

The Church in the Middle Ages: St. Gregory of Narek

Pray Together

Hanoon Hlor, yev Vortvo, yev Hokvooyh Surpo, Amen. "You are perpetual goodness, inexhaustible grace, unchangeable forgiveness, omnipotent hand. Help me, O Lord, that I may be saved; treat me with compassion that I may be cleansed of my sins."

St. Gregory of Narek

Chapter Checkup

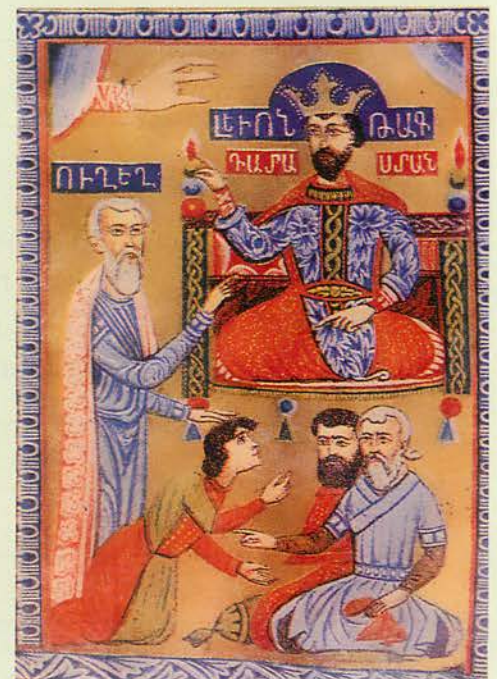
Write "T" or "F" for "true" or "false" on the line provided.

- _____ 1. John the Baptist told people God knows we are busy and it is okay to ignore him.
- _____ 2. St. Gregory was Armenian.
- _____ 3. St. Gregory's father was a very holy man.
- _____ 4. When the king's sister asked St. Gregory to cure the king of his illness, Gregory refused.
- _____ 5. The relics of St. Gregory are brought out every Sunday during Badarak.

A Lighthouse in a Hurricane

Much of the history of Armenia and the rest of the world is filled with war, starvation, earthquakes, and other disasters. The years before the birth of St. Gregory of Narek were no exception. For 200 years the Arabs had ruled (640-884) over Armenian lands. Then, after years of changing borders and conquerors, the Armenian noble houses themselves were at odds. Such famous clans as the Bagratunis, the Arzrunis, and the Siuniks vied for power. Although the period in which he lived (951-1003 A.D.) was relatively peaceful – he grew up under the long reign of the Bagratid King Ashot III (953-977) Gregory was troubled by all the fighting, crime, and suffering in the world.

St. Gregory of Narek saw that sin was at the root of much human misery. Although history records that Gregory was a kind, sensitive, and godly man, he was horrified with the sin he saw in himself. He only wanted to please God and be close to him.



He was born in the village of Narek on the southern shore of Lake Van and studied at the monastery of Narek. He became a monk and lived simply and without any luxuries. He spent his life praying, studying the Bible, and writing poems, prayers, and meditations. St. Gregory felt about God as he would about a best friend- he enjoyed “hanging out” with God more than any other activity. His many prayerful moments thinking about God’s greatness and his own unworthiness moved Gregory to write “Conversations with God from the Depths of the Heart.” Here’s an example:

**Prayer 51 from Narekatsi’s
“Speaking with God from the Depths of the Heart”**

If we run away, it is you who come after us.
 If we are weak, you give us strength.
 If we falter, you set us on the right and easy path.
 If we faint, you encourage us.
 If we are sick in body and soul, you heal us.
 If we lie, you justify us with your truth.
 If we stumble into the darkness, you direct us to heaven.
 If we do not turn from our willfulness, you guide us.
 If we sin, you cry.
 If we are just, you smile.
 If we turn from you, you are full of grief.
 If we come to you, you celebrate.
 If we give, you receive.
 If we become stubborn, you are patient.
 If we are ungrateful, you still give abundantly.
 If we quit, you are sad.
 If we are brave, you rejoice. Prayer 51



Read St. Gregory’s prayer together. Think of what God does for you; add your own two lines.

If I _____, you _____.

If I _____, you _____.

What Kind of Friend?

Do you have a best friend? A close friend? A teammate? Someone you admire at school, church, or activities that you wish were your friend?

Think about that person. What is it that you like about him or her?

On the lines below, write four qualities you would like to have in a friend.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

God knows that friends are important to us. He offers us a friendship that has no conditions. He

doesn't care if you are good at sports, or what brand of clothing your family can afford. He wants to be your best friend. He already knows you – all he is waiting for is for you to get to know him, through prayer, life in the church, reading the Bible, and following his Word.

Our Best Friend

Below are some Bible statements about God that show he is a good friend. Draw a line from the Bible passage to the quality it reveals about God.



“He will never leave you nor forsake you.”
(Deuteronomy 31:6)

you can go to him with problems

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”
(Hebrews 13:8)

wants to be close

“He remembers his covenant forever.”
(1 Chronicles 16:15)

keeps promises

“Though my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will receive me.”
(Psalm 27:10)

will never abandon you

“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is
a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”
(Proverbs 18:24)

*makes you feel better when
something bad happens*

“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his
life for his friends.”
(John 15:13)

*won't change
his mind about you*

“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”
(Psalm 147:3)

there when nobody else is

“The Lord is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer; my God is
my rock, in whom I take refuge.”
(Psalm 18:2)

willing to die for friends

Our Armenian Way



St. Nersess Lampronatzi was a bishop who served the Armenian Church during the Middle Ages. Like St. Gregory of Narek, he led a simple life of prayer and meditation. He left behind many writings and prayers. Here's one:

“For our sake, you became the bearer of sin so we may become righteous for you.

For our sake, you became earthly that we may become heavenly.

For our sake, you became bread that we, partaking of you, may be sanctified.”

Faith Word *Covenant*

A formal agreement or contract

FAMILY FOCUS: *For Parents*



Lesson Roundup

Today your child learned about St. Gregory of Narek as an important figure in the Middle Ages. They learned of his life of simplicity and contemplation. The study of his life and work led to a discussion of God's desire to be a friend to his beloved creation. The children related their own friendship experiences to the kind of friendship offered by God.

Family Faith Activity

God wants us to enjoy a close relationship with him. He is willing to be our friend, and we should reflect that love in the way we treat others. As a family, try to do at least one of the activities listed below.

1. Read James 2:1-13 to see how we should treat others.
2. Read one of the prayers of St. Gregory of Narek each night this week. The prayers are readily available on the internet and in books.
3. Introduce yourself to someone who has recently moved into your neighborhood.

A Parent's Promise

Yes, I read the Lesson Roundup ____ and tried at least one activity as a family ____.

Signed _____