




28th Sunday After Pentecost

Study Guide - Level 1 (Grades K-2 / Ages 5-7)

Lesson Format

- Opening Prayer
- Intro / Recap of last week's lesson
- Review the epistle and gospel readings
- Review festal hymns of the day
- Read front page of handout together
- Use study guide content for discussion and Q&A on this week's topics
- Complete activities on pages of the handout
- Preview of next week's lesson
- Closing Prayer

Tips & Hints

- Use as few or as many of the questions and explanations found in the study guide based on ages of the youth, helping them discover how the Orthodox Faith can be a part of their daily life.
- Watch for the  in the handout for topics/questions which might spark conversations with participants.
- It's recommended to use open-ended questions, encouraging young people to think, share their experiences or ideas, and strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ and His holy Orthodox Faith.
- Questions, ideas, feedback, and suggestions can be directed to the publisher at orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

✦ Overview

Today is the Twenty-eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

Last Week

We heard about a man who invited people to a party but they made excuses to not attend.

God invites us to attend a preview of His heavenly banquet: the divine liturgy, being part of His Church. How do we respond to God's invitation?

This Week

We hear a list of people who were the earthly ancestors of Jesus Christ. While He is the Son of God, having always existed, Christ's earthly life is woven into the history of humanity as recorded in the bible.

We are reminded in this reading that Christ is the descendent of Abraham, David, and many other people - good and bad, and at the fullness of time - was born of the Virgin Mary, all of it, according to God's plan.

God's wisdom and love for us is not some random act, but part of His plan for us to participate in the glory and majesty of His Kingdom for all eternity.

Our faith in God can help bring us closer to God, knowing the Father will provide for our needs through His Son: Jesus Christ.

Next Week

The celebration of the Nativity continues by honoring St. Joseph the Betrothed, St. James, the Lord's brother, and St. David, the prophet and ancestor of Christ. Their lives can be examples for our place in God's plan of salvation in the 21st century.

✔ Goal

After completing this handout, youth should be able to articulate the following:

- What today's scripture lessons tell us about Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
- The message and application of today's hymns (the apolytikion/troparion and kontakion).
- Understanding what God is asking us to do as His followers.
- What we believe as Orthodox Christians and how God is present in our lives.
- Identify ways to live in the 21st century.
- How the Church gives us encouragement to live godly lives regardless of our circumstances or amount of faith.

📖 Apostolos / Epistle and Gospel Readings

Open the bible and have someone read the Apostolos/Epistle and another student read the Gospel lesson for the day.

Epistle: **Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40**

Gospel: **Matthew 1:1-25**

Talk about the epistle reading:

Today's epistle was written by St. Paul.

It is one of the books (or letters) found in the New Testament of our bible.

1) Ask: "What is the author of today's epistle/apostol talking about?"

Possible Answers

- St. Paul talks about the saints of the Old Testament
- He explains that they had faith in God, becoming part of the history leading to Christ's birth
- God's promise of Salvation is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ, which unites all of human history

2) Ask: "How is the message of this epistle apply to our lives?"

Possible Answers

- We are recipients of God's blessings as members of the Church: Christ's Body
- Even though we are born centuries after Christ lived on earth, we are still recipients of God's plan
- Like many figures in the Old Testament, we need to remain faithful to God when faced with attacks and sufferings
- God provides for our needs and ensures we have whatever is necessary to be with Him in Paradise

Talk about the Gospel reading:

Today's gospel was written by St. Matthew.

It is one of four written accounts of the life of Jesus Christ, found in the New Testament of our bible.

1) Ask: "What took place in today's lesson?"

Possible Answers

- The gospel tells of the genealogy or ancestry of Jesus Christ
- There were 42 generations from the first Patriarch, Abraham to Christ's birth of Mary
- The gospel explains what happened at the birth of Christ: Joseph, faced with the challenge of Mary's sudden pregnancy, was assured by an angel that the child would be called Jesus, and would save people from their sins
- Christ's birth fulfilled a prophecy spoken long before His birth
- Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him in obedience to God

2) Ask: "Why is this important for us living in the 21st century?"

Possible Answers

- As Orthodox Christians, we are united through the Church to the generations of people in the Old Testament
- Each of us plays an important role in God's plan
- We can pray to God that He will guide us to our role
- Christ's birth is wonderful because it provides us with an opportunity to encounter God

Hymnography

Have someone read the Troparion/ Apolytikion and Kontakion on the handout.

Review: Troparion (tro – par – ee – ohn) or Apolytikion (ah – po – lee – tee – key – ee – ohn) and Kontakion (kon – tahk – ee – ohn) are theme songs for each feast, celebration, or saint.

Troparion and **Apolytikion** are names for the same hymn. **Kontakion** is a separate hymn expanding on the ideas proclaimed in the Troparion or Apolytikion, where the last line is used as a refrain during some services.

Both hymns describe what or who we're celebrating, and how this event or saint is important to our lives as Orthodox Christians.

These are celebratory hymns, rejoicing in God's mercy and wonders.

1) Ask: "What do the hymns teach us about the resurrection?"

Possible Answers

- Jesus Christ's earthly ancestors were faithful to God's promise
- With God's mercy, they were able to withstand horrible circumstances, even unto death
- These saints and holy people pray to God for us
- The Theotokos fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the ancient cities of Bethlehem and Ephratha

2) Ask: "How can the message of the hymns apply to our lives?"

Possible Answers

- Whatever our role in life, we can play a valuable role in the Church
- The struggles and trials faced by Christ's earthly ancestors can be examples for us of obedience and faithfulness to God
- We glorify God in our hymns and prayers for being born of Mary

A Closer Look

After reading the front page of the handout, discuss and explore the themes below based on today's gospel lesson. Questions are interspersed with the text.

Opening Review

Today we hear a reading with a lot, lot, lot of names. How many?

47!

It tells us about Jesus Christ's earthly ancestors. He had grandparents and many other relatives, like his mom, Mary!

Ask: Why is it important to know Christ is the decendent of all of these people?

Possible Answers:

- The reading connects the Old Testament with Jesus Christ
- It shows Christ isn't some random guy claiming to be the Son of God
- Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise God made concerning a Messiah

Setting the Stage

Ask: Who are the important names in today's scripture reading?

Possible answers:

- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Patriarchs)
- David, Solomon (Kings of Israel)
- Joseph (the betrothed of the Virgin Mary)
- All of the names listed

The genealogy of Christ reminds us that *each of us* plays an important part in the life of the church today. Matthew's entire gospel is for our understanding and benefit.

A Prophecy for the Future

After the gospel reading lists all of the ancestors, it shifts to tell us Christ isn't just the Messiah because He has the right lineage or ancestry.

The prophets spoke of Christ across many generations. We can tell from today's reading that Christ's birth was not ordinary. God's plan took not one, two, or five generations, but forty-two generations! That's a long time, right?

What Does This Mean For Us?

Ask: Knowing that the birth of Christ was the result of God's plan over forty-two generations, how should we react when something doesn't happen for us in the amount of time we expect?

Possible Answers:

- We need to be patient and understanding
- God will provide for our needs when He knows it's right for us and our salvation
- We have to be patient and focused on God, trusting that He will provide for our needs

God's Plan for Salvation

From the start of the book of Genesis and the founding of the world, God's relationship with His creation is an expression of His love.

We were created in God's image: to love, think, be creative, express compassion for others, and ultimately, be in communion with God.

History recounts the path winding it's way to that very special moment when the Archangel Gabriel came to Mary, announcing she would be overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, and give birth to a Son: Jesus Christ.

God's Relationship With Us

God acts in His way, at His time, to provide what we need. When we get distracted or lose focus on God, we become anxious, worried, scared. But God will help us if we reach out to Him: that's called praying to God!

The devil doesn't want us to talk with God, so we have to be careful and do our best to stay focused on being like Jesus and His saints. That makes God happy, and is good for us too!

Wrap Up

As we draw closer to the Nativity of Our Lord this week, let us remember that Christ's birth was a miraculous event in our world, and it should also be the same in our own lives.

Christ's birth can only be explained through the love and grace of God.

Being faithful to God's commandments and teachings doesn't mean everything will make sense or give us a sense of calm. That's ok.

Ask: Now that we've talked about today's reading, how are these saints like us?

Possible Answers:

- They play an important role to serve God's plan
- We have a role to help God make the world a better place
- God will watch over us as He did with the people who lived a long time ago
- There are ways which God helps people in secret, ensuring they are taken care of in life - and He does that for us too

These individuals are important, because we're seeing them as part of a bigger picture. Just like us and our role in the Church!

God's plan will sometimes be a mystery for us, but that's ok, because He's God and knows what we need and how to handle things for us.

We just need to have faith and trust God.

When we come to church on Christmas, we get to participate in the divine liturgy and receive the Eucharist. It's our way of celebrating Christmas with God in His home.

Later, we celebrate with our family at home with gifts and special foods.

Coming to Church on Christmas shows God that we love Him, and want to be with Him on very special occasions.

It's our opportunity to approach and kneel before the icon of the Nativity, glorifying God for His great mercy and love.

Handout Activities

In the handout for the feast, there are a variety of activities which can be completed:

Front Page: Read the introductory text, ensuring the young people understand the message and theme for this Sunday. Read the gospel and epistle/apostolos, and hymns of the day, using the notes on pages 1-3 of this study guide as reference.

Page 2: My Advent Planner: The full Advent Planner is available in the lesson for the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost. This is the last week before the feast of our Lord's Nativity.

The goal is to have students make an active effort to do spiritual activities during the 40 days leading up to Christmas.

Pages 2-3: My Family Tree: This activity can be introduced and started during class, and completed at home or during the Christmas school break with family members.

Help the students fill the boxes with information about each member of their family. Students can use blank space on the page to include siblings, step-parents, or other relatives.

Pages 4-5: My Family Album: Students can place photos of their family into the frames, or draw pictures in each space.

Be sure to send us a link as well, so we can showcase your creativity and celebrate the talents of your young people. Email the link to us at: orthodoxjourneys@gmail.com

Be sure to include students' first name, ages, parish, city, and state/province.

Saints of the Week

Let's explore the feasts and saints commemorated during the coming week.

December 20 - 23: The four days before Christmas Eve are called the Forefeast of the Nativity, during which we are called to fast more intensely, preparing ourselves to receive the new-born Christ child.

December 22 - St. Anastasia lived in the era of Christian persecutions, caring for those persecuted for their Faith.

Her knowledge of medicine made it possible to provide care and healing for the wounds of the persecuted Christians.

St. Anastasia was arrested yet unwilling to bow down before idols, was martyred for her faith in God.

December 24 - The nun-martyr Eugenia lived in Alexandria, Egypt in the 2nd century, as a secret Christian.

Through her pious life, she was blessed with the ability to heal. St. Eugenia lived a simple life, helping young women and those persecuted for the Faith.

Our Savior appeared to St. Eugenia one day, telling her to have courage, because she would enter the Kingdom of God on the day of His birth. She was martyred on December 25.

