joseph fled from her leaving his cloak in her hand and he bore all the consequences: prison, pain, injustice, and didn't expose the sin of his master's wife.

Is it possible that we could be in Joseph's situation?! How can someone intrude my borders?

As we said in the beginning, each of us should have boundaries: physical, intellectual and emotional, and we must beware of any attempt to intrude on them.

So, in our dealings with others, there are nice touches which can give you peace and security. For example, when our mother gives us hugs and kisses, these are done out of love to make us feel loved and at peace and do not intrude my sexual boundaries. But there are some other moves from other people not done out of love, but are done out of love for control, like Potiphar's wife who wanted to take from Joseph his purity and chastity to satisfy her lusts.

We have to take care of our bodies. Just like Joseph the Righteous, we have to refuse evil touches with a strong “**No**”, not being afraid or embarrassed of anything, and not being afraid of losing love or your image in front of others. Joseph understood well that his chastity and purity of heart were very dear to him, so nothing else could compare to them to be taken away.

My eyes are another important organ of my body to take care of! If your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil your whole body will be full of darkness. So, don't let anyone intrude my boundaries with scenes that defile my heart, thoughts and body. This is the most cunning war with which Satan fights us these days. As if he passes the borders of time and place to intrude my borders and reach my room through the Internet and the media, and present to me whatever he likes, becoming like Potiphar's wife in trying to intrude the boundaries of my body. It is not like he is fighting me in an obvious wild war but it is an invisible war in the air. But we are like Joseph, owning strong radars which detect these cunning trials and know very well to say: "**No**" in order not to let him play with our thoughts, emotions and the purity of our heart.

Summary:

Our trip to planet Earth is our trip in a new age, leaving our planet that we were used to which is the world of pure childhood to a different world in which our dealing with people around us increases. In it we have to take care of putting clear boundaries, not allowing anyone to intrude my property: my body, my mind, my heart and my emotions. At the same time with respect of my boundaries, I can also distinguish the boundaries of others, so that I won't be an intruder like Potiphar's wife.

Application



Exercise

- To say: "No" in the suitable time, as this is not wrong.
- To respect the boundaries of other and to not dominate others.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

My Lord Jesus, You have created me in the Your perfect image. You have bestowed on me the grace of Your Spirit to live, and the grace of intellect to understand and think, and the grace of emotion to feel, to love and be happy. Thank You also for the grace of instinct to be able to live and not die. Thank You for all these great gifts. Sanctify all my life for You and fill it with blessings, peace and light. Amen.



I Am Heavenly

The Tabernacle

Bible References: Exodus 25-40

Book References:

- Fathers of St Mark's Church, "Church Encyclopaedia of Old Testament Commentary"
- Movie of "The Tabernacle 3D"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNjWCKDngyc>

Lesson Aim:

To understand that God wants to prepare our minds for heaven.

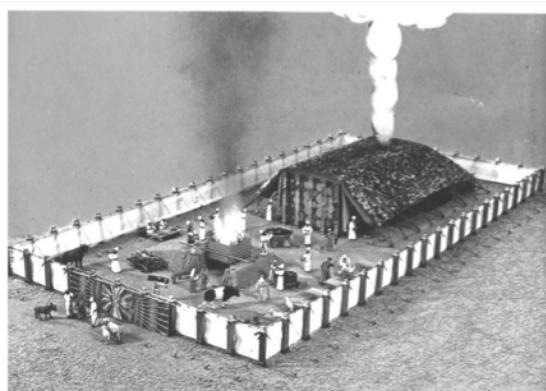
Lesson Objectives:

- Know:** That God loves us and that He wants us to feel that He is in our midst.
- Feel:** That God exists in the church at all times, and to feel that God loves us.
- Practice:** Respecting the Church and thanking God that He allows us to stay in it.

Memory Verse:

"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them."

(Exodus 25:8)

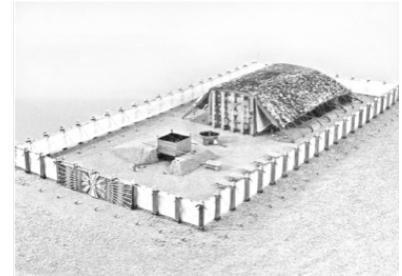


Background Information for the Servant

God wanted to have a dwelling place amongst His people, and so on the mountain He gave Moses the details of how this dwelling place should be constructed.

This dwelling place has several names, for example:

- *The Tent of Meeting* (Joshua 19:51), so called as God meets with His people in it
- *The Tent of the Testimony* (Numbers 9:15) as it contains the two Tablets of the Law which witness to God among His people and because the tent witnesses that God is the God of His people and exists among them.
- *Dwelling* (2 Samuel 7:6) as God dwells among His people.
- *The House of the Lord* (Judges 19:18) as we offer worship to God in it.
- *The Temple* (2 Chronicles 7:1) as God will fill it.



General Overview of the Contents of the Tabernacle:

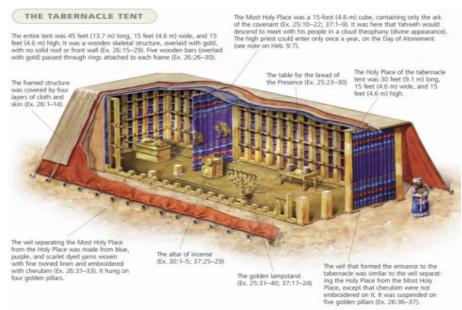
- The Tabernacle consists of the **Tent of Meeting** which includes the **Holy Place** and the **Holy of Holies** in which its three frames are made of wooden boards and covered by curtains and coverings to become a ceiling and roof to it, being hung or draped over its sides and end. As for the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, this was formed of a veil. Also, there was a veil which separated the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.
- There was inside the Holy of Holies, the **Ark of the Covenant**. As for the Holy Place, it had three things which are: the **Table of Shewbread**, the **Gold Lampstand** and the **Altar of Incense**. And around the Tent of Meeting is the **Outer Court** which is a place all around the Tent of Meeting. In front of the Tent is the **Brazen Laver** (wash basin), and before the Laver there is the **Brazen Altar** (Altar of Burnt Offering).
- The Tabernacle is surrounded by a fence of wooden boards covered with curtains and fixed to the ground with sockets.
- The gate of the Tabernacle is located at the East end, and consists of a curtain hung upon wooden boards, just like the entrance of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.
- And when we pass through it and enter the Outer Court, you will find the Brazen Altar, then the Laver, then the entrance of the Holy Place. After that is the entrance of the Holy of Holies at the West end.
- Only the High Priest can enter the Holy of Holies, once a year, on the Day of Atonement. As for the Holy Place, it is entered everyday but only by the priests. In the Outer Court, only the Jews were allowed to enter it. But the non-Jews would stand outside the Tabernacle.

The Tent of Meeting Contents in details:

- Inside the Holy of Holies there is the **Ark of the Covenant** which represents the presence of God, so this is the most important thing in the Tent. It is made of acacia wood, which is extremely durable and does not decay like other kinds of wood, and so it is a symbol of purity and immortality.
- The Ark is overlaid with gold within and without it. Gold is a symbol of Divinity and Heaven.
- Also, two poles were made of durable acacia wood, overlaid with gold. The poles were put through four rings of gold, two on each side, and always remained in it so that the Ark could be carried to transfer it from one place to another during their wandering in the wilderness. It was carried only by the Levites, for the Ark is always covered and no one touches it because of its holiness. The poles symbolise priesthood, so by the help of the priests we are connected to God. They removed the poles at the Temple of Solomon as there was no need to move the Ark from one place to another from then on.

The Ark of the Covenant consists of:

- **The two Tablets of the Law** (Exodus 25:16), known as the Tablets of the Covenant or *Testimony*, are stone tablets on which is written the Law (The Ten Commandments) and is sometimes called the "Tablets of Testimony" as by them, God testifies of all things He commanded His people, by which they may live and to be a witness to the whole world through their lives that they are the people of God.



The contents of The Ark of the Covenant



- **The Golden Pot of Manna and Aaron's Rod** (Hebrews 9:4). The rod symbolises the care of God and His Priesthood.
 - The lid of the Ark is made of pure gold, and it is called the “Mercy Seat” or the “Throne” and is a symbol of God’s mercy. The blood of the sacrifice is sprinkled on it every year, and it is seen by the Divine Justice which is represented by the Cherubim. As He sees it, God passes over His people. This blood is a symbol of Christ’s blood.
- God asked Moses to make two Cherubim as a symbol of the Divine Justice, and to fashion it from pure gold as one piece together with the lid. Their faces shall look one to another, and towards the Mercy Seat shall their faces be. They shall stretch forth their wings on high to cover the lid, such that the tips of their wings meet. The appearance of the angels is similar to that of man, and they look towards the lid on which the blood is to be sprinkled, so the Divine Justice sees the blood which represents Christ’s Blood, i.e. Divine Mercy. Thus, God will pass over man and spare him. The wings on high are a proclamation that they are heavenly. The Cherubim is a high angelic rank, and is a symbol of great knowledge, as they are full of eyes, representing:
- God’s presence.
 - God’s Divine Justice, as were placed at the entrance of the Garden of Eden to prevent man to return after their fall (Genesis 3:24).
 - God’s praise.
- God announces that He is going to speak to His people from above the lid, for the Ark is a symbol of Christ; the wood is a symbol of His humanity, and the gold is a symbol of His Divinity. God will speak between the Cherubim which represents His justice, and at the same time, from above the Mercy Seat so that His justice is mixed with His mercy while talking with His people.
 - From above we see that the Ark and the lid represent Christ in the following:
 - The presence of God amongst His people.
 - The wood represents His humanity, and the gold represents His Divinity, as the Ark represents Christ, the incarnate God.
 - The Ark contains the two tablets of the Law, as it is God’s Word and Christ is the Word of God.
 - It also contains the Pot of Manna and Christ is the Manna which came down from Heaven (John 6:45-48) to grant His people the heavenly Food, which is His Holy Body and Blood.
 - The Ark contains Aaron’s Rod which budded and symbolises Christ who incarnated and gave us Life out of death.
 - The lid on which the blood is sprinkled symbolises Christ Who by His Blood cancelled our debts before the Divine Justice.
 - All of these symbols, i.e. the Ark, its contents, and what is placed on it, point also to the Virgin Mary.

As for the Holy Place, it contains three things:

- **Table of Shewbread** (Exodus 25:23-30): it’s on the right-hand side as you enter the Holy Place. It’s made of durable and incorruptible acacia wood, overlaid with gold and has a crown to guard or protect the bread from falling off the table. On it were twelve loaves of bread (representing the twelve tribes of Israel) placed in two stacks (six in each stack). The bread is kept on the table for a whole week, after which it is changed with new bread, while the old bread is eaten only by the priests. The shewbread symbolises Christ, Who is our fill and satisfaction, and the special grace that is given to the priests. It is called shew bread (or “Bread of Face(s)”) because it is placed before the Face of God, so it has a special grace. On the Table of Shewbread was also placed frankincense and salt; the frankincense symbolises the Priesthood of Christ, while the salt the covenant He made with us by saving us by the Cross and to live with Him. On the four corners of the table are four rings of gold, in which are placed two rods of acacia wood overlaid with gold, which are used to carry the table during their wandering in the wilderness (symbolising estrangement in the world).
- **The Gold Lampstand** (Exodus 25:31-40): it’s on the left-hand side as you enter the Holy Place. It consists of three parts: a base, a shaft, and six branches, and it is fashioned from one piece of pure gold, hammered into shape, for the Holy Spirit is one Person of the Holy Trinity who cannot be separated. The gold from which the Lampstand is made is a symbol of the Divinity, and is also a symbol of heaven, the House of God, which gives us the Holy Spirit. The Lampstand consists of seven branches (the main shaft and three branches on either side of the main shaft). The number seven is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, Who works in the seven sacraments of the church. **All of these details were revealed by God to Moses on the mountain (Exodus 25:40).**
- **The Altar of Incense** (Exodus 30:1-10): it is in the middle of the Holy Place, in front of the Holy of Holies. It is made of durable acacia wood which doesn’t decay, and is overlaid with gold. And we said before that the wood is a symbol of Christ’s humanity, and the gold His Divinity. The wood is also a symbol of Virgin Mary, and as for the gold, it is a symbol of Christ Whom she bore in her womb. There were two golden rings on each side of the altar, made as one piece with the altar, in which were placed the rods (made of acacia wood overlaid with gold) which were used to carry it. The priests offered incense on the altar every morning (matins) and evening (vespers), whenever the Lampstand was dressed and filled with oil, being illuminated continuously, morning and evening. Just as with the brazen altar, a burnt offering was made morning and evening to proclaim

that Christ offered us a complete and continuous sacrifice, rising towards God as a sweet-smelling and pleasing aroma. So Christ is the Light of the world and works always in the believers by His Holy Spirit as a continuous incense and a continuously lit lampstand in the Holy Place.

Around the tent is the Outer Court which is all around the Tent of Meeting. In front of the Tent of Meeting, there is:

- **The Brazen Laver** (Exodus 30:17-21): it's a wide circular vessel standing on a pedestal (foot) standing on a base of brass, which is a symbol of firmness and power. Water is placed inside it, and it is situated between the brazen altar and the Holy Place. It is a symbol of baptism, by which we are born anew, and become rooted in the life with God. The circular shape is a symbol of salvation and eternal life offered to the whole world. It has specific measurements which proclaim the salvation to whoever believes in Christ. The priests wash in the laver before beginning their service, which proclaims the importance of purity before starting to serve God. It is also a symbol of baptism, which is the beginning of the spiritual life. It is situated before the Holy Place because only priests wash in it, who enter by themselves to the Holy Place.
- **The Brazen Altar** (Exodus 27:1-8): it's placed before the laver and it is made of acacia wood (which is non-decaying) which is a symbol of the wood of the Cross. It is square in shape, i.e. the shape of a grave, which is a symbol of the death of Christ. On it sacrifices are offered, symbolising Christ who was crucified and died for us. Four horns were made, which were placed in the four corners of the altar, and they were one piece with the altar. The horn is a symbol of power, for the salvation of Christ is strong and takes away all the sins of the world. The sacrifices were tied to the horns of the altar, until it was slayed. The oppressed would hold on to the horns of the altar to show that he is holding on to God to save him from injustice and death. The alter is overlaid with brass which is a symbol of endurance and firmness, as Christ endured the sufferings for us on the Cross. There were two brass rings on each side of the altar, made as one piece with the altar, in which were placed rods (made of acacia wood overlaid with brass) which were used to carry it.

Transportation of the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle remained for 480 years; the first 40 years was in the wilderness of Sinai, and was transported according to where God led his people by the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night (Exodus 40:36-38). Then, in the land of Canaan, Joshua erected it in Gilgal (Joshua 4:19). He then moved it to Shiloh (Joshua 18:1) where it remained for 400 years, after which King Saul transferred it to Nob (1 Samuel 21:1-9). Then, King David moved it to Gibeon (1 Chronicles 21:9 and 2 Chronicles 1:3) where it remained until King Solomon build the Temple instead of it, and on a much greater scale. He probably placed all its utensils in one of the side rooms (1 Kings 6:1). The people became very sad when one of the enemies took the Ark of the Covenant in the days of Samuel the Prophet. And they remained in weakness until God returned it in the days of King David (2 Samuel 6:17) who became very happy; him and all the people.

Contemplations on the Tabernacle

We can see in the Tabernacle a pattern that God has planned from the beginning of time for the salvation of man. It is a way for man to return to the heavenly Kingdom. So, from the **brazen altar** which represents the **sacrifice of the Cross**, the way starts to the **brazed laver**, which represents **baptism**, in which man dies with the Crucified One, and is raised up with Him for a new life as a son of God. Therefore, man is qualified to enter to the **Holy Place** to practice this new life with Christ Jesus. So, the **Table of Shewbread** represents the **Eucharist** in which the believers partake of the Body of the Lord and His Blood from the heavenly table, the Altar of the New Testament. The **Gold Lampstand** represents the **Light of Christ**, which illuminates in the life of man. As for the **Altar of Incense**, it represents the **spiritual sacrifices** which the believer offers in his striving on earth for the love of God. Whoever is firm in this new life qualifies to enter the **heavenly Kingdom**, which is represented by the **Holy of Holies**.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Drama / Pantomime

Discussion between Timon, Pumbaa and the Servant:

Pumbaa: I'm so upset, Timon, my friend!

Timon: Why, Pumbaa? What's up with you? What has upset you? I don't like you to be upset.

Pumbaa: Last time, the teacher got upset from my behaviour and didn't want to give me the certificate of the star of the week, and I'm so so upset!

Timon: Why? What made the teacher do that? The teacher loves you very very much, Pumbaa.

Pumbaa: I know that he loves me. Look, I'll tell you in detail what happened. While I was sitting in Sunday School last time, I wanted something from my friend, so I called his name in a loud voice and ran after him. And when I was running after him, I hit into the cups from which we drink water after Holy Communion, and they spilled. So, the teacher became so upset from me and asked me, "Is that how we act in the House of God?! God has arranged every place in it, and when we are sitting in church, it is as if we are sitting in heaven."

Timon: Sitting in heaven?! How did the teacher know what heaven looks like??!

Pumbaa: I don't know. For sure, our Lord Jesus knows what heaven looks like, because He is living there. So maybe the Lord Jesus told the teacher what it looks like.

Timon: Look, as soon as the teacher comes, let's apologise to him about what happened last time, and ask him what he meant when he said the church is like heaven.

Pumbaa: I agree!

Then the servant enters and starts talking about the lesson.

Lesson Content

A long time ago, at the time of Prophet Moses, God wanted to have a place to dwell amongst his people on earth, where they can go and visit Him and He will always be present there.

God asked Moses that the people offer their materials suitable for the building of this place: gold, silver, brass and/or linen cloth.

This place was called the **Tent of Meeting** or **Tabernacle**, as God was going to meet with His people in this place.

God set out the dimensions of the Tabernacle and all its details very precisely. This place was in amidst all the houses of the people.

The Tabernacle consisted of two main parts: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Outside, there was the Outer Court, which is like the outer yard of the church.

There was a separation between the Outer Court and the Holy Place, and also between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

All the believers of God could enter the Outer Court, but only the priests could enter the Holy Place. As for the Holy of Holies, no one could enter it except for the high priest, and only once a year.

Inside the Holy of Holies there is the Ark of the Covenant, which was overlaid with gold within and without. Its lid had two Cherubim of gold on top of it, and inside the Ark of the Covenant, there were the two tablets of the Law on which the Ten Commandments are engraved by the finger of God, and the Golden Pot which contained a measure of the Manna, and Aaron's rod. The Holy of Holies is considered the dwelling place of God (you can simplify the idea with the following example: as if God has bought a house and His room in which is always staying is the Holy of Holies).

After the people finished building the Tabernacle, it was filled with a cloud, which was the presence of God with great glory.

The Tabernacle was transferred according to where God guided His people. It was transferred from one place to another until King Solomon built the Temple instead of it, and on a much greater scale. He placed its utensils in one of the side rooms (1 Kings 6:1).

When the Lord Jesus came down from heaven and was crucified on the Cross, the veil of the Temple was torn in two, for the people to be able to see God and talk to Him all the time, not only the high priest as in the beginning.

After that, when the people in God who believed in Christ spread across the earth, there couldn't be only one house for God in the whole world. That's why we built our church and the churches around us, just like the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon, for God to have a house always close to us, choosing everything in it. So we can't throw rubbish in it or break anything in it, or raise our voices in the church, or quarrel or run, because it is the House of God in which He chose everything.

That's why, Pumbaa, I was upset from you last time, because you knocked over the cups, and you kept running after your friend without giving any respect to the Lord Jesus Who is present with us. From today we have to get used to respecting the church and keeping it clean always.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- Who did God tell about the shape and details of the Tabernacle?
- What is the Tabernacle replaced by nowadays?
- In the Tabernacle and the Temple, was God present in the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies?
- Were all the people able to enter the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and the Temple



Exercise

- Respect the House of God, because He chose it Himself.
- Not to throw rubbish inside the church
- Taking care of the church as if it is your house, and more, as it is the House of God.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

Thank You God that You agreed to dwell among us and allowed us to come to Your house to see You there, speak with You, and hear Your voice. Please don't be upset from us if we neglected to respect Your house. Please let my heart be a place suitable for You to dwell in, so that we can have a place in Heaven like the martyrs and saints.



I Feel My Family

Miriam, the Sister of Moses, and Her Feelings Towards Her Mother

Bible References: Exodus 1:8-2:10

Lesson Aim:

To feel my family and their pain, helping where I can.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: That each person has an important role to play in their dealing with others, despite their young age.

Feel: The needs of others.

Practice: Taking positive steps to help others.

Memory Verse:

"Don't say, 'I am only a child.'"
(Jeremiah 1:7)



Background Information for the Servant

Miriam, the Sister of Moses:

Miriam was older than Moses and the Bible calls her a ‘prophetess’ (Exodus 15:20). She kept watching the basket in which the baby Moses was placed until the Pharaoh’s daughter passed by and noticed it. So, Miriam ran to Pharaoh’s daughter and offered her to find her a nurse to take care of the child. Any other girl would have been too afraid to do as Miriam did, for fear of being discovered and accused of some crime, but Miriam was not afraid. Just like her mother, she had strong faith in God, Who gave her courage.

Miriam, Moses’ sister, teaches us how to care about others, and offer true service which starts with the family, as our teacher St Paul said in his Epistle to St Timothy: “But if any-one does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8).

St Paul mentioned the above example in the context of looking after widows to proclaim the commitment of the believer not only towards mother or grandmother the widow but also to every organ in the holy church in need, especially the family.

One of the important characteristics of a true Christian is loving without limits and looking after strangers; how much more then should our love be towards our relatives and household.

In the book of Isaiah it is written “[Do] not hide yourself from your own flesh” (**Isaiah 58:7**). St. John Chrysostom comments on this verse: Talking about caring includes the soul and the flesh which means taking care of both together as he says: Who does not care for his family violates the law of God and the law of nature. Faith is not just about confessing dogma but also about the deeds we do which confirm our faith.

How can I learn to serve in the family?

1. By sharing in household duties: A servant may give a Sunday School lesson on the Good Samaritan although s/he may not be a good Samaritan in his own home. Christianity is not merely about conveying information to people but living it practically, so we should be both a servant and a sharer in household responsibilities. So, when you find your mother or wife has not finished preparing the food yet, don’t get angry or give her a lecture about timekeeping, but rather offer a hand to help her prepare the food and setting up the table. When you finish eating, don’t leave her to take away your leftovers and wash your plates but help her out. Helping out will cost you a little time, but it is a simple thing, and you will receive the blessing of easing the load of your parents and siblings. Moreover, you will receive the blessings of your mother’s prayers and her love to you.
2. An important point to bear in mind about your service at home is to do it with cheerfulness and love. If you are cheerful at home, beaming joy and happiness and have a kind smile, you will be loved by everyone, especially your children. Don’t be like those who memorise from the book of ‘Paradise of the Fathers’ only the passage that says, “Go to your cell and weep for your sins” and from the Holy Bible only the verse: “For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.” (Ecclesiastes 7:3). Such people are unbalanced in their view, and will live in depression, and will make all their household depressed like them! Rather, remember the other verse from the Holy Bible: “there is a time to weep and a time to laugh” (Ecclesiastes 3:4) and “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4) and “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...” (Galatians 5:22).
3. The third point regarding your service to your home is your respect for others. We should never let the love for service take you away from the virtues of discipline and respect for others. And the spiritual message that you want to convey to others, do so with all love, kindness and respect, with purity of tongue and with meekness. Do this even with your youngest sibling; if you ask them something and you say to one of them “excuse me”, “if you don’t mind”, and “may I...” they will learn from you and become like you in their dealings with others. This is how we can serve in a practical way.
4. Be an example to others through your success in your life, be it academically by your achievements; socially by your love and trust of others; spiritually by being blameless, i.e. no one holding anything against you; and in your life in general. If they see you as a good example, they will respect and listen to you, and will aspire to your principles and way of life, taking you as a role model for themselves. This is the practical way of bringing them closer to God through your own life. Your family will love you and be proud of you and accept your words when you speak about God. And if you invite them to church, they will go with you. You may even find your father telling your younger brother to learn from you and to see how successful and loved you are, and not doing bad things.

When you are successful and excel in what you do, and giving God what is due to Him before telling others to

do likewise, then you will be successful in your service to your family because you will be clothed with virtue and not just one speaking about virtue, and you will be a lesson for the others, without even uttering a word.

Lesson Content

Today we will talk about someone who was nearly our age or even younger: Miriam the Prophetess, the sister of Aaron and Moses. Let us see what her story is:

There was a Pharaoh king who was evil, and he humiliated the Hebrews because he felt threatened by their growing numbers and strength. So he called for all the midwives who helped mothers to deliver their babies and told them: when you help any mother to deliver her child, if the baby is a girl leave her to live, but if is a boy kill him in order to weaken the Hebrew people. However, the midwives feared God, so they did not obey the Pharaoh's command. When the king learned of this, he called for them again and asked them why they didn't carry out his instruction, so they answered and said to him that they couldn't make it to the Hebrew women in time before the baby is delivered. During the king's time, there were a lot of boys born from the Hebrew people, so he made a decree to throw all the new born Hebrew baby boys into the river.

At that time, there was a woman who had a girl called Miriam and a boy called Aaron, and she gave birth to another baby boy whom she called Moses, who would later grow up to become a great prophet and lead the people of God in the desert for forty years. After his mother gave birth to him, she hid her son for three months but of course he started to grow and his crying became louder and louder. So, she decided to make a basket made of a material called papyrus and paint it with something that wouldn't let the water seep in. She put her son in this basket, covered him and put the basket into the river. And Miriam observed the basket from afar as it floated on the water. Of course, she wanted to know what would happen to him; she was so courageous because she wasn't afraid that someone would see her.

Then it happened that the Pharaoh's daughter noticed the basket, so she ordered one of her maids to go and fetch it from the river. The king's daughter opened the basket to find the baby crying, and she understood that this baby is from the Hebrews. Then, before she thought of what she was going to do with him, whether to kill him or keep him...

What do you think Miriam did? Cry or run before someone would have caught her? Neither this nor that. Miriam ran very quickly to the Pharaoh's daughter and told her: "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?"

Pharaoh's daughter agreed and Miriam ran and called her mum to go quickly to nurse the baby boy, and the king's daughter told her to nurse him and to be paid for her time. Indeed, she took the boy and nursed him, and brought him up and made him grow in the love of God.

Who do you think was the good and courageous person who caused all of this to happen, for Moses to be saved from death? Of course, it was Miriam, his sister. But how come?

1. She wasn't afraid that someone would see her; she was sure that God was with her.
2. Also, she didn't just say, "I'm minding my own business. Am I his mother?" Neither did she say, "I'm still young". No matter how young we are, we can still help our parents at home, just like Miriam helped her mother and followed up on her brother and helped to bring her mother to him in order to nurse him. All this she did through her courage and words with Pharaoh's daughter.
3. Her heart was full of love for her brother and her feeling that he is part of her, so she was concerned that something may happen to him or that water would enter the basket.

We can help our siblings and our parents by at least keeping our belongings organised and our room clean. We can help dad by bringing him something he may ask for. We can show respect to our parents and not upset them when they are worried about us.

We should always be concerned about our siblings at home and offer them genuine love, and not just complain about them all the time to our parents. Did you see how Miriam, despite her young age, loved her brother and was determined to see where her brother would end up. We should always pray to God for our siblings and ask Him to let us love them from our heart and to make mum and dad happy.

No matter how young I am and no matter how little my knowledge and experience, I can always love those around me from all my heart and help my parents at home just as I help my friends. And if anyone asks you to help him/her,

be courageous enough to do so; know that God will give you the grace and strength, and have faith that He will be with you and help you just as He did Miriam.

We also shouldn't forget that there were a lot of saints and martyrs in our age who made God happy by their love in looking after their siblings, for example, St Anthony the Great.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- What did Miriam do to protect the life of her baby brother?
- How did Miriam put herself before others in serving her mum and brother?
- How did God reward Miriam for her love and service to her family?



Exercise

- The children should examine themselves every day and review how they helped their parents, and their behaviour towards their parents and siblings.
- Tell the children to get two small boxes, and write on one of them "Good Actions" and the other "Bad Actions". When they do something good for someone, they write it on a paper and put it in the Good box; and likewise if they do something bad, write it down and put it in the Bad box. At the end of each week, they should try to count the number of papers in each box, and try to reduce the number in the bad box the following week.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

Our church teaches us to pray every day in the first hour, Ephesians 4:1-5, in which we remember that the joy in our homes comes from the love shared between us: "**I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.**"

Teach us every morning, our Lord Jesus, to remember this beautiful advice and to live by it. Help each one of us, Lord, to be like Miriam; a source of joy and comfort to our parents. Amen.



Covenant Thursday

Washing the Disciples' Feet and the Holy Eucharist

Bible References: Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, John 6 and 13

Lesson Aim:

To learn about the Holy Eucharist

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The order of the rite of Covenant Thursday.

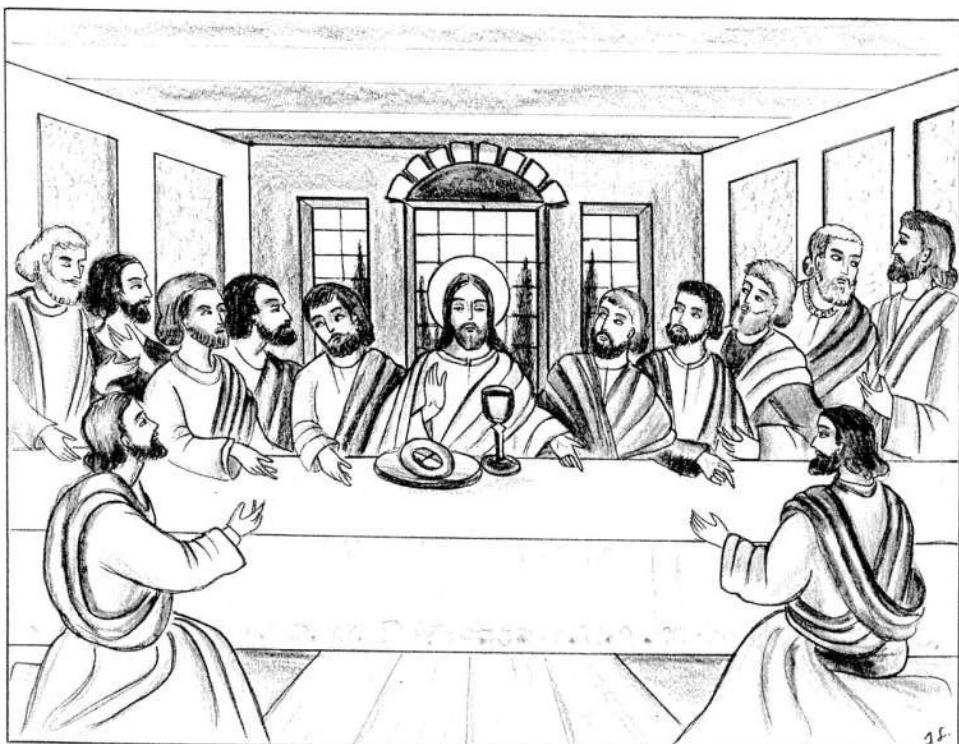
Feel: The importance of the Holy Eucharist.

Practice: Attending the liturgy from the beginning.

Memory Verse:

"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

(John 6:54)



Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Drama / Pantomime

Divide the class into two teams and give a Holy Bible to each team. Tell each team to read the verses related to the Passover of the Lord Jesus and His disciples, and the washing of their feet (Matthew 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22). Ask each team to act out the passage according to their understanding, focusing on the important verses. When the second team finishes, the servant chooses the winning team and starts giving the main lesson.

Lesson Content

Covenant Thursday is one of the most important days in the church calendar, as it commemorates three important events:

1. **Jesus Christ washing His disciples' feet:** the church celebrates this important event by the prayer of "Lakan" in which the oldest priest washes the people's feet.
2. **Jesus Christ establishing the Holy Eucharist:** the church celebrates this by praying a Divine Liturgy for the first time during Holy Week and taking Holy Communion having repented and confessed beforehand.
3. **The care of the Lord for His disciples, His farewell speech to them, and His prayer for them.**

1) Jesus Christ washing His disciples' feet:

- "Jesus rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded." (John 13:4-5). The Lord Jesus washed the feet of His disciples on Covenant Thursday before they partook of the Last Supper – Holy Communion. After washing their feet, the Lord said to them: "you are clean."
- Through the washing of feet, perhaps the Lord wants to teach us a lesson about purity before receiving Holy Communion.
- Or perhaps He wants to teach us a lesson in humility and serving one another, for in humility, the Teacher bent down to wash His disciples' feet; the Creator bent down to wash the feet of His creation.
- Or perhaps through the washing of feet, the Lord wants to teach us a lesson in love. Because of His love for His disciples, He washed their feet, so that He may give them His Body and Blood.
- Perhaps there are other lessons about the Lakan that we can learn today: water represents purity, life and the work of the Holy Spirit.
- The washing of the feet represents the washing of the person as a whole. The washing of the feet in the Lakan on Covenant Thursday is a sign of the purity which should precede partaking of Holy Communion. The church washes first the feet of the people and says to them: "You are now pure", then it offers them Holy Communion. But that doesn't mean that you come to church on Covenant Thursday and proceed to have your feet washed without having first repented and confessed.

2) Jesus Christ establishing the Holy Eucharist:

- On Covenant Thursday the Lord Jesus celebrated with His disciples with the feast of the Jewish Passover, and then instituted the Holy Eucharist, saying to told them: "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). To this day we celebrate the Eucharist according to His holy commandment.
- Amidst the joy of the Passover feast, the Lord hinted to them that His Body will be offered up and His Blood will be shed for them and for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24), saying: "This is My blood of the new covenant." The Lord foretold them about the shedding of His Blood for them. But notice that He said My Blood which "is" shed, not "was" shed. This is because His blood was shed on Good Friday, the day in which He gave salvation to the whole world. So, His words on Covenant Thursday were pointing to the salvation that He was to give on Friday. And the Passover Feast that was celebrated on Thursday was a shadow of the true Passover, which is His sacrifice on the Cross.

Repentance is essential for as a condition to be worthy of Holy Communion. What does it mean to be worthy?

- In the Prayer of Preparation, which is an inaudible prayed by the priest before the Liturgy, he says: "O Lord, Who know the hearts of all ... You, O Lord, Who know my unworthiness, my unpreparedness and my insufficiency for this, Your holy service, I have no boldness to draw near and open my mouth before Your holy glory; but according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, pardon me, a sinner, and grant that I may find grace and mercy at this hour."

We receive Communion for the purification of our souls, bodies, and spirits.

- **Communion gives purity, but not infallibility:** No one is infallible, no matter how righteous or saintly s/he is, and regardless of how often s/he confesses and receives Holy Communion.
- God taught us the need for reconciliation before Holy Communion, by saying “**Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.**” (Matthew 5:23-24).
- Therefore, reconciliation with others is essential before receiving Holy Communion because you can't proceed to take from the Sacrifice of love if you yourself have no love in your heart.

So, what is the meaning of reconciliation? Is it essential for a person to be reconciled with all people?

- The least we can do is to remove from our heart all feelings of hatred and unforgiveness towards any person. And if possible we should try to restore the good relation we had before.
- **However from the point of being ready physically:** We should prepare ourselves by fasting. No one is exempt from fasting, except those who are ill and/or frail, who are unable to fast. The church teaches us to not to eat or drink anything after midnight, so that the first thing we partake of the following day is the Lord's Body and Blood.
- **And we don't want anyone to stop themselves from having Holy Communion by giving the excuse of not being ready or not being worthy.** Let us try to make ourselves ready by repenting and confessing. Repentance is a work done in our hearts, so it is something we are all able to do. Be responsive to God's voice inside you; don't harden your heart but return to God.
- **And always remember the great blessings that result from taking Holy Communion,** which are mentioned in the Holy Bible and in the Divine Liturgy. Behold the Lord says in the Bible: “**I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever... Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day... He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.**” (John 6: 51, 54, 56). And in the divine liturgy it is said: “given for the remission of sins and eternal life to those who partake of Him” and, “to partake of Your Holies for the purification of our souls, our bodies and our spirits.”

Application



Comprehension Questions

- Mention briefly the order of the events of Covenant Thursday?
- Mention the order of the rite of the Covenant Thursday liturgy?
- What is the difference between the annual liturgy and the liturgy of Covenant Thursday?
- What does the priest say while putting on the clothes he wears specially for the service?



Exercise

- Encourage the kids to attend the liturgy weekly, giving presents to those who are committed in attending. The goal is to encourage them to attend. The servant should make note of the kids' attendance and their participation in the prayers.
- Every kid should research the rite of preparation of the Liturgy (The rite of Matins), and submit it to the servant. A prize can be given to the kid who does the best research, and the kid should present a summary of his research to the rest of the class.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

We thank You our Lord Jesus Christ that You were incarnate for our salvation, and gave us Your holy Body and Your honoured Blood, so that we may abide in You and live forever, and receive remission of our sins. To You is the glory forever. Amen.

Weeks 2-3 of April:

No lessons due to Palm Sunday
and the Feast of the Resurrection.



The Resurrection is the Glory of Christianity

Bible References: Matthew 28 and Luke 24

Lesson Aim:

To learn that death could not defeat the Lord Christ. Death will not be an end to true Christians. Therefore, Resurrection is the glory of Christianity.

Memory Verse:

"Why do you seek the living among the dead."
(Luke 24:5)



Background Information for the Servant

Resurrection of Christ

"Why seek ye the living among the dead He is not here but is risen: Remember how He spoke unto you when He was yet in Galilee saying: 'The son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified and the third day rise again.' " Luke 24

References: Matthew 28:1-10 Mark 16:1-8 Luke 24:1-12 John 20:1-6

The egg and the chick Christians all over the world used to make eggs during the feast of the resurrection. This goes back to the time of the apostles. Christians related the baby chick emerging out of the egg to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It is known that during the preaching of Mary Magdalene, she went to the King of Rome and told him about the resurrection of Christ. He did not believe and insulted her. She then brought an egg to him and said, "How can you believe that the chick comes out from the egg and not believe that the creator of the world was able to conquer death and rise from the dead?" Then he believed.

Sham El-Nessim:

Sham El-Nessim is an old Egyptian feast. It is the spring feast that the ancient Egyptians celebrated. The Coptic Christians are accustomed to celebrate Sham El-Nessim as an Egyptian feast on the day following Easter.

Lesson Content

First describe the events of the resurrection of Our Lord Jesus mentioned in Luke 24 early on Sunday morning. The two Mary's went to the tomb and did not find their beloved Jesus. The Angel told Mary Magdalene that Jesus rose from the dead. Afterwards, Jesus met Mary Magdalene and told her to tell the Disciples and Peter about His Resurrection.

Peter and John came to see the empty tomb for themselves, as Mary Magdalene told them that He had risen from the dead. Peter was older than John, so even when John arrived at the tomb first, he did not enter until Peter arrived and entered before him. We must respect our elders. Please read John 20: 1-10.

Our Lord Jesus rose from the dead to let us also rise from our sins, since the punishment of sin is death. If we do not rise from our sins then we cannot benefit from the Resurrection of Christ. Therefore, regular repentance is needed.

Our beloved Lord rose from the dead by Himself. He did not need the Archangel Michael to open the gates of the tomb. The Archangel came only to make the announcement. Jesus rose from the dead with the stone at the door of the tomb and the guards around it. The Lord Jesus is God.

The guards thought (by the plot of the chief priests) that His Disciples came at night while they were asleep and took His Body. This was a big lie.

Through the resurrection of Christ, He conquered death and death no longer had power over the believers. Just as Jesus rose from the dead He will raise us as well in His second coming.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- Easter is the greatest feast in our beloved Coptic Orthodox Church because the Resurrection of Christ gave us power over sin and death. Let us all be very happy and sing the joyous songs of Resurrection.
- In our Liturgy, as we pray for the repose of the departed souls, we say "For there is no death for thy servants but a departure." **This is only in Christianity** and this is the reason for us to say "The Resurrection is the glory of Christianity."



Joy of the Resurrection

The Lord at the Lake of Galilee after His Resurrection

Bible References: John 21:1-14

Lesson Aim:

To feel the happiness of the Disciples when they saw the Lord Jesus after His resurrection at the lake of Galilee. The resurrection is a great source of joy for us now.

Memory Verse:

“Jesus said to them come and eat breakfast.”
(John 21:12)



Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Discussion

Opening Questions:

1. What is the largest feast in our church? Easter.
2. Why is Easter the largest feast in our church?
3. How do you feel in it?

Lesson Content

What a drastic change did the resurrection of the Lord do to His Disciples! During His crucifixion the Disciples were afraid and ran away (except John the Beloved who followed Him to the Cross). All the Disciples stayed together in the upper room (the upper room represented the Church) fearing the Jews. The door was shut closed when the Lord came to them and granted them peace and happiness instead of fear. This caused a major change in the Disciples. The resurrection is a great source of joy.

In another incident after the resurrection, the Disciples were very poor and lonely while at the lake of Galilee. They couldn't catch any fish and were saddened. They sadly remembered that the Lord helped them before when He was with them to catch plenty of fish. But He was not there. The Disciples wondered.

They hoped He would come and transform their sadness to joy. Suddenly, the Lord appeared to them standing on the shore. Yet the Disciples did not know it was Him. He asked them: "children have you any food?" they answered "no". He said "cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." So they cast, but they were unable to draw it in because it was heavy with fish. The Disciple exclaimed: "it is the Lord!" They brought the fish to the shore and the Lord Jesus sat with them and they had breakfast together. The Disciples were filled with great joy. What a great difference did the resurrection do to the Disciples? Resurrection will always be the great source of joy for us.

No one can accept the crucifixion of the Lord without His resurrection. So the resurrection of Christ is at the core of our faith.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- Christ cares about us in all aspects. He cares about our daily living needs as well as our spiritual life.
- Christianity is a religion of joy because it gives solutions to all our problems. If we are sick or in need of food or in need of shelter Our Lord Jesus will not deny His love for us and will give us all our needs and more. Through His resurrection He opened the way for us to have eternal life after we depart from this world.



The Life of St Mark

How was Christianity Planted in Egypt?

Book References:

- HH Pope Shenouda III, "The Beholder of God, Mark the Evangelist, Saint and Martyr"

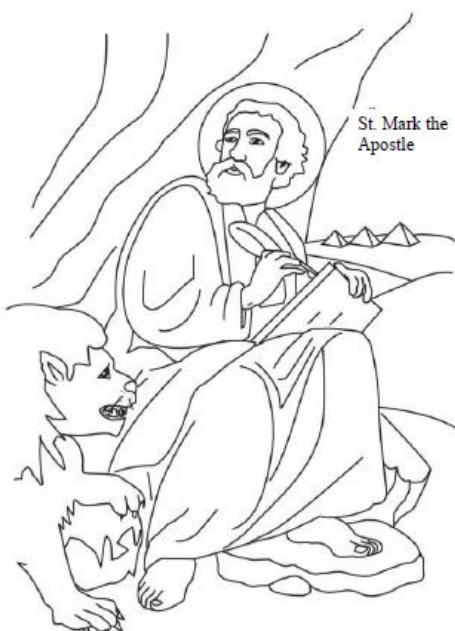
Lesson Aim:

- To learn about the life of St Mark the Evangelist.
- To learn how Christianity was planted in Egypt.
- To learn about St Mark's love for God which enabled him to travel all over the world to preach the word of God.

Memory Verse:

"Blessed is Egypt my people."
(Isaiah 19:25)

"In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt."
(Isaiah 19:19)



Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Discussion

Opening Questions:

1. Who preached Christianity in Egypt? What do you know about St Mark?
2. Whenever the Coptic Orthodox church starts a new mission in a town, city or country, the first church that gets built in that place is usually named after St Mark. What is the reason for that?
3. You are Christians, Orthodox and Coptic. What do these words mean?

It was written in the Old Testament that there shall be a good altar for the Lord in the land of Egypt. Do you think that it was easy for St Mark and the priests he ordained to preach Christianity there?

Lesson Content

Our Church makes a celebration for St Mark twice a year, once in May and once in November.

The Holy Family in Egypt

Egypt was singled out for a particular blessing. The Holy Family took shelter in it. The Holy Family's visit was a preparation of the groundwork for St Mark who was to begin his mission in Egypt about 60 years later.

As the Holy Child entered Egypt through the city of Heliopolis the noise of a rushing mighty wind was heard and the earth trembled. The idols that were worshipped by the Egyptians crashed.

The Planting of Christianity in Egypt:

Some Egyptians were in Jerusalem attending the Pentecost and carried the news to Egypt shortly after the Pentecost.

Early Childhood of St Mark:

His original name was John, his surname was Mark. He was born to two Jewish parents at Cyrene, a city on the western borders of Egypt. He was from Libya. His parents Immigrated to Palestine and settled in Cana of Galilee. He was St Peter's relative. St Mark was a well-educated man; He studied the Greek and Latin languages.

The first Church in the world:

St Mark was one of the seventy Apostles that followed Jesus. His home was the place of gathering for Jesus and the Disciples during the Last Supper. It was also the place where the Disciples stayed after Jesus' resurrection and where the Pentecost took place. Hence, St Mark's home is well known as the first Church in the World.

St Mark's First Visit to Egypt:

Alexandria was the cultural capital of the world when St Mark arrived there. There were three races in Egypt at his time the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Jews, in addition to a few Romans. All were non-Christians. In Alexandria, St Mark healed the hands of Anianus the shoemaker. Anianus and his family were baptised by St Mark. This home was the first fruit in St Mark's preaching in Egypt. Many people in Alexandria became Christians and met with St Mark in Anianus's house as it was the first church in the city. So the Lord supported the missionary work of St Mark by performing miracles.

St Mark ordained Anianus as the First Bishop of the Egyptian Church in 62 AD.

The Church in Libya

He stayed from 63 to 65 AD in Libya and established two churches.

St Mark went to Rome again:

St Paul and St Barnabas were going to preach in Rome. St Mark wanted to join them but St Paul preferred not to take St Mark. At that time St Mark went with his cousin St Barnabas to preach in Cyprus. St Mark stayed there until St Barnabas passed away, then joined St Paul and St Peter in Rome and stayed there until the martyrdom of St Paul in 67 AD Then he went to Libya.

St Mark then preached Christianity in Egypt

St Mark returned from Libya to Alexandria, Egypt. He was pleased to see that the number of believers had increased a lot. He ordained Bishop Anianus, three priests and seven deacons. Christianity spread among the Egyptians very rapidly with the help of God and because of large parallels between the ancient Egyptian religion and Christianity.

St Mark the Martyr and Saint

In 68 AD, while the Christians were celebrating Easter in the church in Alexandria, the Egyptians and the Greeks were also celebrating the national day for the idol god Sirabis.

On this day the pagans gathered to kill St Mark. It was too much for the pagans to see many of their own people were converting to Christianity. The people together with authority moved swiftly against St Mark. The crowd attacked the church at the time St Mark just completed the Eucharist. They pushed away the congregation and arrested him and with a long strong rope they put around his neck, they pulled him along the streets and the roads of the city.

With extreme cruelty they kept pulling him over the rough rocky surface of the streets that his flesh was cut into pieces with the blood all over the roads. The Saint thanked God who made him worthy to suffer in His name.

By the end of the day, they got tired, and they threw him in a dark prison.

St Mark spent that night with his terribly lacerated body, with a high spirit, and was looking forward to meet the Lord in His Kingdom. God didn't leave him alone.

At midnight, he saw an angel, who touched him and said, "O Mark, the good servant, the time has arrived to receive your award now." "Be courageous, as your name has been written in book of life." This comforted him and he raised his hand towards heaven and said, "Thank you my Savior Jesus, You never left me alone, You accepted me with whom You blessed with Your mercy."

As the angel left, the Savior appeared to him and gave him the peace and said: "O Mark, my disciple and my evangelist, peace be with you." The disciple screamed and said, "O' my Lord Jesus." When the vision ended, he became cheerful and comfortable, as his heart was ready to meet the Lord.

The following morning, on 30 Barmoda, the idolaters came, to take him from the prison and again surrounded his neck with a thick rope and repeated what they did with him the previous day. While he was pulled over the stones he prayed God to forgive them. His soul left him for its Creator, to receive the crown of martyrdom.

One hundred and seventeen patriarchs sat on the Seat of St Mark (Seat of Alexandria) before our present Pope (Pope Tawadros II, the Pope 118). St Mark was considered their first. The first to succeed him was St Anianus.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- We learn how God planted Christianity in Egypt. We belong to the oldest church in the world. We must always be thankful for being Christians, Orthodox and Coptic.
- Not only is our church the oldest in the world, but our church also has maintained the faith throughout the years without any change.
- St Mark's love was stronger than the sufferings that the pagans brought upon him. Can we stick to our Christianity and never fear anyone? We must.
- St Mark was rewarded from the Lord very generously. He lived a very peaceful life. He was filled with joy. He gained many crowns in the eternal kingdom.

Saint Mark Doxology

"In this day there will be an Altar to the Lord in the midst of the Land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border." (Isaiah 19:19)

Hail to you Saint Mark
Who preached the name of Isos

the son of Arostopolos
Markos Piapostolos.

You were born in Cyrene
The land of the Divine

and fled to Palestine
Markos Piapostolos.

You followed Jesus Christ
While He was in your midst

from the east to the west
Markos Piapostolos.

When the lions attacked
So immediately they died

you and your father prayed
Markos Piapostolos.

Our Lord sent Peter
In the house of your father

to prepare the Passover
Markos Piapostolos.

You were carrying a pitcher
They followed till you entered

that was full of water
Markos Piapostolos.

And the Lord said
For you it is shed

this is My body and blood
Markos Piapostolos.

To the garden you followed
You fled from naked

the men of you laid hold
Markos Piapostolos.

In your house the Comforter
God answered your prayer

descended like fire
Markos Piapostolos.

With tongues you spoke to men
About the resurrection

from every nation
Markos Piapostolos.

You brought us the good news
And ordained Anianus

about Piekhestos
Markos Piapostolos.

You wrote the first witness
Describing His Holiness

about Jesus' greatness
Markos Piapostolos.

In Alexandria you built
Many popes graduated from it

a school that was the first
Markos Piapostolos.

And when you were martyred
God ordered and it rained

your body was not burned
Markos Piapostolos.

You and God's beholder
Remember us in your prayer

and our intercessor
Markos Piapostolos.



Kindness: I Can Solve My Problems With Kindness

Ibrahim El Gohary

Book References:

- Synaxarion of 25 Pachons
- HH Pope Shenouda III, "Fruit of the Spirit" - Arabic
- HG Bishop Youssef, "Anger Management" - Arabic
- "Interpretation on the Epistle to the Ephesians - The Church of the two Saints: Saint Mark and Pope Peter" - Arabic
- Fr Tadros Attiat Allah, "A Nice Word Opens the Hearts" - Arabic

Lesson Aim:

To understand that kindness is best when dealing with others.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: How to gain others through kindness.

Feel: The importance of gaining others and reconciling with them.

Practice: Making peace with whomever one deals with.

Memory Verse:

"Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' "
(Romans 12:20)



Background Information for the Servant

"And be kind to one another" (Ephesians 4:32)

The word for 'kind' in the Greek language carries the meaning of both 'kindness' and 'goodness'. Kindness is a witness to the dwelling of the Spirit, so when we see a gentle and kind person we know that the meek and calm Spirit of God is resting inside that person. The Greeks knew that kindness is caring about others' situations as though they are our own. So, kindness has more of an outward view than an inward one, and Christianity has stated this view: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." (Romans 12:15).

Kindness is a characteristic of God in His dealings with us. It is also a characteristic of His disciples:

As the apostle Saint Paul said: "But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in fastings; by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love" (2 Corinthians 6:4-6).

Saint Peter the Apostle says: "all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing" (1 Peter 3:8-9).

Kindness is a natural fruit of the life of meekness, gentleness, cheerfulness, humility and one that violence, harshness, pride and being rough with others.

If you are not kind in your dealings, so you are not religious at all, because kindness is a Fruit of the Spirit, so whoever doesn't have this Fruit in his life will not be a spiritual man.

Kind! Tenderhearted! Forgiving!

It is difficult for the kind person to become nervous or irritable. Rather, such a person is full of sympathy and compassion. The word 'tenderhearted' means a heart which feels the pain of others, such that whatever annoys others is also painful and hurtful to me. Such a person will have sympathy in his/her heart, as it is difficult for a sympathetic person to hurt someone else, because if s/he does, that person will feel pain inside themselves. Sympathetic people cannot direct hurtful phrases to others, but on the contrary, they can easily forgive and forget any wrongdoings towards them.

Be kind to win those around you:

Kindness in speaking, and gentleness in behaviour is the way to gain the hearts and the love of others. So nice words will help you in gaining many friends. If you offer others nice words, this will make them happy and at ease; people are in need of this. If you have a word that will give someone joy, say it to him/her, but if you have a tiring word let's delay uttering so as not to tire the other. Be cheerful before all, especially with your children and your Sunday School children; offer them a pure smile and nice words, remembering that people don't like gloomy expressions or depressed faces. This way you will make people happy to meet you, and will give them the feeling that you are a reason for their joy.

The kind person's words are nice:

The nice and faithful word encourages, makes happy, raises morale, increases confidence and pushes towards more success. Not only to the one who hears the nice word, but also to the one who says it, because whoever says a positive word will also be positive, have a strong personality, and be capable of giving.

Kindness and gentleness in speech must be in the character of every servant, as they are their way to the hearts of his Sunday School children, and will gain their love, and by them s/he presents to them the person of Christ, and gains the love of his/her fellow servants.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Discussion

Equipment needed: Two pieces of wood, a nail and a hammer.

Method of presentation: Of course, we all see the carpenter when he holds two pieces of wood together with a nail. But what if the nail objected and told the hammer not to hit him? Will the carpenter be able to do anything? And if the wood objected for the nail to go through it, will we be able to do anything? (Children opinions)

You know why the nail bears being hit by the hammer, or why the wood bears to have an injury in it? It is so that nice shapes are produced from it, or something useful is made for us (table, cupboard, chair ...)



Story

One day, a rich man gave a basket full of rotten food to a poor man, but the poor man just smiled and left the palace with the basket. The poor man emptied the basket of its contents and cleaned it, put in it fantastic flowers and returned to the palace and gave it to the rich man. The rich man was wondering and asked him why on earth when I give you a basket full of rotten things, you would return it to me full of beautiful flowers? The poor man replied: each man gives whatever is in his heart.

Lesson Content

The Great Layman Ibrahim El-Gohary:

Our story today is about the great layman Ibrahim El-Gohary. He was born to righteous parents in a city called Kalube close to Cairo. He learned reading and writing, and used to transcribe the books of the church and give them to Pope Youannes XVIII, the 107th Pope of the church. He lived in the 18th century.

He liked his job very much to the extent that he spent money from his own salary to transcribe more copies of the books. By time, he was promoted in his job till he became the Chief Scribe of all of Egypt, a position which is equal to Prime Minister today. Despite his high position, he was a meek, humble and charitable man, and all the people loved him. "Tribulation produces perseverance" (Romans 5:3).

The layman Ibrahim El-Gohary had a daughter called Demiana and a son called Joseph. He was preparing for his son a house because he was about to get married, but God chose for his son to be with Him in heaven instead. Ibrahim El-Gohary grieved with his wife on their son's passing, but their grief transformed into a desire to help widows and orphans and to provide comfort to every sad soul, especially after St Anthony the Great appeared to him and comforted him for his son's death. Not only that, but St Antony also appeared to his wife in the same night, and it was a very nice comfort from heaven.

Girgis El-Gohary:

Ibrahim El-Gohary had a brother called Girgis El-Gohary. There were some people annoying Girgis with bad words and insulting him, and he of course was so annoyed and said that he must tell his brother Ibrahim to deal with them, for he is in a high position and has authority: he could imprison them or punish them in any way. Then Girgis actually told his brother these words and Ibrahim's response was really strange. He told him: "Don't be afraid I will cut their tongues for you."

The next day, as Girgis was passing by in front of those people, he found them dealing nicely with him rather than annoying him with bad words. He went immediately to his brother Ibrahim to know what exactly he had done to them! He told him that instead of losing them and returning revile with revile, I replied to their revile with kindness and sent them some gifts and presents; through this we win them and live in peace and love and are reconciled. You saw their reaction after they saw you today; the tongue of evil is cut.

Girgis was convinced with what his brother, Ibrahim El-Gohary, said; that we have to behave with love, kindness for all of us to live in peace, calmness and love.

Application



Game

Equipment needed: Drawing paper, pens and some colouring pencils.

Tell the children a situation: For example, if your friend broke your pen, what will you do? Let the children express their opinion and their reaction towards this situation with drawing or writing (or both). Then their opinions should be evaluated and the positive opinions rewarded.

Examples of positive opinions:

1. Reproach him in order not to repeat these things.
2. Forgive him and tell him that I'm not upset with you.
3. Pray for him.

Examples of negative opinions:

1. Beat him.
2. Unfriend him and do not speak to him again.
3. Do a prank on him and hide his pencil case.

**Comprehension Questions**

- What was the job of the layman Ibrahim El-Gohary in Egypt?
- What did St Anthony do with Ibrahim El-Gohary and his wife after their son passed away?
- How did Ibrahim El-Gohary deal with those who insulted his brother Grgis?

**Exercise**

1. Not to revile the one who reviles me, but instead show him kindness and respect.
2. Try to win others (my family, friends, neighbours and others) with love and nice word.

**Prayer**

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

My Lord Jesus, I thank You my compassionate God because You are always with us in everything in our lives. Teach us to be kind, meek and humble-hearted just as You are. Thank You for making us learn about Your saints, like the layman Ibrahim El-Gohary.

Help us O Lord to learn from You, and to deal with everyone around us with love and kindness. Help us to win them over, and not upset any of them with any word or a look that may annoy them. Amen.



Ascension

"He Blessed Them"

Bible References: Luke 24:50-53 and Act 1:1-11

Lesson Aim:

In this lesson we would like to review with the children the events leading to the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. As He blessed His Disciples, He will bless us now if we ask for it.

Memory Verse:

"... And He lifted up His hands and blessed them."
(Luke 24:50)



Lesson Content

Resurrection: After our Lord died on the Cross, His body was placed in a new tomb. Because the Lord Jesus is God He rose from the dead after three days. He showed up alive again to His Disciples and to His followers at many places in various times over a period of forty days. During these forty days He strengthened them, restored their faith and spoke with them about His kingdom in heaven. He also taught them how to preach and how to tell people about their salvation.

Ascension: At the end of the forty days, as He was speaking to them, He started to rise up gradually to heaven, spreading His hands to bless them when He started to ascend. He finally disappeared in the clouds very very high in the sky. His Disciples continued to stare at the clouds when the Lord Christ disappeared. They were amazed with what they saw. But He filled their hearts with joy and they continued to look up to the clouds for a long time.

Two Angels appeared to them in a beautiful white garment and told them "Why do you stand gazing up into heaven?" This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will soon come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11)

The Disciples went back to the upper room (in the house of St Mark the apostle). They stayed there with our holy mother St. Mary the Virgin and some women and were praying in one accord. They obeyed when the Lord Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the power of the Holy Spirit.

As the Lord Christ raised His hands and blessed His Disciples He is ready and willing to bless us now. But we have to ask Him to bless us. We also have to obey Him as the Disciples obeyed Him and returned to Jerusalem after they saw the ascension. Remember what happened when the Lord blessed the five loaves and the two fish? For how many people were the five loaves and the two fish enough to feed? And how many baskets of remaining food did they collect? We all need the blessings of God. We must ask Him to:

Bless our parents
 Bless our minds
 Bless our health
 Bless our spiritual life
 Bless our food
 Bless the sick people
 Bless the poor people
 Bless everyone

In our divine liturgy we pray and say to God "As you blessed at that time now bless." But remember: for God to bless us we have to be obedient like the Disciples were; we must thank Him for everything and ask Him to give us His heavenly blessings.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- The Lord Jesus is God. He is the only one who resurrected by Himself and ascended by Himself to heaven.
- The Lord showed a lot of love to His Disciples while He was ascending to heaven. He raised up His hands and blessed them. The Lord Jesus is so kind and He is very generous in His giving to us.
- Let us all be obedient to the commandment of the Lord Jesus and the outcome will be great blessings for us.

Six weeks kept free for
Coptic Festival programme.



St Paul the Apostle I

His Life Before and his Ministry with the Holy Spirit working in him

Bible References: Acts 9:1-18 and Acts 20:7-12

Lesson Aim:

To teach the children about Saul's persecution Christians, and how God changed his heart and gave him strength in his ministry. Also to teach the children that the Holy Spirit can support us as He supported St Paul.

Memory Verse:

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia."
(Acts 22:3)



Lesson Content

Start by reviewing what the children know about St Paul the Apostle. He was not one of the 12 Disciples or one of the 70 Apostles.

We must never lose hope, because as God worked with Saul; He can also work with us.

The word “Apostles” is limited to certain men of the first generation of the church and missionaries of the gospel.

The first 12 apostles sent by Jesus are named in Mark 3:14-19. Note that Matthias replaced Judas Iscariot.

Others are also considered apostles; including Paul, James, Barnabas, Matthias and Luke.

The church desired to limit the word “Apostles” to those who had seen the Lord Jesus and had firsthand information about Him.

The birth of Saint Paul and his life in Jerusalem:

- **Acts 22:5** - “...as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.”
- **Acts 26:4** - “My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know.”

Saint Paul was a Jew from the tribe of Benjamin He was a Hebrew, his name was Saul and he also had a Romanian citizenship.

- **Acts 16**
- **Philippians 3:5** - "...circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee."
- **Romans 11:1** - "I...am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."

He was a Pharisee:

- **Galatians 1:13-14** - “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”
- **Acts 22:3** - “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God...”

He was against the church:

- **Galatians 1:13-14** - “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”

What did the Lord Jesus do to convert him?

Read and explain Acts 9:1-18:

The Damascus Road: Saul Converted

9 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. **4** Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

5 And he said, “Who are You, Lord?”

Then the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.”

⁶ So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?"

Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Ananias Baptises Saul

¹⁰ Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias."

And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

¹¹ So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. ¹² And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

¹³ Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

¹⁷ And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptised.

Key Points about St Paul

1. The Lord Jesus led him to Ananias to teach him and baptise him with water and the Holy Spirit.
2. St Paul was in the wilderness for three years. After he was baptised, He was led by the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 1:17)
3. St Paul was given the Apostolic status in Jerusalem with the laying of hands of the other Apostles on him. (Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 15:1)

Nothing is impossible for God. Saul was converted to St Paul, so we should never lose hope.

St Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit. His spiritual talents increased as follows:

1. Speaking with various tongues

This helped St Paul preach the word of God and Christianity in several nations. See the memory verse.

St Paul talked about the talents given by the Holy Spirit to the believers "But the manifestation of the spirit is given to each other for the profit of all, for no one is given the word of wisdom through the spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretations of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

2. Performing Miracles during his ministry:

"And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power." (1 Corinthians 2:4) Please also see "Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his hands to the sick and the diseases left them and the evil spirit went out of them." (Acts 19:11-12)

Mention in details some of the miracles, e.g.:

- The man of Lystra was healed. (Acts 14:8-11)
- The Young man brought back to life. (Acts 20:7-12)

3. He was very humble despite all the powers given to him.

He considered himself to be the least amongst the Apostles. See 1 Corinthians 15:8-10 and 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- Jesus said: "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?" We learn that whoever is against the church is against God and cannot win.

We can see that when a non-Christian becomes Christian, he or she can have a very strong faith and love for God.

We must remember the non-Christians in our prayers and ask God to help them have faith in Him and believe in Christ the Saviour.

- We must never lose hope. As long as we pray and do our best, everything will go smoothly.
- The Holy Spirit inside us can give us spiritual strength, talents and heavenly powers. But we must also ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We have to be humble and reject the feeling of pride.
- Everything that is good in us is from God. Remember that St Paul was Saul. Saul was a lost being; God changed him and gave him several heavenly gifts.



St Paul the Apostle II

His Personality: Strong, Yet Kind

Bible References: 1 Corinthians 4:9-12

Lesson Aim:

In this lesson we learn that a true Christian must be strong yet kind.

Memory Verse:

“And we labour, working with our hands.”
(1 Corinthians 4:12)



Lesson Content

St Paul was exposed to a tremendous physical sickness. Yet he preached with great intensity and spent great efforts with the help of God. He was physically weak but spiritually strong:

- **2 Corinthians 10:1,10** - "Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you." ... "For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."
- **Acts 14:12** - "And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker."
- **Galatians 4:13,14** - "You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first." ... "And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus."
- **2 Corinthians 12:7** - "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to [a]buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure."

Although St Paul said "whoever serves the Altar eats from the Altar", he used his skill as a tent-maker to feed himself and others who served with him:

- **1 Corinthians 4:9-12** - "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but we are dishonored! To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labour, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure..."
- **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** - "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."
- **2 Corinthians 4:7-12** - "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed — always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you."
- **2 Thessalonians 3:8-9** - "...nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labour and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us."

St Paul was an excellent speaker inspired by the Holy Spirit. He was well-aware of all the questions raised by the Jews and had clear answers about the Lord Jesus as Christ, whom the whole human race has been waiting for:

- **Acts 14:12** - "And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker."
- **Acts 20:7-11**
- **Acts 24:26 and 26:24** - "Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him." ... "And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ."

Though St Paul was a very tough person, yet he was very kind, i.e. he was hard on the issues but soft on people:

- **1 Corinthians 4:19-21** - "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power. What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?"
- **2 Thessalonians 2:15** - "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle."
- **Galatians 1:8-9** - "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- Although he was physically sick St Paul loved God and God loved him. God allowed this ailment to protect St Paul from being conceited. We, too, must also thank God if we are sick, because He has a reason for everything.
- St Paul worked hard to feed himself and the people who served with him while preaching the word of God.
- Just as the Lord Jesus Christ was tough at times and kind at other times, we too as Christians must have the same personality.



How to Reach Heaven I: Prayer

Saint Pishoy

Bible References: Book of Revelation – Chapter 3

Book References:

- HG Metropolitan Pishoy, Metropolitan of Damietta and Kafr El-Sheikh, "Christ, the desire of all generations from an orthodox perspective" - Arabic

Lesson Aim:

To learn about the power of prayer in helping us to reach Heaven.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: St Pishoy's biography and the importance of prayer to reach eternal life.

Feel: The love of prayer and the enjoyment of prayer time.

Practice: Praying regularly, praying the psalms at various times.

Memory Verse:

"O You who hear prayer, to You all mankind comes."
(Psalm 65:2)



Background Information for the Servant

From "Words Of Spiritual Benefit Vol. I" by HH Pope Shenouda III:

Prayer is to open the heart to God, so that the faithful talks to Him, lovingly and openly. It is laying the individual before God. Prayer is a tie; a relationship between man and God. Therefore, it is not just talk, it is a heart connected to a heart. Prayer is a feeling of being in the presence of God. It is a partnership with the Holy Spirit and unity with God.

Prayer is the food of the angels and the spiritual beings by which they are nourished and taste the Lord, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8) Prayer quenches a soul's thirst for God, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul to you, O God" (Psalm 42:1), "I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." (Psalm 63:5)

Prayer is the submission of life to God to allow Him to conduct our lives, "Your will be done." Prayer is an admission of our lack of strength and intelligence. Therefore, we resort to a greater power where we can find our care.

Prayer is abolishing our independence from God. It is meeting with God: either we lift ourselves up to Him or He comes down to us. It is turning oneself to Heaven and to the throne of God. Prayer is not an obligation or an order. It is not just a commandment or piety and devotion. It is a desire and longing.

The heart's beat is a prayer; the eye's tear is a prayer; the feeling of God's presence is a prayer.

Our Fathers lived in the desert with a need, desire and enjoyment of prayer. Their lives were filled with the love of prayer and the feeling of the strength of prayer and the need for prayer while working and during their times of solitude. All their works were prayer, abiding with God, and being led by prayer to the depths of Christ, to the depth of the beloved Saviour.

Saint Anba Pishoy, the great saint, was discipled by Anba Bemoa, the disciple of Saint Macarius the Great (who was discipled by Saint Antony, the father of monasticism).

Saint Pishoy was born in the city of Monufia around 320 AD. God chose him from among his siblings to consecrate his life to God and to be a role model for many of the desert fathers.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Discussion

The servant asks the children the following questions:

- What is the nicest thing about eternal life? (It is to meet with the Lord Jesus)
- How can we start living our eternal life here on Earth?
- Is it possible to talk with the Lord Jesus when we are here on Earth?
- Does the Lord Jesus hear us when we pray to Him?
- When we pray what can we tell Him in prayer?



Group Workshop

The servant divides the class into groups and asks each group to write the things for which they usually pray. The servant of each group then writes the prayers on a piece of paper. At the end of the lesson, a servant mentions all the children's prayers which they suggested during the workshop.



Story

One day, Sunday School had arranged a trip to a monastery where the children were to sleepover, for the servants had told the class that sleeping over at the monastery has a unique taste. They prepared a suitable place for the kids in one of the buildings of the monastery.

A boy called Michael went on the trip, and during the night, Michael was woken from his sleep by the beautiful tunes of the hymns the monks were chanting and felt that he was hearing angels' voices. Michael woke his servant

and asked him if he could go to the place of prayer. So, Michael and his servant went towards the church where the monks were chanting. It was dark outside and when Michael arrived at the church, he couldn't understand anything from the words, but he was really enjoying the tunes of the hymns.

After the prayers had finished, the monks prayed a liturgy, and after that the monks went silently, each to their own cell. Michael asked the servant about the nice hymns that he heard. The servant told him that it is called Tasbeha, and that it is not only the monks and deacons in the church who pray it, but also the angels of God. And so, by praying Tasbeha, we are participating with the angels in praising God and this is something that makes God very happy.

In most of the monasteries the monks pray Tasbeha at nearly at 4 o'clock in the morning, while other people would be sleeping. The monks wake up at that time to raise up strong prayers which make our Lord Jesus very happy. This is how the monks start their day, just like how our father, Saint Pishoy did.

Lesson Content

Saint Pishoy was born in a city called Menofia around 320 AD He was one of seven siblings, and physically he was the weakest of them all. His mother raised them with the love of the church, prayer and reading the Holy Bible.

Saint Pishoy would always ask his mother to tell him about something that happened in the Bible, while the rest of his siblings were busy with their work and many other things.

Saint Pishoy's greatest concern was prayer, and he loved it more each day as he used to feel that he was truly speaking to the Lord Jesus, whom he loved very much. Whenever he prayed, he felt that he was in Heaven.

One day an angel appeared to the mother of Saint Pishoy and told her: "God says to you, 'give me one of your children.'" She answered him and said: "All my children belong to God. Whomever He wants, let Him take." So, the angel chose Saint Pishoy. Then the mother said: "But Pishoy is the weakest one among them." But the angel replied: "God's strength is made perfect in weakness."

Days passed and Saint Pishoy grew up, and when he reached the age of 20, he had it in his heart to offer his life to the Lord Jesus, so that nothing else could preoccupy him. So, he went to the wilderness called "Scetis" which means "weighing of hearts" and met a monk called Abba Bemwa from whom he started learning.

The monks at that time were not staying at the monastery, but they would move from one place to another in the wilderness, living in caves. In the wilderness, whenever there was an old monk, there would gather around him a group of young monks who would teach them how to fast and pray and conquer the devil by the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ. Despite Saint Pishoy's weak body, he would stand praying for hours because of the enjoyment he would receive in his time of prayer, for he is praying to our Lord Jesus, the King of kings. There was a very strong relationship between Saint Pishoy and our Lord Jesus.

One day, after Saint Pishoy finished his prayer and went to sleep, he kept thinking: "how can I sleep and not speak with our Lord Jesus all night? How nice is the time of prayer! Why don't I pray during the night as well?" Indeed, Saint Pishoy decided to pray all night, but often sleep would overcome him, so he kept thinking to himself what to do. Then he decided to tie a rope to the ceiling and tie the other end to his hair, so that if he sleeps while he is praying, the rope would pull his hair and he would wake up again to continue praying. This is how Saint Pishoy stayed up all night to pray, and through this he established a very strong bond with the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus would appear to him and talk to him.

It happened that God sent a group of monks to be discipled by Saint Pishoy, so he taught them that prayer is very important to reach Heaven, and it also lets us feel Heaven while still on Earth.

One day Jesus Christ visited Saint Pishoy as though He were a normal person. Traditionally, the first thing a monk would do after welcoming a stranger is to wash their feet of the dust from travelling. So, when he was washing His feet, he saw the imprint of nails which pierced His feet, and from that He knew that this Man is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and then immediately disappeared. So, Saint Pishoy took from this water and drank from it. He called another monk and told him to drink from it as well, but he refused. So, when the disciple came back the following day, he saw the water had gone, and when he asked Saint Pishoy about it, he told him that this is the water with which he washed the feet of the Lord Jesus. When the monk heard this, he became very upset.

Saint Pishoy's disciples increased in number, and one day they asked him to pray so that they may also see our Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, Saint Pishoy prayed and asked the Lord Jesus to appear to the monks, so the Lord promised him that he would appear on a mountain and told him the day on which it would happen. When that day came, all the monks went out towards the mountain. And it happened that they came across a poor old man standing at the foot of the mountain asking for help to walk. However, all the monks were in a rush to reach the top of the mountain to see the Lord Jesus Christ. When Saint Pishoy came at last (because he was old-aged) he saw the man, had compassion on him, carried him on his shoulder and helped him towards the top of the mountain. However, as he started walking, he felt the man getting heavier and heavier. So, Saint Pishoy raised his eyes towards him and realised that He is the beautiful Lord Jesus, and he said to Him: "My Lord Jesus, Heaven cannot contain You and yet I, the sinner, am carrying You on my shoulder!?" So, God told him with a very beautiful voice: "My beloved Pishoy, your body will remain intact, and nothing will happen to it because you carried Me." When He said this, He disappeared. When the other monks learned that this poor old man was the Lord Jesus, they were very upset, and remembered the verse saying: "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." (Matthew 25:40)

When barbarians attacked the monks in the wilderness, Saint Pishoy left the wilderness of Scetis and went to Upper Egypt to establish a big monastery in a town called "Deir El Barsha" in the centre of Mallawi, and he continued his life there with his strong prayers and his strong relationship with our Lord Jesus till he reached the age of 97, and his soul went up into Heaven to the bosom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord willed that there should be a monastery named after this great Saint Abba Pishoy so that his life can be a role model to all the fathers in this monastery and to its visitors. And by this he taught the monks and all the people the life of prayer, which is the ladder that will lead us to heaven, and which allows us to enjoy God while still on earth and brings us closer to His dwelling place in Heaven. Prayer is the key to Heaven by which we enter and join with the angels in their praises to and joy of the King of kings, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Michael was very happy with what his teacher told him. So, Michael told his teacher that he also wants to be a monk and to learn from the nice life of Saint Pishoy and how to love prayer more and more and stand every day to talk to our Lord Jesus. The teacher replied to Michael saying: "Our Lord Jesus gets very happy when we talk to Him and waits everyday for our prayers and He listens to our prayer and when we speak to Him, telling Him about everything in our life." Michael replied and told the teacher: "From today I must speak with our Lord Jesus."

Application



Comprehension Questions

- How many siblings did Saint Pishoy have?
- Why did Saint Pishoy go to live in the wilderness?
- To whom did Saint Pishoy become a disciple?
- What did Saint Pishoy do to overcome feeling sleepy while praying?
- What aspects did you like in the life of Saint Pishoy?



Exercise

- Fix a time for prayer each day.
- Select a Psalm to pray at different times, for example to recite on their way to school, for example: "Preserve me, O God" (Psalm 16 from First Hour in Agpeya), or "I will lift up my eyes to the hills" (Psalm 121 from the 11th Hour in Agpeya), and to recite Psalms before a test or exam: "Make haste, O God, to deliver me!" (Psalm 70 from the First Hour in Agpeya).



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

My beloved Lord Jesus, I know that You always hear my prayer. Help me to know the strength and beauty of prayer; help me to love prayer, and to tell you about everything that happens in my day. Help me to make prayer the first thing I do each day before anything else, and also to be the last thing I do before I sleep. Amen



How to Reach Heaven II: Strong Faith

Saint Simon the Tanner and the Moving of the Mokattam Mountain

Bible References: Matthew 17:20

Book References:

- HG Bishop Youanis of Gharbia, "Paradise of the Spirit"
- Fr Menassa Youhanna, "History of the Coptic Church" - Arabic

Lesson Aim:

To teach the children the importance of prayer in our spiritual lives.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The story of Saint Simon the Tanner and the moving of the Mokattam Mountain.

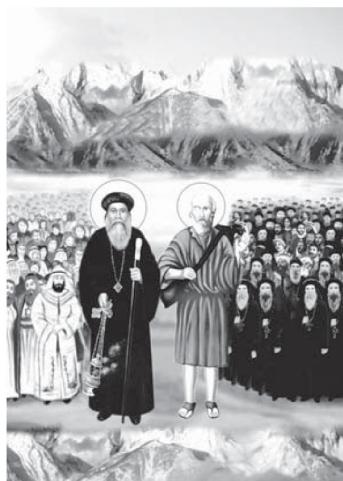
Feel: The importance of prayer and fasting.

Practice: Being confident of God's promises.

Memory Verse:

So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."

(Matthew 17:20)



Background Information for the Servant

From the “Paradise of the Spirit” by HG Bishop Youanis of Gharbia

Faith is one of the most important pillars in Christianity, for by it we can see God and it is the basis upon which we can establish a living relationship with God. Without faith, we cannot please God through our lives, for a lack of faith is equivalent to denying God's existence. By faith, Christ dwells inside us, and we become confident in every step we take in our lives, because we are confident that God is always with us. As we see in the old promises that were made between God and His people who, in the eras of grace, were full of faith. From the prophets of the Old Testament, the Apostles in the New Testament, the Church fathers and the martyrs. Faith had an active role in their spiritual lives, which was connected to God and evident in their strong faith in the Lord Jesus, just as Joshua, Son of Sirach, said: “Consider the ancient generations and see: who ever trusted in the Lord and was put to shame?” (Sirach 2:10) As in chapter 11 of St Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle writes and tells us how the lives of the fathers and the prophets were full of confidence that God is with them.

By faith Noah, built an ark for the salvation of his household, despite the surrounding circumstances and his mind trying to ruin his work. (Hebrews 11:7)

By faith Abraham, offered up his only son, Isaac, sure and confident that God was able to raise him up from the dead. (Hebrews 11:19)

By faith Joseph the Righteous saw God’s hands when his brothers put him into the well, and when he was put into Pharaoh’s jail when he refused to sin against God and do a great wickedness, and after a few years God prepared him to become the second-most powerful man in Egypt. He was sure that God was always with him, for: “All things work together for good to those who love God.” (Romans 8:28)

By faith, Moses went from before Pharaoh and headed towards the desert; the sea was in front of him and Pharaoh’s armies behind him, and God went before him and parted the sea for the children of Israel to cross. And he saw God’s strength return the sea to drown Pharaoh’s armies. By faith the rock in the wilderness was converted to a spring of water to quench the thirst of the children of Israel. By faith also God sent down from heaven manna and quail for the children of Israel see God’s hands working, which are moved by those who have faith in Him.

By faith, David stood in front of Goliath and killed him after he told him: “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” (1 Samuel 17:45)

By faith, Elijah asked the widow of Zarephath to make for him cakes out of the remaining food that she had, and she obeyed his word, and the jar of flour and jug of oil never emptied, so she and her son were filled throughout the whole time the famine was spread on the earth.

By faith, Elisha raised the son of the Shunamite from the dead, who was confident that God will be glorified through the man of God.

By faith, the three saintly youths did not obey the king’s order, so they were cast in the fiery furnace, and the fire became as cold dew. Also, by faith, the den of lions was converted from a terrifying place to a peaceful place after Daniel was cast into it.

By faith Elijah, Jeremiah and Daniel and the rest of the prophets, wrote and prophesied about what was going to happen on Earth as a result of wars, slavery and tribulations.

By faith the prophets, prophesied and saw the birth of Christ, His passion, crucifixion, death and resurrection from the dead. The hand of God which worked in those is working with us till this day, but we need the right faith, free from all fear and trouble, and we need to be able to say with Saint Paul the Apostle: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

The truth in this verse becomes self-evident when we study and go deep into God’s work with His people in the Old Testament, and His great arrangement, love and care. For example, King Hezekiah didn’t have even two thousand soldiers to fight against the Assyrians, yet through God’s intervention, the Israelites conquered the strong army of Sennacherib, which was formed of 158,000 soldiers.

We also see in the book of Judges when God used only three hundred soldiers with Gideon to conquer thousands of Midianite armies, and we see how Joshua depended on God's word in causing the wall of Jericho to fall after the tabernacle was taken around the wall seven times.

St Paul says to us in his Epistle to Hebrews: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1). Christ also encourages us with His words in the Gospel of St John: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29) This verse is important in our relationship with Christ, for it will lead us to our Salvation.

Blessed are those who sit in God's presence, reading His word, in the knowledge that it is God's voice talking to them.

Blessed are those who partake of Holy Communion with full confidence that they are taking Christ's real and non-metaphorical Body and Blood.

Blessed are those who have a personal friendship with the saints in heaven, seeing that their prayers are an aid for their lives.

Blessed are those who see and feel God's hand holding theirs and working in and through their lives.

Blessed are those who enter church and feel that heaven declares its glory in that place.

Blessed are those who put themselves in Saint Peter's place and look at the eyes of the Lord in the midst of the raging sea.

Blessed is the one who waits for a word to proceed from Christ to heal and comfort, just as the centurion in the healing of his servant.

Blessed is the one who has faith as the Virgin Saint Mary, when she saw so great a salvation for all humanity through the suffering of her Son.

Blessed are those who have such faith, and blessed are those who see and contemplate on the people of God as St Paul mentions in his epistle to Hebrews: "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." (Hebrews 13:7)

Faith yields living spiritual fruit in the life of the believers:

1. Life of submission: If faith in God is trust in Him, this faith will guide one into a life of submission to God in Whom I trust.
2. Life of joy and peace: Peace accompanies faith, such that those who feel alone will feel afraid, but those who believe that God is with him/her will not feel afraid: "Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear" (Psalm 27:3). Without any doubt peace brings joy.
3. Life of contentment and thanksgiving: The believers who live in contentment always feel satisfied with every condition that God has permitted them to be in, and because of their belief, they feel that there is no better condition for them than what they are in at present.
4. Life of victory: There is nothing that can stand in front of believers and there is no difficulty whatsoever that can alter their aims or goals, and that must be a good thing. For faith does miracles and defeats the power of evil.

Lesson Content

How did the miracle of moving the Mokattam Mountain happen?

A rich Syrian merchant was living in Egypt, and when the seat of St Mark became vacant after Pope Mina II, the bishops agreed to choose this Syrian man to become the next pope, because of his love to the service and his fear of God so he distributed all his money to the poor. His name became Pope Abram Ibn Zaraa.

In the era of Pope Abram Ibn Zaraa, the Syrian (975–979 AD), Egypt was under Fatimid rule, and the caliph was Al-Mu'iz Li Din Illah the Fatimid.

The caliph Al-Mu'iz was fond of literary gatherings and interested in religious controversies. There was a Jew in the

company of Al-Mu'iz who espoused Islam in order to be assigned a minister and he hated Christians. This man's name was Jacob Ibn Killis.

So, Jacob Ibn Killis the Jew asked the caliph to bring the Pope of the Christians before him to give evidence of the 'wrong' Christian beliefs. So, the caliph sent to Pope Abram the Syrian who responded to his invitation, taking with him Abba Sawirus Ibn Al-Muqaffaa the bishop of Ashmunin in Upper Egypt, who was one of the great church scholars of his generation. A sharp debate took place between Abba Sawirus and the Jew, so Abba Sawirus presented very strong evidence and proof of the truth of Christianity, and Jacob became embarrassed before the caliph.

This Jew became even more resentful against the Christians and wanted to devise a way to turn the caliph against the Christians. He chanced upon the verse which says: "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:20)

So he hastened to the caliph Al-Mu'iz and told him about this verse, and said to him that if the words of the Holy Bible are correct, the Christians will be able to move the Mokattam mountain, and if they are not able to move it, they should be destroyed.

The caliph was convinced with what Jacob said and thought to himself that if the words of the Lord Jesus are true, then this would be a golden opportunity to remove the mountain that was perched to the east of the new city of Cairo. However, if they proved unable to carry out this miracle, this would be a chance to harass the Christians. The caliph Al-Mu'iz spoke to Abba Abram the Syrian concerning these words. The Pope was in confusion, and issued a public statement ordering all the Christians in Egypt to fast for three days from till sunset, and to lift up fervent prayers for the safety of the church.

The Pope then went to the famous church of Saint Mary, which is known as Al-Muallakah (the Suspended Church) and confined himself within it, fasting and praying, until the Virgin Mary appeared to him, pointing to him to leave the church through the iron gate to search for a man carrying a jar of water, who will tell him what he should do. This man was Saint Simon the Tanner and his job was tanning animal skins besides shoemaking and other things.

When Pope Abram asked Saint Simon about his life, he learned that he led a simple and ascetic life. He was a great man of prayer and served the elderly and the sick, delivering water to them every day, as well as bread and food to the needy in the area. He was a saint with much meekness and with very strong faith.

In the morning of the third day, the Pope informed the Caliph that he was ready to carry out his request by the grace of God. The Caliph walked to the outside of the city, having with him his great men of honour. The Pope went after him with a great number of bishops of the church, priests, deacons, archdeacons, and laity, and amongst all these people was Saint Simon the Tanner. The two parties stood opposite one another on the mountain as Saint Simon had instructed the Pope beforehand. They cried out with a broken spirit and a contrite heart "Kyrie Eleison" (Lord have mercy).

After that they kept silent for a few moments, and then prostrated in worship of God while the Patriarch made the sign of the Cross upon the mountain. And behold, a great earthquake swept over the mountain, and each time the people prostrated and worshipped God, the mountain was thrust down, and every time they stood up again, the mountain would rise up and the sun would be seen from under it. This is the power of faith which our teacher Paul declared when he said, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13)

When the miracle had taken place, the caliph panicked and feared, together with all the people that were with him. He moved forward riding on his horse towards the Pope and told him: "Ask whatever you want and we will do it for you." The Pope didn't want to ask anything from him but when the Caliph insisted, the Pope said, "Since you press me to reveal my desire to you, allow me to say that I desire that the churches, especially the church of Saint Mercurius (Abu Sefain) in Old Cairo to be rebuilt and restored." So, he issued a decree for the churches to be restored immediately.

Scientists later explored the area of the Mokattam mountain, and found evidence of the trueness of this miracle through the remnants at the bottom of the mountain, which proved that the mountain did indeed move.

God loves me and satisfies all my needs. God answers the prayers and supplications of His children. Watch over us to keep the peace of the church from every evil and every envy. The word of God is never returned void. Every word mentioned in the Holy Bible is a promise given to us by God. Our duty is to have strong faith and remember the

importance of fasting and prayer.

St Augustine said that fasting and almsgiving are the two wings that we need for our prayer to rise up to God. This is what Pope Abram and Saint Simon the Tanner both realised.

Application



Comprehension Questions

Divide the class into two teams, and select two children in turn, one from each team, to quickly answer one of the questions below.

- The miracle happened in the era of Pope ...
- The name of the Jew was ...
- The Bible verse that the Jewish man used is ...
- The Pope saw a vision of ... who pointed to ...
- The prayer that the people said on the mountain was ...
- The Pope's request from the Caliph after the miracle was ...



Exercise

- Read the story of moving the Mokattam Mountain from the Synaxarion of 6th Kiahk (The commemoration of the departure of Pope Abram Ibn Zaraa).



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

We thank You our Lord Jesus Christ for every condition, concerning every condition, and in every condition. Thank You for Your true promises for us. We thank You for satisfying our needs and helping us always, and for allowing us to see Your strong hand in tribulations, assisting us and saving us, that we may praise you unto the end of ages. Amen.



Fasting in the Church

St Mary's Fast and the Fast of Wednesday and Friday

Bible References: John 3

Lesson Aim:

To learn about the importance to fasting with my church.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: Why we fast.

Feel: The importance of fasting in his/her life.

Practice: Fasting.

Memory Verse:

"However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."
(Matthew 17:21)



Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Story

In the sixth century BC, the scientist, Pythagoras, wanted to prove that meat makes one ferocious and tough and not strong and healthy, and also that plant-based foods have a greater health benefit. So, Pythagoras let a bear come to his house and as we know bears are ferocious animals that eat meat. Instead of feeding the bear meat, he offered it fresh plants and fruits. The bear refrained from eating for three days in a row but after that it started to feel hungry. So, it had no choice but to eat a little of the plants whenever it became very hungry. Little by little the bear got used to eating plants, and after a few months, Pythagoras found out that the bear was becoming tame and started to become like a pet, neither eating meat nor harming people. By that Pythagoras proved that the type of food one eats influences one's nature.

One of our fathers the bishops commented on this story saying that elephants eat only plants, yet it is stronger than the lion which eats meat. Therefore, although a lion may attempt to eat an elephant, the elephant can wrap its trunk around the lion and split it into two.

Lesson Content



Drama / Pantomime

Hold the following discussion between a servant, and one of the kids or a puppet, and tell them to assume that today is Friday.

Kid/Puppet: Can I buy a chocolate?

Servant: No, you can't.

Kid/Puppet: But why, I'm so hungry?

Servant: Because today is Friday and we should be fasting.

Kid/Puppet: Fasting? What is Fasting?

Servant: Fasting is refraining or abstaining from something, that is the definition from the dictionary. However, the meaning of fasting in our church is abstaining from food for a period of time. After a period of abstinence, we should eat vegetarian food.

Kid/Puppet: Does that mean that there are different types of fasting?

Servant: Yes, there is group fasting, which is put by the church for all the believers following a certain arrangement. There is also individual fasting which is when one may fast by himself under the guidance of his father of confession and for a specific circumstance related to him/her.

Kid/Puppet: So, does that mean we fast St. Mary's Fast because of St. Mary?

Servant: No, it is called St. Mary's Fast not because we offer the fasting to her; fasting is offered only to God. Rather because this fast ends with the Feast of the commemoration the assumption to Heaven of the pure body of St. Mary, we call it St. Mary's fast.

Kid/Puppet: I wonder, who created this fast?

Servant: This fast is very old in the history of the church. Some church fathers even said that it is the apostles themselves who arranged this fast after the departure of St. Mary.

Kid/Puppet: How long is this fast?

Servant: The fast is for 15 days and it starts from 1 Mesra to 16 Mesra. It is a second degree fast which means that eating fish is allowed.

Kid/Puppet: Are there any fasts in which we are not allowed to eat fish?

Servant: Yes, and this is what is called a first degree fast, like when we fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, and in Lent.

Kid/Puppet: Why do we fast on Wednesday and Friday?

Servant: This fast has been practiced by the church since the times of the apostles. We fast on Wednesdays to remember the betrayal of our Lord Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot when he promised the high priests to deliver Him in return for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-15), and on Fridays we fast to remember our Lord Jesus Christ's crucifixion, death and burial. So, do you know why we fast on Wednesdays and Fridays? To remember these events.

Kid/Puppet: And do we fast on Wednesdays and Fridays each week?

Servant: We fast on every Wednesday and Friday except during the holy Fifty Days of Easter and the Feasts of Nativity and Epiphany.

Kid/Puppet: I'm very happy because I learnt all this wonderful information. God willing, I will fast every Wednesday and Friday and all the fasts of the church.

Application



Comprehension Questions

- How long is the Fast of St. Mary?
- Since when did the church practise these fasts?
- What are the two types of fasts?
- Why don't we eat fish in the fasts of Wednesdays and Fridays?
- Why do we fast St. Mary's Fast?



Bible Tour

Match each fast with the suitable verse, to show that fasting exists in the Holy Bible in both the Old and New Testament. It also precedes every service, as it precedes any sacrament of our church.

Fast	Verse
Fast of the Lord Jesus	Esther 4:3
Fast of the children of Israel	Jonah 3
Fast of the Apostles	Daniel 1:12-16
Fast of Nineveh	Matthew 4:1-11
Fast of Esther and the Jewish people	Nehemiah 9:1
Fast of Daniel and the three young men	Acts 13:3



Exercise

- Encourage the children to become accustomed to fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays from their young age, as well as the Fast of St Mary.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

My Lord Jesus Christ, thank You for Your holy teachings. Thank You for my church, and its holy fasts which bring me closer to You more and more. Help me and strengthen me to live according to Your commandments, to be with You always. Amen.

Evaluation

Did the children get the aim of the lesson?

Objective	Can the children...	Notes
Know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● About the period of the Fast of St Mary. ● Since when the church started observing these fasts. ● What the different types of the fasts. ● What is the reason for not eating fish on Wednesdays and Fridays. ● Why we observe the Fast of St Mary. ● The verse of the lesson. 	
Feel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The joy of the believers when participating with the church in fasting. ● The importance of fasting for one's health. 	
Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Participating with the church in fasting. ● With their friends to fast as a group. 	



Simplicity of Faith

Flying Pigeons

Lesson Aim:

To learn the importance of having simplicity of Faith.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: That God provides us with qualities more than we ask for.

Feel: That simplicity of Faith makes you experience God's presence in your daily life.

Practice: Living with simple faith which leads one to gain Eternal Life.

Memory Verse:

"Be wise as serpents and simple as doves."
(Matthew 10:16)



Background Information for the Servant

Pope Shenouda once wrote about Simplicity of Faith:

Simplicity of faith ‘believes everything’ concerning God and accepts it without requiring evidence or argument, the arguments which the intellectuals are famous for.

This simplicity reminds us of the faith of children who believe in theological and spiritual facts. They have the confidence that does not doubt or lie and does not oppose the mind. Maybe that is one of the reasons that made Jesus tell His disciples “**Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)** The faith of an adult may be deeper, but the faith of a child is more innocent, simple and sincere; true faith that has no doubts. May your faith be strong like that of a child’s.

I do not agree with those who say that children are non-believers. St Paul the Apostle, tells his disciple Timothy “**From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3: 15)** How great was the praise of Jesus to the child He set in the middle of the Disciples (Matthew 18:2,3).

He who attains the simplicity of faith lives far from the complications of the mind, and lives far from what the mind presents from doubts, thoughts, and may be even misleading's. Really, the mind's balance is from God but it may err if separated from faith.

Faith is a kind of glorious virtue God presents to the mind so as to enlighten it.

If the mind stands alone it troubles its owner with ideas. If David, the young man, depended only on his mind and thoughts, he would have feared Goliath. Saul and his army did, but David depended on the simple faith, and he told Goliath “This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand...” (1 Samuel 17:46) However, how would God give Goliath into David's hands? David did not think of that but left it to God because the war is to God (1 Sam. 17:46). **This is faith.** With it David defeated and won the war and was more victorious more than those who used their minds and tactics.

Simple faith is a matter of confidence and not a matter of thinking.

Even if the mind said that war searches for the balance of powers and how one side will overcome? The answer is simple, if God entered the battle He would change the balance of power, and hence David with God's power will be much stronger than Goliath. Here we see that faith -with its simplicity- does not contradict a balanced mind.

He who lives in simple faith lives without anxiety because anxiety usually comes because of much thinking or when a person thinks about problems in an intellectual way. But in the simplicity of faith the person does what he can and leaves the more important points to God Himself and hence he is not anxious. His confidence that God works for him gives him peace of heart and does not allow anxiety to overcome his feelings.

He who has this simple faith is not anxious because he leaves God in control of his matters. If he has confidence in the good care of God in his life, he won't worry about tomorrow, because the God of tomorrow will take care of it, and he will welcome everything that happens in his life with the expression, “**All things work together for good to those who love God.” (Romans 8:28)**

But he who places his thinking in place of trusting Gods management will become exhausted from his anxieties. Through faith he should let God carry them for him.

The confidence provided by the simple faith that God answers prayers, takes away anxiety.

Maybe you all know the story of this village that suffered from drought. The people of the village decided to set a day for prayer so that God would send rain. All the people went to pray and a young girl went carrying an umbrella. When they asked her about the reason, she said: “Aren't we praying for rain? What shall we then do when God hears our prayers and it starts to rain and we don't have an umbrella?” She had faith that God will answer their prayer and because of her faith it did rain.

This simple faith is very much needed in regards to miracles and apparitions. A miracle can happen to a person and not to another. The one, in his simple faith, believes and accepts it but the other sees the difficulties

that his mind presents and he doubts that a miracle can happen.

The same also happens concerning apparitions. Some see the heavenly apparitions due to their simple faith, and others do not due to the complications of their minds. This was illustrated when the Virgin Mary appeared in her church in Zeitoun, Cairo.

The mind tries to analyse everything scientifically or else it will not believe. As for faith, it needs belief, in simplicity, far from the complications of their minds.

That is why miracles and apparitions happen mostly to simple people. Most intellectuals, who disregard miracles and apparitions, mock the believers and it rarely happens that they experience either of them, whether to bring them to faith or so that they are a witness of them (John 15:22).

Even the Jews did not believe the miracle of the man who was born blind and said that he who healed him was a sinner (John 9:24). The mind put the problem of healing on a Sabbath in front of them, so that they lost faith (John 9:16).

That is why Jesus praised the simple people saying, "**I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.**" (**Matthew 11:25**) With the word 'babes', He meant those of simple faith. Those 'wise and learned' in this verse are those who are proud of their knowledge and understanding, and who only depend on their minds far from faith. Even some of the spiritual men admitted in sorrow and said: "This is the fruit which Adam and Eve ate from." They meant by that, the knowledge away from God.

The mind can imagine danger everywhere and at the same time not consider God's work. On the contrary, it causes the non-believer to be afraid.

That does not mean that a person throws himself in jeopardy without wisdom. If a person was as cautious as can be and then found himself in, so called, 'danger', then with all simplicity he will have confidence in God's protection and care, singing with the Prophet David "A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But *it shall not come near you.*" (**Psalm 91:7**)

Simple faith has confidence that God's hand will interfere to rescue and solve any problem.

The person believes totally that God, as a lover of mankind and benevolent, will no doubt interfere in the problem according to His promises to His children and He will stretch out His hands to solve it.

But how does this happen? Simple faith does not ask that.

He accepts the work of grace in simplicity without investigating how it works.

How many times did we try to solve our problems using human methods and they failed. When the problem is solved we clearly see through faith that it was the finger of God.

Simple faith has confidence in God's work, through belief and experience.

Faith brings the person to trials. Tests deepen the faith and build it on a firm basis and not on theoretical ones. Faith and trials go hand in hand together until the person reaches simplicity of faith.

Simple faith has confidence that everything is possible and that nothing is impossible.

It has complete confidence that God can do all things and that none of His plans can be thwarted (**Job 42:2**). The person believes in the Lord's saying "**All things are possible to him who believes.**" (**Mark 9:23**)

That's why simple faith, overcomes all doubts.

It is a strong faith, stronger than any doubt, because doubts are the work of the mind, and the mind is proud of its measures but the believer has overcome the stage of the mind and has lived at a higher and deeper level. Higher than doubts is simplicity of faith.

Some try to transfer the problem of religion to philosophy and to bring it out of the heart and the soul and restrict it only to the limit of the mind.

That was what Saint Paul the apostle fought with all his might, and said “...not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.” (**1 Corinthians 1:17-20**)

No doubt, the simple believer who gains his faith through experience, above the level of investigation, is stronger in faith than some theologians who acquire their faith from books. They think they have faith. It may be that their faith can be easily shaken by the opposing intellectual thoughts.

Train yourself to a life of simple faith and make use of the experiences that happen in your life or the life of others, and do not let much thinking keep you far from faith.

Lesson Content

The simple youth, Kyriacos, stopped to dry his sweat and to rest for a bit because his feet felt heavy. He couldn't even carry his small bag which contained only a few of his clothes. He was very tired, and it showed on his face.

The youth returned on his route, reciting the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, reassuring himself that he is so close to the historical city where he is used to enjoying the blessings of the monastery and being in the midst of his fathers the monks. Indeed, the domes of the monastery started to appear from afar off, and the crosses were getting bigger, so he became very happy.

Immediately Kyriacos kneeled on the floor and raised his eyes to heaven, while mumbling saying: “Thank You, my Lord Jesus Christ, You Who prepared me for this hour to see this monastery; permit me to enjoy the blessings of its fathers. Will You accept me as a servant for my fathers? Will You accept my whole life as a sacrifice of love to You, O You Who first loved me? May I complete all my life of estrangement in Your arms? I ask for nothing but Your abiding in me and I in You.”

Tears started to well up in his eyes, but his yearning for the monastery attracted him to get up quickly, as joy has filled his heart, and he felt as though he was being carried by a cloud to depart towards Heaven, or given the wings of a dove by which he may depart to the sky. All physical tiredness went away as he hurried towards the monastery.

The youth Kyriacos took hold of the rope of the large doorbell of the monastery taking care not to pull it too hard so as not to disturb all the monks. After few minutes, he heard a quiet voice from behind the monastery door, asking him:

Monk: Who is it?

Kyriacos: Your son Kyriacos, my father!

Monk: What do you want, my son?

Kyriacos: Permit me to enter, my father, as I have travelled a great distance to receive blessing of the monastery and my fathers the monks.

Monk: There are many churches in the world, if you want you can go there to get a blessing and there are many fathers of confession who can support you!

Kyriacos: I have heard much about this monastery, my father, and am in need of your prayers and guidance, so please permit me to enter for few minutes to meet the head of the monastery.

Monk: Forgive me my son, I cannot open.

Kyriacos: Please, my father, accept me as I am stranger, and have endured a lot to travel here and receive the blessing of the monastery.

Monk: Tell me from where you have travelled, my son, so that I may inform the head of the monastery; he may permit you to enter for a short period.

Kyriacos: I am your son Kyriacos, from a country far away.

The monk permitted Kyriacos to enter, and he was insistent on meeting the head of the monastery. So, the head of the monastery came to meet the youth, Kyriacos, and cheer filled the face of the father. Kyriacos was overjoyed to see the father, and hastened towards him, kissed his hand, and asked the father to pray for him.

The youth started opening his heart to the head of the monastery and telling him about his desire from an early age for the life of monasticism. The father asked him about his father of confession, spiritual discipline and his readings. After a simple and calm discussion which lasted for nearly two hours, the head of the monastery said: "My son, I can't promise you anything, but I will leave you alone for some time to examine yourself, for the road of monasticism is not easy and its war is tough and bitter. I can look after you myself, but I want you to be open with yourself and with me. For monasticism is not in itself an end, but a means that only a few are called to follow. Your eternity and life with Christ comes above all things." After the two had finished talking, the head of the monastery was about to get up to prepare a place for him to live under supervision when Kyriacos asked him: "Do you not know me my father?" The head of the monastery was surprised by such a question after a long discussion which lasted for hours and in which the youth revealed every part of his spiritual life. In simplicity, the father responded: "What do you mean, my son?" Kyriacos replied back: "I'm Kyriacos: your nephew." The head of the monastery looked intently at Kyriacos, as he hadn't seen him for a very long time.

Abbot: How are your parents my son?

Kyriacos: All good my father.

Abbot: Do your parents approve of your monasticism?

Kyriacos: Yes, my father went himself to become a monk in another monastery.

Abbot: Where is your mother?

Kyriacos: She went to Heaven.

The head of the monastery nodded, remaining cheerful, and said: "Your mother departed to the place of rest, and your father fled the world to find his life." Then the head of the monastery told his nephew to put aside their relation and focus his thoughts on the worship of God, and these words made Kyriacos very happy.

Years passed by and Kyriacos grew in grace. He became so attached to Christ and his heart became fiery with love for eternal life. His face was always glowing with joy and he led an ascetic and holy life, so many people came to ask for his prayers.

His popularity spread to many cities in Armenia, and some people envied him for this and went to the monastery and made false accusation against him to the head of the monastery. They claimed that the monk, Kyriacos, is only pretending to be ascetic and holy.

The people making the false accusation asked the head of the monastery to introduce them to Kyriacos the monk as though they were a group of guests going to visit him, so that they can reveal to head of the monastery the truth about this monk. The head of the monastery accepted their request, and Kyriacos the monk received them all with great love as he did with all guests.

After Kyriacos had spoken with them at length about the kingdom of God, he offered to make them all dinner at his place, for he knew that they had come from afar to meet him, and out of love and hospitality he couldn't leave them to go away hungry. So, he went quickly to slaughter some pigeons and grilled them, not realising it was a Wednesday, a fasting day. However, for Kyriacos, he was used to fasting all year round, and would only ever break his fast out of his love for accommodating strangers. When he brought in the food before them, he offered a prayer before eating,

As Kyriacos offered the food to them, one of the guests excused himself quickly and went to call the head of the monastery to witness that the ascetic monk Kyriacos ate grilled pigeon on a Wednesday, breaking his fast. The head of monastery entered the cell himself while the other person stayed outside the cell so as not to be exposed. Then one of the other guests, wanting to embarrass Kyriacos the monk in front of the head of the monastery, asked: "Father Kyriacos, do you not know that today is a fasting day? How could you prepare for us pigeon to eat?!"

The simple monk stayed silent for a short while without being disturbed, and in all calmness asked them: "Is today really a fasting day, my brothers?" "Yes, our father," they answered, "today is a Wednesday." At that point, the monk replied: "I'm so sorry, I didn't know that today is Wednesday. Will you permit the pigeons to fly away then?" Those present laughed in sarcasm as they saw him making the sign of the Cross on the grilled pigeons saying: "If today is a fasting day, why are you still here, pigeons?! Fly away and be gone!" Suddenly, everyone in the room stopped laughing as they saw the grilled pigeons flying away in the air!

So how can we live this simplicity?! Remember the verse of today's lesson: "... be wise as serpents and simple as

doves." (Matthew 10:16)

Application



Comprehension Questions

- What is the name of the monk in the story?
- what ways did he love the Lord Jesus Christ?
- What are the most important characteristics of the monk, and what were his faults?
- How did the guests try to accuse the saint?
- What was the reaction of the saint towards the accusation? How did God respond to his simplicity?



Exercise

- The servant agrees with the children to recall to mind the verse of the lesson before reacting to any problem s/he may face.



Prayer

Meditate on the following prayer, live it, and pray it at the level of the children.

O Christ, the Saviour of the whole world, look at me and have mercy on me and save me from the multitude of my sins. For I have denied all the good things that You have done for me since my youth because I was without understanding. So you filled me with knowledge and wisdom, and Your grace has increased in me. You satisfied my hunger, quenched my thirst, enlightened my dark mind and gathered my wandering thoughts. I kneel to You confessing my weakness, and I entreat Your compassion which is beyond description.



The First Lie and the Forbidden Fruit

Bible References: Genesis 3

Lesson Aim:

To show that the devil is the greatest liar and we must not listen to him.
We must keep in mind to speak only the truth.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The devil will try to deceive us, but God is stronger and is always with us.

Feel: Close to God at all times so that the Devil cannot affect us.

Practice: Being in constant prayer so that Our Lord can always strengthen us against the temptations of the Devil.

Memory Verse:

"Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.' "
(Genesis 3:4)



Background Information for the Servant

The serpent deceived Eve as he told her that she and Adam would not die if they ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We know that Satan is the greatest liar.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the tree, they lost their purity and innocence at once. They did not realise that they were naked until they had eaten from the forbidden fruit; they felt guilty for this reason, and hid themselves from God. This was man's first sin, which was the transgression of the law, Adam and Eve brought death to mankind and all other living beings.

As Adam and Eve transgressed God's law and disobeyed His commandment, the grave results to their transgression, or rather sin, were:

- Both were cast out of the Garden of Eden.
- Women were to suffer the pain of child bearing.
- Men were forced to labour for their food among the thorns and the thistles.
- Death was brought on mankind.
- God cursed the serpent.

Consequently, we became in need of Christ, our Saviour to redeem us from the hands of the devil. Without our Lord, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and redeemer, no one can overcome the devil and go back to paradise.

Jacob and Isaac

When Isaac became old, he could not see very well. His son Jacob wanted to get the blessings of his father Isaac, instead of his older brother Esau. Jacob lied to his father. He put on his brother's clothes and entered his father's room, taking advantage of his weary vision. He took the good food instead of his brother Esau and offered it to his father Isaac. Because he lied to his father, other people lied to him and he suffered a lot.

His uncle Laban lied to him and gave him another daughter named Leah instead of the one he loved named Rachel to marry. Also, after selling their brother Joseph, his sons lied to their father Jacob and brought a shirt covered with blood. They told him that they found his beloved son, Joseph, dead; Jacob kept weeping for the loss of his son until he lost his sight and could not see. These are the consequences of lying!

Lesson Content

Introduction:

Children, please listen to this scenario: Imagine you forgot to do your homework and when you were asked by your teacher you lied and said that your mum was not feeling well and you had to look after your younger siblings. Your teacher called home and finds out that you were not telling the truth. Discuss the reasons for doing this and the consequences of this lie. What do the Ten Commandments tell us about lying?

- Tell the story of Adam and Eve, and then start by emphasising that God wanted Adam and Eve to live in the Garden of Eden, enjoy it and live a very peaceful life. God loved Adam and Eve a lot.
- Eve had a bad conversation with the serpent. As usual, he lied to Eve and convinced her not to obey God saying, "You will not surely die" (Genesis 3:4) if you eat from the forbidden fruit.
- Adam and Eve were thrown out of the Garden of Eden. They spiritually died, because anyone living away from God is considered to be spiritually dead. Adam and Eve became miserable, led a sinful life and were under the influence of the devil.
- God, being merciful, had prepared a plan of salvation for all mankind.
- Tell the story of Isaac and Jacob. Jacob lied to get his father's blessing (birthright) from his brother Esau. As a result, he suffered greatly when his uncle and sons had lied to him. Please read the background information to the servant.
- All this teaches us that we must not discuss anything with the devil or let him lead us to doubt the word of God. The main mistake that Eve committed was that she allowed the questioning of God's word and discussed things with the serpent.

Application



Exercise

- Take time to think before you act because the devil can give you wrong ideas and make you fall into temptation.
- Do not lie.
- Large mistakes usually start with a small mistake. Giving the devil a chance to tempt us with a small mistake leads to a much bigger mistake. Example: A younger brother used to steal small things from his old brother, he got used to that and then he stole something from a store and fell into a huge problem. Let us all be careful from the temptations of the devil even from "small sins".



The Cross at the Highest Point Inside and Outside the Church

Lesson Aim:

To show the importance of the Cross in Christianity, in our Coptic Orthodox Church and in our daily lives.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: The Cross is a sign of glory, strength and love.

Feel: The love of Christ every time you think of the Cross and His sacrifice.

Practice: Signing ourselves with the Cross many times daily.

Memory Verse:

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

(Galatians 6:14)



Background Information for the Servant

The Apparition of the Cross in the Sky

Occasions where the Cross has appeared in the sky:

- The first time it appeared in the sky was to the Emperor Constantine The Great to assure him of victory in the prospective war. He and his officers saw it like a pillar of light in the sky surrounded by the following words: "With it (the Cross) you will conquer."
- The second time the Cross appeared in the sky was to Julius Caesar on the doors of the city of Antioch. It appeared in the East like a pillar of light which startled all those who saw it.
- The third time, the Cross appeared to all the people of Jerusalem. This happened in the Holy Fifty days after the Feast of the Resurrection, to be exact, on 8th May 351AD at about 3 pm (1 pm UK time). A big Cross appeared in the sky on Golgotha stretching to Mount Olive. It was very clear and was seen not only by one or two, but by all the people of the city. It remained for many hours shining brighter than the rays of the sun. All the people of the city came out to see the apparition. They were astounded, and scared, but with great joy they witnessed that heavenly scene. Old and young, men and women of all ages, Christians and non-Christians from all places, praised Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Feast of the Cross

On the feast of the Cross, we recognise the discovery of the glorious Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. When the Jews noticed the very large number of miracles done by Jesus, they got angry and asked everyone in the Jewish country to collect all the dirt and the rubbish and put it at the top of the Cross. The Jewish people continued to do so for over 200 years until a very large pile of dirt was formed. Saint Helena, the mother of King Constantine, went to Jerusalem and asked about the location of the Cross. Nobody told her, until she met an old man who told her that the Cross is underneath the pile of dirt. She dug out the Holy Cross of Jesus Christ from beneath this dirt. She built a church for it, consecrated it and celebrated for the Honorable Cross. Christians make pilgrimages to that place every year as they do on the feast of the Resurrection. St Helena did this because she loved the Cross since it appeared to her when she was with King Constantine before he went to war and was victorious.

On the 17th of Tout (around the 28th of September) is the commemoration of the consecration of the Church of the Holy Cross, which is built by the empress Helena, the mother of Constantine.

On the 10th of Paremhat (around the 19th of March) is also the Commemoration of the discovery of the Holy Cross by Empress St Helen, and then again by Emperor Heraclius (after the base of the Holy Cross had been stolen).

Lesson Content

The Cross is a sign of glory for Christians, because salvation happened through the Cross. On the Cross, God proved His love for us. When we carry the Cross, we remember the power of the Cross in our lives and what Our Lord Jesus did for us.

Why do we make the sign of the Cross on ourselves? Why do we put the Cross at the highest point inside and outside the church? The reasons are:

- The sign of the Cross has been a sign of victory over the devil in both the old and the New Testaments. Please read Exodus 17:8-13 and the story of the Victory of Moses through the sign of the Cross.
- Our Lord Christ taught a lot about the Cross in the beginning of His service and in His teachings before He was crucified. So, we remember to carry the Cross in our lives (i.e. any problem we may face) thankfully: Matthew 10:38 states "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." Also Matthew 16:24 says, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me".
- Our Lord Jesus' crucifixion has been the source of salvation. Everything the Christians are enjoying in the New Testament (salvation and forgiveness) was completed on the Cross. Through the Cross, Jesus paid the price of our sins and died for us so that we may have eternal life.
- The Cross is the subject of glory: Galatians 6:14 says "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."
- The Cross is the subject of the preaching: 1 Corinthians 1:23 says "But we preach Christ crucified to Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness".
- The Cross is the subject of strength: 1 Corinthians 1:18 tells us, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Furthermore St Paul mentions here that "the message of the Cross... is... the power of God." Therefore, when we mention the word of the Cross or when we make the sign of the Cross, we are filled with heavenly strength.

- The devil is very scared from the sign of the Cross: Every time we Cross ourselves, the devil becomes very scared, because he remembers that through the Cross, Jesus Christ defeated him and gave salvation to His people. The devil then escapes from the sign of the Cross. Remember that when St George put the sign of the Cross on the cup that was filled with poison water, he was able to drink it without being poisoned (Please tell the story in a bit more detail).
- The feast of the Cross in the Coptic Church: The Coptic Church observes two feasts in honour of the Holy Cross of Christ.
- From the sayings of the church fathers: Hail to the Cross that God was crucified on and stretched His hands for everybody; Adam was dismissed from paradise, because of one tree. Because of the Holy Cross, he regained his original status.

Application



Exercise

- The Cross is very dear to us as Christians. Through Crossing ourselves we gain heavenly strength and victory over the devil.
- We must put the sign of the Cross on ourselves many times during the day: as soon as we get up in the morning, before we eat, before we enter a place, before being driven in a car, before we sleep...
- The Cross is very dear to us, so we put it at the highest point inside and outside the Church. We must also hang the Cross in many locations in our homes.

Weeks 3-4 of September:
Two weeks kept free for
Coptic Festival revision and exam.



Think Before You Speak

The People of Judea Kept the News in Their Hearts

Bible References: Luke 1:57-66.

Lesson Aim:

We must learn to think more and speak less. We must think before we speak.

Lesson Objectives:

Know: We are all one in Christ and we should stick by each other at all times, whether happy or sad.

Feel: Love towards your neighbours.

Practice: Thinking before you speak so that what you say can benefit your neighbours rather than harm them.

Memory Verse:

"And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, 'What kind of child will this be?'"
(Luke 1:66)



Lesson Content

Discuss with the children about what they know about the events leading up to Christmas, then read Luke 1:57-66 and explain it as you go along. Some points of discussion include:

- The Angel's message to Zacharias was complete and Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist. Their neighbours were exceedingly glad for them. We should also learn to share in the joy of our neighbour's, friends and family and be happy for them, as a sign of our love.
- How did the people react to this good news? They "rejoiced" (Luke 1:58) and they felt "fear" (Luke 1:65) when Zacharias could speak again 'fear' in this case means reverence or awe).
- The people of Judea discovered that all the good news was from God and that they had to start following God's commandments: they kept thinking and meditating "in their hearts" (Luke 1:66) on what they had witnessed. When we read the Holy Bible, we must think and meditate on the word of God so we can benefit from the word of God and apply it in our lives.
- We also must know that it is not nice to interrupt someone while they are talking and practising silence is sometimes beneficial: St Arsenius the Great used to speak only as needed and one of his sayings was: "Many times I spoke, and as a result felt sorry, but I never regretted my silence." We should practise thinking and reflection before speaking.

Application



Exercise

- Think and then speak. When you speak, choose the right words and do not say anything inappropriately.
- We should show sympathy and empathy towards people no matter what they are going through and we should also feel happy for people when they are happy as a sign of our love to them.



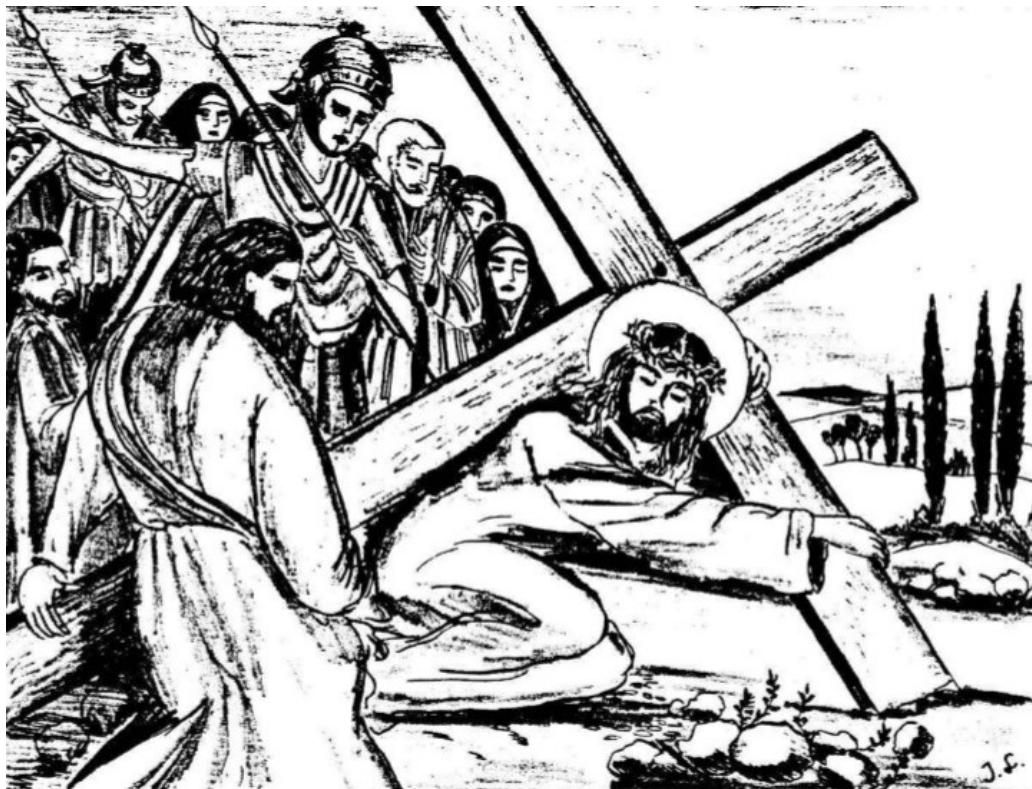
The Importance of the Passion Week in the Coptic Orthodox Church

Lesson Aim:

To show how Christians in the early church have lived the passion week and why.
We would also like to determine what we can do in our present life?

Memory Verse:

"Thine is the power and the glory and the blessings and the strength forever Amen."
(Doxology of Holy Week)



Lesson Content

The passion week as the church lived it in early times:

The Passion Week is also called the Pascal week and is the most important week of the year and the deepest one spiritually. It is a week filled with many holy memories in the most serious stage of our salvation and it is the most important chapter of atonement. The church has chosen for this week special readings from both the Old and the New Testaments. These readings are filled with emotions and feelings that are very effective and they explain clearly the relationship between God and the human race. The church also has chosen for us a collection of deep hymns and deep spiritual explanations.

In the early stages of the church, Christians needed to receive this week in full respect and lead these days with deep ascetic life:

1. They needed to abstain from eating anything sweet like cake or honey or any sugar, because it was considered to be unsuitable for them to eat anything sweet while remembering the sufferings of our Lord on their behalf.
2. Many people don't cook at all because of ascetism on one hand and because they do not want to be distracted from the prayers and the spirituality of that week. Many people used to eat only bread and salt. Many people who are capable did not eat at all for these days at least from Thursday evening until the Easter feast.
3. The ascetism in that week included no decorations and women will have no make-up or wear any jewellery.
4. The whole week was dedicated to worship. The people needed to stop working and meet in the churches at all times for prayers, singing and meditating.

Even the Christian rulers gave orders to stop all work in governments' departments so that people can be focused only on prayers. They let people who were imprisoned to get out of jail and also go to church so that these prayers can help them straighten up. One of the great emperors was Theodosius the Great.

What can we do now to benefit from the Passion Week?

1. We can finish our homework very fast and head to church.
2. We can abstain from eating any sweets and practice very deep fasting.
3. We can stop watching TV or listening to the radio or looking over the internet unnecessarily.
4. We must behave outside the church as good and as serious as inside the church.
5. Focus on the Pascal readings. Everyone must have his or her book.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- The Passion Week in our Coptic Orthodox Church represents an important corner stone in our spiritual life. The church, guided by the Holy Spirit, has prepared a very spiritually rich program. To benefit from all these prayers of the Passion Week, we have to try to reach the level of practices of the Christians of the early years as much as we can.
- We must participate in all the prayers and hymns of the Pascal week.



The Seven Major and Minor Feasts of Our Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Entry to Egypt

Bible References: Matthew 2:13-23

Lesson Aim:

To learn about the seven Major and the seven Minor feasts of the Master Jesus Christ as celebrated in our church and know them by heart. Also, to learn about the feast of Christ's coming to Egypt.

Memory Verse:

"Behold, The Lord rides on a swift cloud and will come into Egypt"
(Isaiah 19:1)



Lesson Content

Our Church celebrates 7 major feasts and 7 minor feasts for which the most important events are attached to our Saviour Jesus Christ. In these feasts all the prayers in the church are done in a joyful tune. In each feast the Lord Christ granted us a special gift in our lives.

The 7 major feasts of our Master Jesus Christ are:

1. The feast of the Annunciation.
2. Christmas or the feast of Incarnation of the Word of God.
3. Epiphany.
4. Palm Sunday.
5. Easter or the feast of the Resurrection,
6. The Ascension feast.
7. The Pentecost.

Please say a few statements about each feast and discuss it with the children. If possible give each one a picture about each feast.

The 7 minor feasts of our Master Jesus Christ:

1. The Circumcision feast.
2. The feast of the presentation of Our Lord Jesus to the temple.
3. The feast of Christ's entry to Egypt.
4. The feast of the wedding at Cana of Galilee.
5. The Transfiguration feast.
6. Covenant Thursday.
7. The Renewal of Thomas.

Please say a few statements about each of the feasts:

- Please let the children know these feasts by heart
- On June 1st of each year, we celebrate one of the minor feasts: The Lord Jesus entry to Egypt.

The feast of Christ's coming to Egypt.

The first seed of Christianity that paved the way for St. Mark to preach about Christianity was the visit of the Holy Family to Egypt. They were escaping from King Herod who wanted to kill Baby Jesus. The historians say that as the Holy Family entered Egypt (the city of Heliopolis) the noise of a rushing mighty wind was heard and the earth trembled, the idols crashed from the pedestals. See the memory verse.

Our Lord Jesus blessed our homeland Egypt. When we celebrate this feast we remember that our roots go back to Egypt, the Holy fathers and the consistent faith of the oldest church in the world.

Application



Exercise

What do we learn from this lesson?

- We should know our church's feasts by heart. These are happy occasions that we celebrate and live through. In these feasts our Lord Christ granted us many heavenly gifts.
- What can please a Christian is his or her salvation. This is the reason for celebrating our Master's feasts in a joyful tune. We also review and enjoy those gifts that Our Lord Christ has given us in those feasts.



Jacob's Trip to his Uncle

Bible References: Genesis 28:10-16 and Genesis 29:1-12.

Lesson Aim:

To learn that just as God comforted Jacob, He will also comfort us. His house (the church) is a place made for our comfort and peace.

Lesson Objectives:

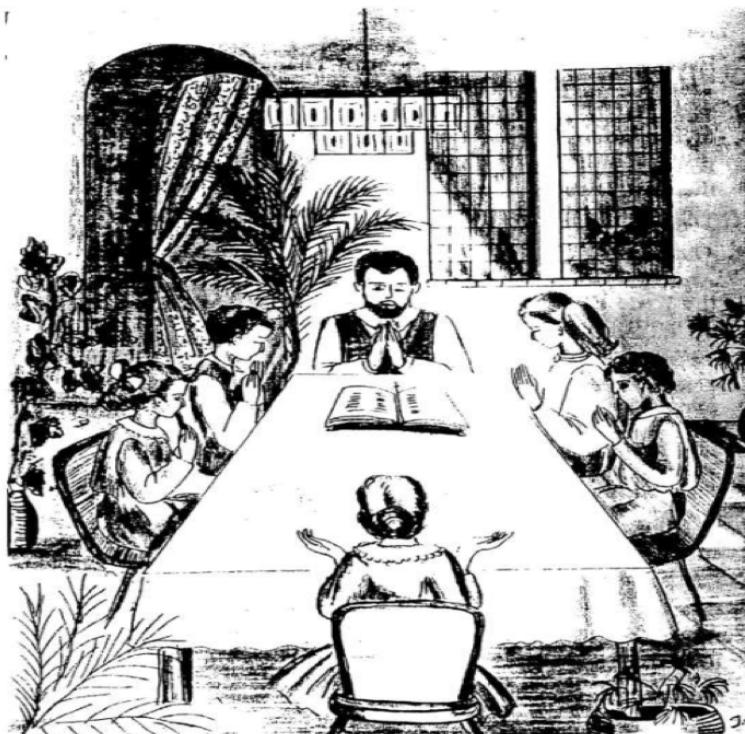
Know: God will always comfort us.

Feel: Peaceful in the presence of God and in His house (the church).

Practice: Attending church regularly and participate in the activities.

Memory Verse:

"The angels of God were ascending and descending on it."
(Genesis 28:12)



Background Information for the Servant

Jacob had to walk a long distance to a different country because his father told him to go there so that he can find a wife. Jacob was tired and was lying down to sleep, (because it was night) and he had a dream. Jacob dreamt that there was a ladder so tall that it reached right up into the sky. Angels were going up and down the ladder. Then, in his dream, Jacob saw God standing at the top of the ladder, telling him that many wonderful things will happen to him because God loves him.

Jacob was a long, long away from home in the different country and he was helping a girl whose name was Rachel (Laban's daughter) while she was taking care of her father's sheep. She invited him to come to her house and her father was exceedingly glad to see Jacob. Jacob loved Rachel and wanted to marry her so he asked his uncle, Laban, if he could. Laban agreed according to certain conditions: Jacob had to stay and work for him.

Activities to Introduce the Lesson

You can use one of the following ways to introduce the lesson:



Discussion

Opening Questions:

- Can you give a biblical example of someone who was obedient?
- What are the rewards of being obedient to God, our parents and guardians?

Lesson Content

Jacob obeyed his parents as the Bible says in Genesis 28:7 “and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram.” God comforted him as he travelled a long way to his uncle Laban, God said to him, “Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land: for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.” (Genesis 28:15).

God also sent His angels to Jacob while he was asleep. Jacob saw the angels come up and down and so he realised that God was taking care of him. Just as God told him, “I am with you.” (Genesis 28:15), God is telling us the same. We face difficulties sometimes but if we submit ourselves to God, He will be with us, protect us, help us, and give us eternal life. We also have to do as Jacob did: obey our parents.

When Jacob awoke, he said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!” (Genesis 28:17). From this, we ask: what is the definition of the “house of God”? It is:

- A place of prayers.
- A place where the angels ascend and descend.
- A place where God speaks to His people.
- It is the gate to heaven.

Application



Exercise

- As we submit ourselves to God and obey our parents, Our Lord will be with us, comfort us, protect us and help us.
- Our church is a very blessed place in which we get peace and comfort. We must go to church regularly and enjoy participating in the prayers and activities.