

The Faith Journey

Lesson 4

Unit Three

In The Beginning Was The Word

Here I Am, Lord

How sweet are your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to me.
I gain understanding from your teachings;
And so I hate every false way.
Your word is a lamp for my feet
And a light to my path.
I have taken an oath and confirmed it,
To follow your righteous commands.

Psalm 119: 103-106



One Step Back

1. Acts 8:26-40 is a story about the conversion of an Ethiopian eunuch by the apostle Philip. What was the eunuch reading when Philip encountered him?

- a. the prophet Jeremiah b. the prophet Ezekiel c. the prophet Isaiah

2. What did the apostles do for both the Ethiopian and Lydia?

- a. invited them to Jerusalem to learn more b. baptized them c. stayed at their house

3. Who was the King of Armenia when Thaddeus went there to preach?

- a. Sanadroog b. Drtad c. Apkar

4. Why did King Sanadroog call for the execution of the apostle Bartholomew?

- a. he would not worship pagan gods b. he baptized his sister Volouhi c. he refused to help King Drtad

5. Name three special feast days dedicated to St. Gregory the Illuminator.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Write It Down For Me...



Imagine for a minute that you are in your classroom and the teacher is giving out the homework assignment for the week. What would you do? Don't take out your notepad and a pencil or your iPad just yet, because there is no written language for your country! The only way that you will be able to remember your assignment is by memory. Ok, some of you will say: 'no big deal it's only my homework.' Well, what about texting, using the internet, emails? Undoubtedly, it is very difficult for us, living in this age of technology, to imagine a world like that. Well, that was what it was like for the Armenian people before a priest by the name of Mesrob Mashtotz created the Armenian alphabet.

Mashtotz, a man of deep faith who desired to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, was deeply disturbed that some of the Armenian people were still following

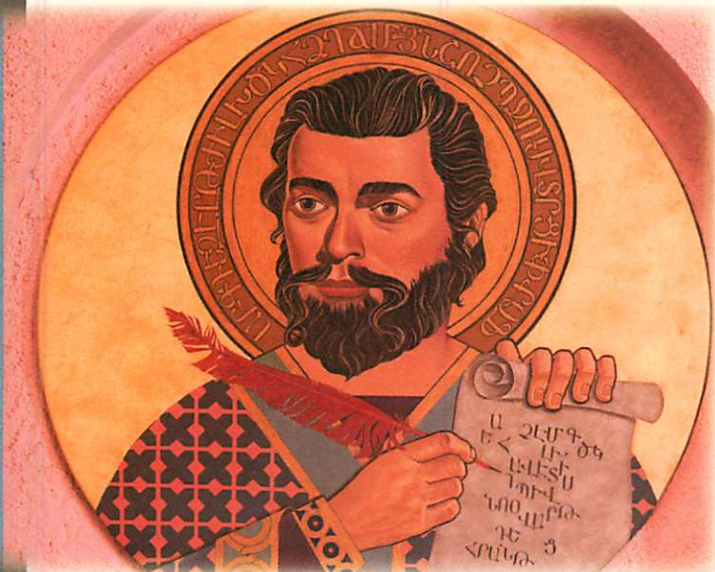
pagan practices, and knew that an Armenian alphabet would help people better understand the liturgy and Scriptures. The Divine Liturgy and the reading of Scripture were conducted in Syriac and Greek often with spontaneous oral translation into Armenian. A written script would help people follow the readings and liturgy and benefit from their divine message.

After a great deal of prayerful reflection, Mashtotz consulted with Sahag, Catholicos of Greater Armenia, who was very receptive to his idea. Together they prayed for God's divine wisdom to guide them. Soon they sought the aid of King Vramshabooh.



Mashtotz enlisted the help of young assistants and sent them to different cities to study languages and alphabets. He himself labored tirelessly. But they were still unable to complete the task. One day, as Mashtotz was meditating in a cave near the village of Palu, the saint had a vision in which the hand of God wrote the alphabet in letters of fire. Undoubtedly, God had a plan for the Armenian nation!

Mesrob Mashtotz went on to build schools across Armenia to teach the alphabet and is even credited for the role he played in developing the alphabets of neighboring nations. The invention of the Armenian alphabet also paved the way for the famous 5th century **Golden Age of Armenia**. Students who were educated abroad returned and originated a new literature, now rich with Christian concepts. The new national alphabet fostered a stronger faith that captivated all Armenian hearts.



Yes, this period was one of marvelous activity. Nearly every book of importance written in Greek and Syriac was translated into Armenian. Over the subsequent centuries, Armenian writers, philosophers, mathematicians, and scientists have achieved world acclaim due in large part to St. Mesrob Mashtotz' influential work.

How Do I Use Language?

Undoubtedly, the written word lends authority and gives power to what is said. It also allows accessibility since something written can be copied and distributed as the Bible was.

Words are double-edged swords: they can build up or they can destroy...How do you use your words? How do you feel about this saying?

True False : "Sticks and stones may break someone's bones, but words will never hurt them."

Since the time of Adam & Eve, the human race has had difficulty controlling its tongue. Let's look at three places in the Bible and see what we learn about the best way to use our words:



1. Proverbs 13:3

It is important to think before I speak because _____

2. James 3:5

My mouth can get me into trouble because _____

3. 2 Timothy 2:16

I don't want to gossip or say foolish things because _____

Proverbs 1:2

Why do you think that these were the first words that Mashtotz translated into the Armenian language?



Our Armenian Way

Goriun Vartabed was a student of Mashtotz and eventually wrote a beautiful account of his teacher's life and amazing achievements. He has also been listed as one of the "junior" translators – that second generation of students who studied and translated works of history and literature.

In his biography *Vark Mashtotzi (The Life of Mashtotz)*, Goriun identifies Sahag and Mashtotz as virtuous men, and compares them to great figures in the Old and New Testament such as Moses, Job, Elijah and St. Paul. Another interesting detail is that both men received burials befitting martyrs which would have been unusual for a 5th century Christian society such as Armenia. In those early days of the Church, sainthood could only be attained through martyrdom in the name of Jesus Christ. Since the Church recognizes both as saints, Goriun's, 'Life' undoubtedly helped persuade churchmen that these men were indeed extraordinary.

The translation of the Bible was finished by the Holy Translators in 425. The first words written in Armenian were: "To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding." (Proverbs 1:2)

The first Armenian translation of the Bible is among the world's oldest and is considered by biblical scholars to be the 'Queen of Translations.'

The Armenian Church remembers these men and their accomplishments on the Feast of the Holy Translators in October. The Holy Translators are highly revered in the Armenian Church. Many of the works they translated have since been lost in their Greek or Syriac original, but have been preserved in the Armenian.

My Language and My Life Count!

The old saying "sticks and stones... is a myth. Words really do hurt and can cause irreversible damage. Many times we say things we shouldn't and wish the words were attached to a rope, so we can pull them back out of the air. We can't! Today, you learned about the invention of the Armenian alphabet which led to the enlightenment of the Armenian nation. Like our Holy Translators, we all have the power to contribute to our world...holiness is the doorway in.

Closing Prayer

God, you chose St. Mesrob Mashtotz to enlighten the Armenian nation through his work, but first he had to choose you...to listen to you, to rely on you and be obedient to your will. Who do you want me to be? You have given me direction in your Word. Help me to hear your call. Help me be the person you created me to be- the real me! Amen.

