

Looking At Life

Lesson 1

Unit One

Hello, God? I Have a Few Questions...

Here I Am, Lord

- Group 1: Lord listen to my words.
Group 2: Pay attention to my sigh.
Group 1: My king and my God, listen to me when I cry for help.
Group 2: I pray to you.
Group 1: Lord, in the morning you hear my voice.
Group 2: In the morning I pray to you.
All: I wait for you in hope.



Psalm 5: 1-3

God, I've Heard About You All My Life... But I Need to Know More!

We naturally have questions about our world, our lives, and our future. And even though the world around us seems more complicated than ever, it's really no different than in Jesus' time. Jesus truly was not like anyone the apostles had ever met. Imagine the questions they must have had! This man had control even over the forces of nature as we will see in the Gospel reading today. He could even walk on water. He seemed to have the answer for everything, but sometimes the answer he gave or the way he reacted just led to more questions.

Truly, the world has never been the same since Jesus walked the earth. The apostles were certainly never the same. In fact, *all* people who live with Christ are always

dramatically changed at the very core of who they are and what they do.

How could God change you?

But, before God can truly work in your life you have to learn to TRUST him.

Undoubtedly, just like the apostles, saints, and all who have lived before us, we have doubts and questions—and that's great! Don't ever be afraid to ask questions. God is happy with our questions and completely understands our doubts and fears. We know that now our knowledge is incomplete but someday we will know and understand.

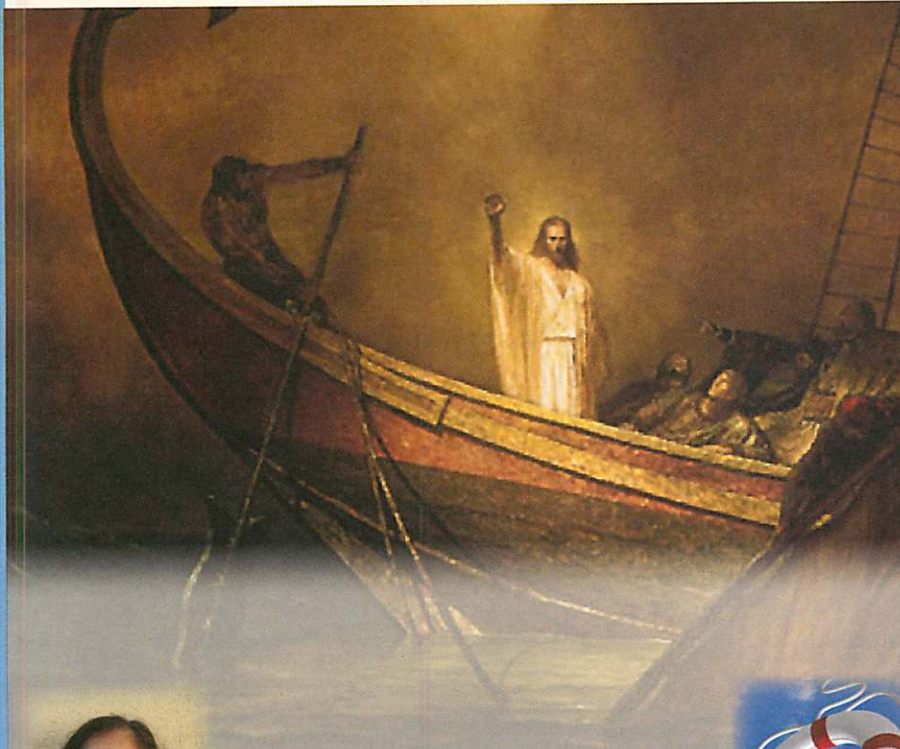


God Asdvadz Աստուծոյ

I Corinthians 13: 12

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

As you get older you will have more and more decisions to make and, from time to time, you will struggle with who you are and how you fit into this world. We can learn from the examples of the apostles and the saints of our Holy Church who struggled with the same questions and had difficult decisions to make just as we do today. They all had something in common that supported them and helped them make the right decisions, even when it did not seem right to the rest of the world—they gathered in a community as a family of faith. Within that family of faith it is much easier for us to make good decisions because we have the support and wisdom of others and we have the strength and power that the Holy Spirit offers to his Body of believers. Just as they did, you will experience time after time the faithfulness of our God—that faithfulness will lead to trust. Our response to God's faithfulness is to keep the lines of communication open through a prayerful life. Our God not only hears your voice...he listens...he responds!



Scriptural Reflection A Journey to Meet Christ

Close your eyes...concentrate on the rhythm of your breathing until you feel yourself calming down... relax and...prepare yourself for a journey to meet the Lord...be alert...a storm is quickly approaching and you don't want to make the same mistake the apostles did!

Listen to the story of Jesus calming the storm in Matthew 8:23-27.



Jesus, Can I Trust You Will Send Me a Lifeboat?



Sometimes life is like a giant storm...yet the teachings of our Church and the practice of faith encourage us to believe and trust in our God who is all-knowing, all-loving and ever-present. He loves us so much that he sent his only Son to help us understand the mysteries of life. He sent his Son to prove how much he loves us and also to make us worthy. Living within the community of faith we witness the faith of others and learn from their example to turn to God in trust for all things but especially when we are caught in a "storm." But, we will still have questions we would like to discuss with Jesus. Let's consider a couple of the most commonly asked questions. There is even room for a question that really bugs *you!*

1. If God is all-loving why do people suffer from disease?
2. What good comes from natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes?
3. It's just so sad...I don't understand why people have to die!
4. *Now ask God to help you understand a question that's been on your mind.*

The Sea of Life (Dzov Gensaguys)

The sea of life daily storms upon me
The raging waves of my enemy hit me
Good captain, to me a protector be.

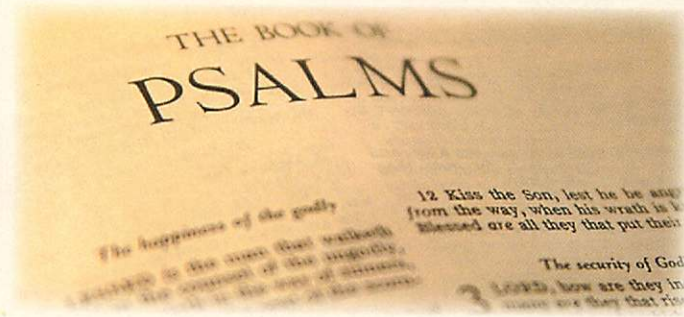
Mesrob Mashdotz



Psalms

Questions → Trust → Praise

Did you know that there was a book of the Bible *all* about people talking to God? Agonizing over their doubts and fears? Asking for God's help? And, ultimately, expressing their trust and praise? While there are many prayers and hymns in the Bible, the one biblical book dedicated to these *entirely* is the book of **Psalms**.



Most of the psalms were originally composed for liturgical worship. Why? Because while they express an individual's feelings, they also expressed what *everyone* often feels. And the community of believers wanted to sing and chant them together, at worship.

There is no sure way of dating the psalms with total accuracy, but we know that some date back before 587 BC—hundreds of years before Christ. Imagine that... we are still praying them!

To this day, the psalms are an important foundation for the Divine Liturgy and all the worship services of the Armenian Church. As a matter of fact, at our Badarak, at the conclusion of his personal confession and when he is going up to the altar, the priest and the deacon take turns reciting Psalm 43.

Open your Bible to the Book of Psalms and read Psalm

43. Why do you think this is such an appropriate psalm to be recited at this moment in our Liturgy?

Identify:

1. 2 verses that ask God for something
2. 2 verses that offer praise to God
3. 2 verses that ask God 'Why'

Saghmos • Uuḡuḡu

Write Your Own Psalm

Use the letters provided to begin each sentence.

T _____

R _____

U _____

S _____

T _____



Our Armenian Way

St. Gregory of Narek

(c. 945-1003) was the greatest poet of the Armenian Church and a beloved teacher and churchman in his time. He was born in Narek and entered the monastery of the same name (south of Lake Van). He wrote Bible commentaries, history and poetry. Like many of the psalm writers, **St. Gregory** felt himself completely unworthy. Yet he never lost sight of God's endless mercy and great compassion.

He trusted God and, indeed, God found him so worthy that he inspired this humble man to write *The Book of Lamentations*, a book of 95 amazing confessional prayers. For centuries this little book of prayers was the most respected and most read book among Armenians. A miraculous healing power was attributed to it and it was often kept under the bed pillows of the sick.

Here's an example of one of his prayers:

*Dear Lord, I pray
that I might be honored with clothing of light
from which I have been stripped
that I might touch the hand of Him
from whom I am separated
that I might receive my daily bread
for which I have not worked
that I might be showered with rewards
which I have not earned
remember all my blessings
which I always forget.*

Prayer 24



What are some of the blessings I need to remember right now in my life?