



Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

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

Today is the Second Sunday of the Great Fast

Lesson Order

- Opening Prayer
- Intro / Recap last week's lesson
- Review the scripture readings
- Review the hymns of the day
- Read front page of handout together
- Use study guide lesson and Q&A
- Complete handout activities
- Preview next week's lesson
- Closing Prayer

Tips & Hints

- Use as much or as little of the content in this study guide helping the students discover how the Orthodox Faith can be a part of their daily life.
- Use open-ended questions, encouraging young people to share their experiences or ideas, drawing connections to the topics of the day, strengthening 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

✓ Goal

After completing this week's lesson, students should be able to articulate the following:

- How today's scripture readings and liturgical hymns apply to their life
- Understanding what God is expecting us to live as His followers and members of the Orthodox Faith
- How being part of the Orthodox Church gives us the tools and skills to live godly lives regardless of our circumstances
- Why they believe and follow Jesus Christ as Orthodox Christians

✂ Overview

Last Week

Was the first Sunday of the Great Fast when we celebrate having icons in our homes and churches.

Icons, like pictures of our family, show us our spiritual family - the Virgin Mary and saints - so we can be like them and grow closer to Jesus and God the Father.

During Great Lent, we make more of an effort, because we're getting closer to celebrating Pascha - when Jesus rose from the dead.

How did He do this? Because He's the Son of God!

This Week

The second Sunday of the Great Fast celebrates the life and teachings of St. Gregory Palamas, a famous bishop.

St. Gregory was really smart, and taught people why it was important to want to be with God.

He explained that Jesus is the Light of the world, bringing us closer to His Father: God!

We honor St. Gregory for being so smart, and thank God that He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from the devil.

📖 Apostolos / Epistle and Gospel Readings

Have one student read today's Apostolos/Epistle and another read the Gospel lesson.

Epistle/Apostol:
Hebrews 1:10-2:3

Gospel:
Mark 2:1-12

1. What is the author of today's epistle/apostol talking about?
2. How does the message of this epistle apply to our lives?

Possible Answers

- God created everything, and this shows us how much He loves us
- St. Paul, the author of the letter, teaches us that even though we might sin or make mistakes, God still loves us...a lot!
- Jesus' death on the cross restores us to a strong relationship with God
- God's love will never change, so we can find out way back to Him if we fall down or sin

1. What took place in today's lesson?
2. Why is this important for us living in the 21st century?

Possible Answers

- The men who help the paralytic are examples of how we can help others
- When we do good things for other people, we are like the men, and also like Jesus Who helped those in need
- We should do whatever we can to get closer to Christ

🎵 Hymnography

Have a student read the hymn(s) on the front page of the handout.

1. What do the hymns teach us about today's commemoration?
2. How can the message of these hymns apply to our lives?

Possible Answers

- St. Gregory is honored as a wise defender of the Church's teachings
- He was a great teacher who instructed many about the nature of God
- We can ask St. Gregory to pray for us, just as we ask our parents, friends, priest, and others to pray to God for us

A Closer Look

Let's take a closer look at today's primary topic.

Summary of Gospel Reading

The reading during the liturgy today tells us how large crowds would gather to hear Jesus speak. They wanted to hear His teachings about how to live, and to get close to Him. Some people, especially those who were ill or sick, would do whatever they could, or have friends help them encounter Jesus.

One group of people tore a hole in the roof to get closer to Jesus. What would you do to get as close to Christ? How much do we want to have Jesus in our life?

What Does This Mean For Us?

As the Son of God, Jesus can unite us to God the Father. He offers us the chance to be His followers, forgiving us of sins or things we do wrong. He does this, because He loves us.

Jesus wants us to say, "I'm sorry" and live according to His teachings. When we come to liturgy, receive the Eucharist, say our prayers, or read the bible with our family, we are being His followers. This is a wonderful thing, and something which the devil doesn't like. That's ok. We don't like the devil, because he is mean and fights against God.

When we believe in Jesus, we'll want to be like Him. Some people want to be like famous sports figures or celebrities - as Orthodox Christians, we want to be like St. Nicholas, St. Tatiana, St. Herman, or the Virgin Mary, because they dedicated their lives to God. We can do that, and rejoice in the special connection we have with God.

What happens if we sin or fall short? God understands that will happen. That's why He gave us the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist to help us return to His Father. He loves us regardless of any physical limitation we might have, and encourages us to love Him and each other, so when we get to Holy Week, we'll be able to stand before His cross and say "Thank you!" for the gift of salvation.

Wrap Up

As Orthodox Christians, we hear this gospel reading as an encouragement to get closer to God - to fight against the things which might seem important, but are temporary distractions from the really important part of this life: a relationship with God.

The season of Great Lent provides us with moments to pray more, fast more, and help those less fortunate more. By doing these things, we can draw closer to the Light of Christ which illumines the world from His empty tomb on Pascha.

The Great Fast is an excellent time to make meaningful efforts to make Jesus Christ a part of our life.

We can, and should, want to be with God, because it's in His presence that we can become children of God. And that's a wonderful experience and blessing for us to have in our lives.

Discussion Questions

Choose from these possible questions to explore today's topic.

1. How can we be like the men who helped their friend?
2. Why do we attend liturgy and actively participate in the prayers, hymns, and receive the Eucharist?
3. How can we be good Christians at school? the mall? at church? at home?

Possible answers

- Our behavior reveals what type of Orthodox Christian we choose to be in life
- We can be merciful, forgiving, repentant, compassionate (without fanfare or drawing attention to ourselves)
- We can avoid gossip, lying, stealing, being greedy, or lazy, or judging, or needing to control things/people/situations
- 4. Why does Jesus want us to follow His teachings?

Possible answers

- He loves us and wants us to be with Him and God the Father
- 5. Why does the devil want to stop us from following Jesus?

Possible answers

- He doesn't love us and wants us to be separated from God
- 6. What can we say in our prayers to ask Jesus for help being His followers?

Possible answers

- Lord, have mercy on us
- Lord, please guide my actions
- Lord, thank you for your mercy and love in my life
- Pray "The Lord's Prayer"...
- Pray "O Heavenly King..."
- O Lord, guide my footsteps in the path where I should walk today, so that I may glorify Your Name in my words, thoughts, and deeds. Amen.
- 7. When we sin, what should we do?

Possible answers

- Forgive ourselves and run to God in repentance
- Reflect on why we might have fallen into sin, identifying ways to not do those bad things again
- Be grateful to God for the opportunity to again receive forgiveness and healing through His mercy

What the Saints Say

Hear what they say about today's topic.

"But the good Instructor, the Wisdom, the Word of the Father, who made man, cares for the whole nature of His creature; the all-sufficient Physician of humanity, the Saviour, heals both body and soul. "Rise up "He said to the paralytic; "take the bed on which thou liest, and go away home."
- **St. Clement of Alexandria (3rd century)**

Terminology

Compassion: The act of being charitable or merciful to another or ourselves. Being compassionate is also a way we can be like God, who (as it says in the psalms) is "merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

Being compassionate means giving of ourselves, using our gifts and resources to help someone less fortunate or someone in need.

Faith: The virtue which is the foundation for all we do as Orthodox Christians. It is through faith that we believe in God, trust in God's mercy, and are obedient to His teachings and commandments.

Faith is referenced throughout scripture as being the source of hope, love, and all the good things of this world. It is through faith that we trust in God's love and mercy, that God will protect and keep us throughout our lives.

Through faith, we rely on God. And through faith, we come to know God, desiring to understand and know God as much as we can, so that we can grow closer to Him. And, as we grow closer to God in faith, we come to see ourselves as part of a larger community to which we are responsible to bring God's love into the world through our words and actions - bringing our faith to life.

Preview

Next Week

The third Sunday of the Great Fast reminds us that our journey through Great Lent will lead us to the cross of Christ.

We are called to make every effort to be active Orthodox Christians who love God and want to be with Him.

The Church encourages us to stay focused, with more prayer, fasting, and helping others than we usually do outside of Lent.

By denying ourselves we learn humility and compassion, drawing closer to God, living a life of holiness like the saints.

On The Web

Learn more about this week's topics on the web:

Fasting and Great Lent

<http://ww1.antiochian.org/fasting-great-lent>

