

Learning Objectives: Middle School / Junior High and High School Textbooks (*in progress*)

Prepared by Stephania Gianulis and Aimee Cox Ehres
Additional material by Anton C. Vrame, PhD

What Your Child Should Know

A frequent question that the Department receives from teachers and parents is “What should children know about their faith by the time they are “X” years old?” This question is fueled by a number of influences. First, schools have expectations that their students should reach certain milestones at various stages in their education. Teachers are expected to prepare their students to meet those points in the course of the year, usually because there will be some kind of test. Second, education itself is goal-oriented. Educational progress is measured by the acquisition of certain objectives. Teachers and students want to know their level of progress. Third, parents want to be able to assist their children in the learning process. Knowing the expectations and what the program hopes to accomplish is beneficial.

The aim of education in the Orthodox Church is “to nurture, instruct, and direct each member of the community of faith—the Church—in Christian living, or as Orthodox writers typically call it, the life in Christ, so that each person grows “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18) and become “a partaker of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Alternately stated, the goal of ... catechesis is for each person to become an icon, a living image of God, a person who lives in continual fellowship—communion—with God, reflecting a particular way—the Christ-like way—of knowing and living in the world.” (A. Vrame, *The Educating Icon*, 1999, p. 63). This vision of education involves acquiring information but also involves living according to the precepts of that information.

Thus, an Orthodox Christian ought to be well-informed about the rich content of the Orthodox Tradition. Being able to name, to retell, to identify, to list, and more are dimensions of what it means “to know” one’s faith. A Church school program should be able to transmit these concepts to its students. But “knowing the Faith” also involves being able to appreciate its content, to consider how it influences one’s life, to participate in it, and to respond to its call of commitment to faith in Jesus Christ and His Church. For example, what is the benefit of reciting the Lord’s Prayer in a classroom setting, and a teacher’s assessment that the student has memorized it, without praying the Lord’s Prayer at home and reflecting on the words themselves?

The real curriculum for learning the Orthodox Faith is the life of the Church as experienced in a dynamic, faith-filled parish. Our education in faith is a lifelong journey. No Church school curriculum can include or teach everything. Any series of published textbooks is merely the first step of learning. Even in the best series, the authors, editors, and publishers make choices about what they believe most valuable for learners to achieve in a certain timeframe.

What follows—for the middle school / junior high and high school levels—is the result of reviewing our existing textbook series, published by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Religious Education from 1995 to date, and summarizing the concepts that the textbooks strive to teach. We have tried to distill their contents, by textbook, to answer the question, “What should my child learn in grade X?”

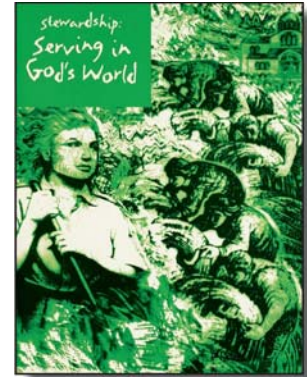
Please note the following:

- You will notice how certain concepts and topics, e.g., the Divine Liturgy, are presented in various ways based on the theme of the text. The goal of our textbooks is not to present all of the information on a single topic in one unit, never to return to it, but to revisit key topics in an unfolding pattern of discovery for the learner.
- Some items, such as prayers introduced in each unit, are found only in the Teacher’s Guides to the books.

Of course, individual parishes and teachers add material, information (lives of saints, feast days, Sunday scripture readings), and activities, which will add to this list. Finally, the following list assumes that a child attends Church school faithfully, has a well-prepared teacher, and a family that is involved in the life of the Church, involved in the learning process, and reinforces the concepts at home.

Anton C. Vrame, PhD
Director

Stewardship: Serving in God's World



Lesson 1: Our Gift from God

- Explore the creation story.
- Recognize one's responsibility to creation.
- Celebrate God's creation in the Divine Liturgy.
- Praise and thank God for all His blessings.
creation universe steward

Lesson 2: Our Responsibility to Each Other

- Understand what stewardship requires.
- Recognize that each one has the capacity of stewardship.
- Recognize that Jesus is the Master Steward.
- Explore biblical passages dealing with stewardship.
compassion missionary

Lesson 3: St. Symeon, Peacemaker and Translator

- Recognize stewardship values.
- Recognize that each one has the capability of stewardship.
- Recognize the stewardship of St. Symeon.
diplomat eternal saint

Lesson 4: The Three Ts

- Recognize our God-given gifts.
- Use our God-given gifts for the glory of God.
- Become involved in the stewardship of the Church.
- Recognize that giving of oneself through time, talent, and treasures can have many rewards.
talent

Lesson 5: Putting It All Together

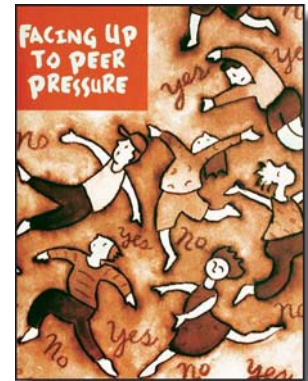
- Recognize their opportunities to practice stewardship.
- Live the teachings of the Beatitudes.

Facing Up to Peer Pressure

Lesson 1: *Pressure, Pressure Everywhere!*

- Recognize positive and negative peer pressures.
- Recognize the difference between a clique and a group of friends.
- Face up to peer pressures and cliques with confidence as Christians.
- Commit themselves to being sources of helpful pressures to their friends.

peers peer pressure clique



Lesson 2: *Keeping the Pressure Down*

- Recognize what they can do to resist negative peer pressure.
- Recognize what their family, other adults, and their church can do to help them resist negative peer pressure.

holiness

Lesson 3: *Blowing the Lid*

- Recognize the reasons why some teenagers join harmful pressure groups.
- Recognize the behaviors of teenagers in such pressure groups.
- Realize that the actions of such pressure groups can lead to violence and crime.
- Know what Christian love and understanding can do to turn harmful behaviors into positive ones.

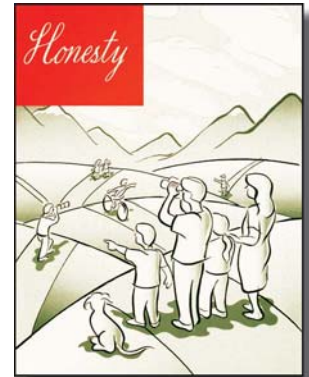
gang

Lesson 4: *Keeping the Faith*

- Identify and use five specific ways the Church provides help to resist peer pressure (correct teaching, holy icons, fasting, prayer, Bible reading).
- Know how Jesus resisted Peter's temptation.
- Identify the temptations Jesus faced in the desert and some that students face daily.
- Recognize Satan (the Devil) as a source of temptations.
- Learn how to use the words of Jesus in responding to Satan's temptations.

Satan temptation Scripture concordance

Honesty



Lesson 1: Called to Honesty

- Recognize the value of being an honest person.
- Realize that there are consequences to being honest or dishonest.
- Recognize honesty involves words and deeds.
honesty integrity

Lesson 2: Rules, Guidelines, Goals

- Recognize that the most important rules are given by God.
- Realize the Ten Commandments provide us with moral guidance, and Jesus provided us teachings calling for unselfishness and sacrifice.
- Understand that Christ’s teachings help us reach the “ultimate goal,” and what is meant by the “ultimate goal” (salvation).
controversy deceive deception goals guidelines ultimate

Lesson 3: Can You Be Trusted?

- Understand God expects us to be truthful and honest.
- Recognize true friends can be depended upon at all times.
- Recognize the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Understand that gossip can be equal to “character assassination”.
covenant gossip rumor

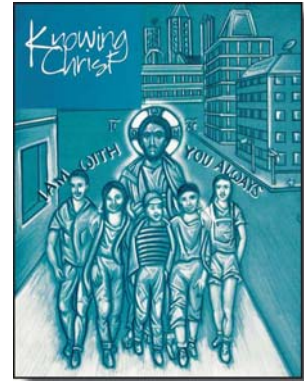
Lesson 4: Cheating Yourself

- Recognize cheating is a form of lying.
- Recognize cheating is a form of stealing.
- Realize dishonest behaviors have unfavorable consequences.
tempt temptation

Lesson 5: Forgiven and Forgiving

- Recognize God is loving and forgiving.
- Realize that we too must be loving and forgiving .
- Realize honesty comes easily when it is practiced daily.
- Understand the hidden meaning of the Parable of the Prodigal Son.
reconcile reconciliation restoration

Knowing Christ



Lesson 1:

Who Is Christ?

- **Recognize** that Christ is the greatest figure the world has ever known.
- **Recognize** that Christ's birth marks a change in world history.
- **Understand** that in reciting the Creed, we pledge our belief in Christ and the Orthodox Faith.
- **Recognize** that the birth of Jesus was far from ordinary.
- **Understand** the significance of Christ's baptism by John the Baptist.
- **Recognize** that people disputed, and some still do, that Jesus is the Messiah.
- **Understand** that only faith in Christ's words and actions can overcome questions about who He is.
Carpenter creed humble humanity incarnation
Messiah miracle prophet

Lesson 2:

The Kingdom of God

- **Recognize** that the Gospel means "Good News," which comes from God.
- **Understand** that the Gospel teaches what is right, true, and good in the eyes of God.
- **Realize** that the Kingdom of God is God's presence and power everywhere.
- **Understand** that the Kingdom of God comes through Christ.
Gospel king Kingdom of God repent

Lesson 3:

The Teachings of Jesus

- **Recognize** the greatest rule of the Bible: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." (Deuteronomy 6:5).
- **Understand** the "new commandment": "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18).
- **Realize** God's Kingdom is a Kingdom of love.
- **Memorize** John 13:34–35: "I give you a new commandment—love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.
Commandment parable sacrifice

Lesson 4:

The World's Most Famous Talk

- **Recognize** the Sermon on the Mount as the "Law of Christ".
- **Understand** that Christ used His authority to interpret the Law of Moses in a new way.
- **Realize** that we need God's help to practice the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount.
- **Recognize** temptation and how to overcome it.
beatitude Law of the Prophets

Lesson 5:

Christ's Miracles

- **Realize** that it is God's power that performs miracles.
- **Recognize** that the greatest miracle is that God became man in His Son, Jesus Christ.
- **Recognize** that Satan tempts people to lead their lives away from God.
- **Understand** that Jesus performed miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **Understand** the purpose of Christ's miracles.
Satan Holy Spirit Beelzebub

Lesson 6:

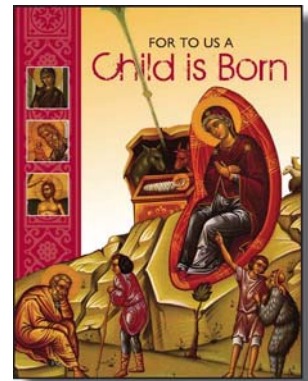
I Am With You Always

- **Understand** Christ's mission to save the world.
- **Understand** the meaning of Holy Week.
- **Recognize** the greatest injustice ever committed.
- **Recognize** that Christ is always with us.
- **Memorize** John 3:16: "For God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life."
mission recruit

For to Us a Child is Born

Lesson 1: *Preparing for the Incarnation*

- **Observe** the elements of preparation for the coming of Christ in Scriptures and in the Nativity narrative.
- **Connect** the preparation that Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zachariah and the whole world must undergo, to the ways that any Christian can personally prepare for the coming of Christ in His Nativity.
- **Commit** to a personal plan of preparation for Christmas.



Lesson 2: *The Miracle and Meaning of the Incarnation of Christ*

- **Observe** elements and details of the three nativity icons in the text.
- **Analyze** nativity scenes for their use as aids in worship.
- **Categorize** elements along the theme of God's incarnation in Jesus Christ.
- **Connect** the icons' depictions to the fundamental truth that "God is with us."

Lesson 3: *Character Traits of St. Basil: Emulating Christ*

- **Describe** people who are positive examples.
- **Connect** these positive character traits to the character traits that distinguish St. Basil as a holy person.
- **Identify** ways in which these character traits reflect the life and person of Christ.

Lesson 4: *God Is Revealed in Christ, and the World is Transformed through Him (Theophany and the Presentation of Christ)*

- **Discern** the theme of the incarnation in Christ's manifestation as God, and of the transformation of the world, in the story of His Theophany.
- **Interpret** the significance of symbolic imagery—both visual and written—that conveys the fullness of Christ's incarnation in His baptism and presentation.
- **Connect** Christ's participation in traditions to their own participation in the sacraments and traditions of the Church.

Journey through Holy Week

Lesson 1: Saturday of Lazarus and Palm Sunday

- **Identify** the joy that Jesus brought people when He answered their greatest hopes.
- **Connect** with this joy and bring it into their present life.

Lesson 2: The Bridegroom Services

- **Interpret** the meaning of the actions of characters and stories from Scripture, as symbolic of living a life in preparation for encountering Christ.
- **Connect** forgiveness, mercy, and love for others to love for Christ.
- **Decide** on specific ways to live in a preparation for Christ, based on the examples from Scripture.

Lesson 3: Holy Wednesday and Holy Thursday

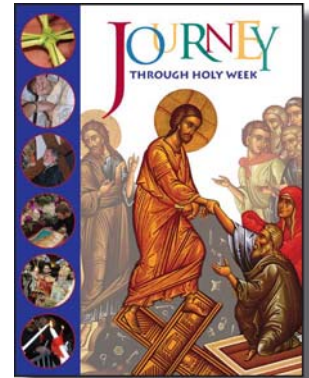
- **Work together** to experience the importance of unity and mutual dependence.
- **Personalize** their role as a member of the body of Christ.
- **Connect** the image of mutual dependence on the spiritual unity of the body of Christ.
- **Focus** understanding of unity in the direction of service to others.

Lesson 4: Holy Thursday Evening and Holy Friday

- **Identify with** Christ's suffering in His last days on earth.
- **Interpret** expressions of the paradox of Jesus' full divinity and humanity.
- **Invite** Christ's life-giving light into their own suffering and challenging moments.

Lesson 5: Holy Saturday and Easter (Pascha)

- **Identify with** emotions of uncertainty, sadness, and joy related to Christ's dwelling in the tomb and freeing humanity to life.
- **Reflect** on the mystery that Christ brought life to death and death to life.
- **Personalize** Christ's resurrection as their own life-giving, joyous miracle.
- **Commit** to ways that they can share this joy with others in their lives.



Journey through Great Lent

Entire unit:

- **Memorize** the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian.
- **Plan** and complete a service project.
- **Participate** in the Sacrament of Confession.
- **Attend** Lenten services beyond the Divine Liturgy on Sundays.

Lesson 1: *Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee: Introduction to Great Lent and the Triodion*

- **Examine** their attitudes toward the Lenten season and its disciplines.
- **Identify** the beginning and end of the Triodion and Great Lent.
- **Compare** and **contrast** pride and humility.

Lesson 2: *Sunday of the Prodigal Son: Repentance and Confession*

- **Recognize** the traits of repentance.
- **Desire** reconciliation with God and other human beings.
- **Describe** the Sacrament of Confession.
- **Apply** the themes of the Parable of the Prodigal Son to the Sacrament of Confession.
- **Evaluate** various methods of personal preparation for confession.

Lesson 3: *Judgment Sunday: Life, Eternal Life, and Death*

- **Describe** the Orthodox Christian understanding of judgment and life after death.
- **Define** heaven, Hades, and hell.
- **Distinguish** between the physical and spiritual understandings of heaven and hell.
- **Explain** that “faith” is expressed and made visible through “works.”
- **Plan** a service project.
- **Recognize** opportunities for spontaneous acts of service, hospitality, and empathy.

Lesson 4: *Forgiveness Sunday: Forgiveness, Mercy, and Grace*

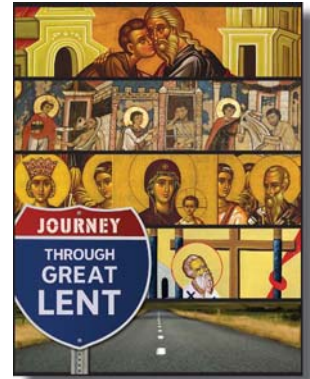
- **Explain** that asking for and granting forgiveness heals relationships.
- **Understand** that communion with God is salvation.
- **Forgive** others.
- **Seek** forgiveness from God and from others.

Lesson 5: *The Sunday of Orthodoxy: Come and See*

- **Inventory** aspects of the Faith that they find hard to explain.
- **Celebrate** the Orthodox Christian Faith.
- **Consider** forms of and opportunities for evangelism.

Lesson 6: *The Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas: Come Near Him*

- **Examine** interpersonal connection, concentration, and mindfulness.
- **Practice** silence.
- **Compare** the life of prayer to daily life and to Lenten disciplines.



Lesson 7: *The Sunday of the Holy Cross: Take Up the Cross*

- **Examine** spiritual struggles as crosses to be borne.
- **Recognize** that God does not want His people to suffer.
- **Create** a visual reminder of the cross's victory over death and suffering.

Lesson 8: *The Sunday of St. John Climacus: Help My Unbelief*

- **Discuss** virtues and the fruit of the Spirit.
- **Discuss** vices and the passions.
- **Analyze** the symbolism of the Ladder of Divine Ascent.
- **Propose** other symbols that also represent life in the Orthodox Christian Faith.
- **Compare** the Ladder of Divine Ascent with the "greatest commandments." (Matthew 22:36–40)
- **Examine** the paradox of the statement "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

Lesson 9: *The Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt: Drink the Cup*

- **Review** the themes of Great Lent, as they are found in the life of St. Mary of Egypt: sin, the cross, repentance, confession, discipline, and drawing near to God through the Sacrament of Holy Communion.
- **Assess** their Lenten efforts in light of St. John Chrysostom's Paschal Homily.

Heaven on Earth: The Divine Liturgy

Lesson 1: Liturgy Is Worship

- **Distinguish** among worship, veneration, and idolatry.
- **Develop** a working definition of worship.
- **Describe** the aspects of worship.

Lesson 2: Liturgy Is Unity

- **Understand** that the Church constantly recognizes the two realities that are joined in the world—earthly (temporal) and heavenly (eternal).
- **Apply** this understanding to church architecture.
- **See** how the divine reality is accessible to us and can indeed help us in life's struggles.

Lesson 3: Liturgy Is Prayer

- **Approach** the Divine Liturgy prayerfully and peacefully.
- **Examine** the petitions to discover the Church's approach to earthly needs.
- **Describe** liturgical prayer and private prayer.

Lesson 4: Liturgy Is Scriptural

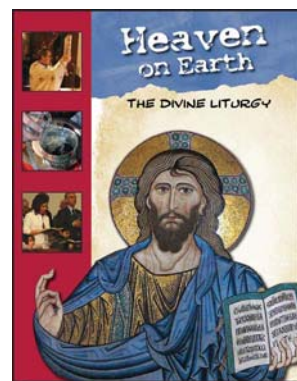
- **Explain** that the Bible and the Divine Liturgy are products of the Church.
- **Demonstrate** that the roots of liturgical practices and items are found in the Old Testament.
- **Connect** the statements of the Creed to scripture.
- **Integrate** daily Bible study and weekly worship by following a lectionary.

Lesson 5: Liturgy Is Forgiveness

- **Recognize** the difficulty of repentance and forgiveness in daily life.
- **Understand** that forgiveness is central in the lives of Orthodox Christians.
- **Explain** the abundance and depth of forgiveness that is in the liturgy, and especially the type of forgiveness before communion.

Lesson 6: After the Liturgy

- **Connect** the Sunday Divine Liturgy to weekly life—heaven and earth.
- **Understand** that becoming God-centered is a lifelong process.
- **Look** for ways to do God's work through daily life.



A Lamp to My Feet: Introduction to the Bible

Lesson 1: *Making Scripture Important in Our Lives*

- **Identify** motivations for Bible study.
- **Develop** the discipline to actively incorporate Scripture into daily life.
- **Anticipate** the rewards of the discipline.
- **Embrace** attitudes that promote a habit of Bible study.

Lesson 2: *Studying Scripture*

- **Survey** study techniques and methods.
- **Establish** a Bible study plan for the coming week.
- **Compare** Bible translations.
- **Practice** using the tools of a study Bible, including study notes, cross-references, and a concordance.

Lesson 3: *The Old Testament*

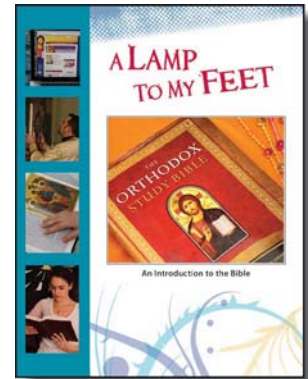
- **Discern** two types of meaning in the Old Testament, literal and revelatory.
- **Familiarize** themselves with the types of books the Old Testament contains: Law (the Pentateuch), History, Wisdom, and Prophecy.

Lesson 4: *The New Testament*

- **Describe** the types of books in the New Testament.
- **Understand** that the Gospels give four authors' perspectives of the same events.

Lesson 5: *Finding Truth and Salvation in Scripture*

- **Explore** the role of faith in believing and accepting the truth of the Biblical texts.
- **Describe** the development of the canons of the Old and New Testaments.
- **Evaluate** the roles of human beings in recording, interpreting, and receiving Scripture.
- **Identify** uses of Scripture in the services of the Church.

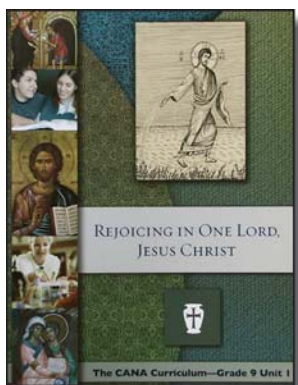


Come Receive the Light Bible Studies, vol. 1

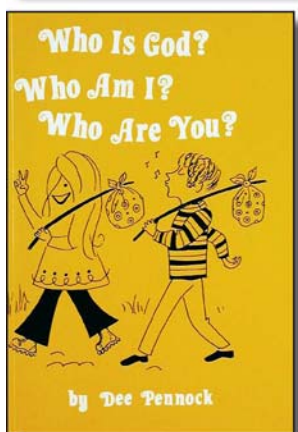
Come Receive the Light Bible Studies, vol. 2

First among Equals: The Ecumenical Patriarchate (forthcoming)

High School Texts



Rejoicing in One Lord, Jesus Christ



Who Is God? Who Am I? Who Are You?

Seeing Is Believing: Holy Icons (forthcoming)

Who Do You Say that I Am? The Person of Christ (forthcoming)

High School Texts cont'd

Of Your Mystical Supper: The Eucharist

Lesson 1: *The Sacrament of Remembrance*

- **Describe** how they remember those who have fallen asleep in the Lord.
- **Reflect** on how the general natures of memory and remembrance.
- **Compare** the disciples' memory of Jesus with our remembrance of Him.
- **Identify** and **develop** prompts to remind themselves of Jesus.

Lesson 2: *The Sacrament of Thanksgiving*

- **Identify** the sources of needs and wants.
- **Name** some of God's gifts.
- **Recognize** that God fulfills both needs and wants.
- **Thank** God for both small and large blessings.

Lesson 3: *The Sacrament of Forgiveness*

- **Analyze** the process of human repentance and forgiveness.
- **Compare** their own capacity for forgiveness with God's grace.
- **Approach** the Eucharist as healing sacrament, meant for the "holy," i.e., those who have been baptized, not "the sinless," i.e., no one.
- **Accept** that repentance is a never-ending process.

Lesson 4: *The Sacrament of Community*

- **Recognize** their participation in multiple communities.
- **Describe** the community of the first Christians.
- **Find** opportunities to work in synergy with God and other human beings.

Lesson 5: *Preparing to Receive Holy Communion*

- **Develop** an understanding of how to prepare to receive Holy Communion.
- **Take responsibility** for their own preparations for Holy Communion: prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and the Sacrament of Confession.
- **Describe** the material (the prothesis) and liturgical (the proskomide) preparations for the sacrament.

