

**OBJECTIVE**

To have each family member understand that life comes through Jesus Christ—we must live our lives with Him at the center each and every day.

**PREPARATION**

The committee leading this activity should review and use the *Preparing for the Family Night* checklist in *Appendix B* to plan for the event. This session is written as a review for all the sessions that families have participated in throughout this year. Recognizing that many families may not have made all of the sessions, families need not have participated in previous sessions to participate in this one.

Session leaders should allocate sufficient time to prepare, familiarizing themselves not only with the session but also with the passage John 14:6. In addition, look over any prayers that will be used so that you are comfortable with them as well. If theological questions arise during preparation, the leader(s) should schedule a meeting with the parish priest so that the lesson is fully understood before the session.

On the day of the session, allow time to organize the materials.

**MATERIALS NEEDED**

*For the Whole Group*

- Copies of prayers and/or prayer services (*for all participants*)
- Flip chart, masking tape, and markers
- Bibles with concordance
- A small prize for the family that wins the opening activity
- *Family Time: Opening Activity* handout (*see p. 215*)
- Small terracotta plant pots (*one per person*)
- Soil and water (*divided into containers for one per family*)
- Small plants or seeds
- Paint pens (*multiple colors for each family*)
- Paper towels
- *Family Time: Closing Activity* handout (*see p. 216*)
- Pens/pencils and paper
- *Family Night: Taking It Home* handouts (*see pp. 217–218*)

**OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS**

*We recommend that as a parish family you begin and end your evening with a worship service or prayer. We have included a Small Compline service in Appendix A to reproduce and distribute for all to participate. If you choose a different service, make every effort to have the text available for everyone. For alternative prayer time, teach the families this beautiful prayer to Christ. It is important to take a few minutes as a group to review the meaning of this prayer so that all can be active participants when praying. Consult with your parish priest for guidance in this.*

Christ our God, who at all times and in every hour is worshiped and glorified in heaven and on earth; long-suffering, generous in mercy, and rich in compassion; loving to the righteous and merciful to the sinner; You call all to

# SESSION 12

## I AM THE LIFE

---

salvation through the promise of blessings to come: Lord in this hour accept our prayers and direct our lives in the way of Your commandments. Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds, and deliver us from all affliction, evil and distress. Encompass us with Your holy angels, so that guided and guarded by their company we may reach the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Your unapproachable glory, for You are blessed forever. Amen. —  
**Prayer to Christ**

### **OPENING ACTIVITY:** WHO AM I (5 minutes)

*After the opening prayers, give each family a Family Time: Opening Activity handout and a Bible with a concordance. Begin the discussion when most of the families have completed the task. Consider giving a prize to the family that gets the most right.*

### **OPENING REMARKS** (Paraphrase in your own words.)

This year we have been focusing on learning who Christ is. We can never fully comprehend all that He is, but it is essential that we work every day to know Him better. His final “I am” leads us to examine something that has been at the core of all that we have learned this year. The passage itself is one we have studied before, but we will look at a different aspect of it. Jesus says in John 14:6, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” We have focused on “way” and “truth.” Today we will focus on the final statement in this passage: I am life. God is the creator of life. All life comes from Him. What comes to mind when you think of life? (*Allow participants to brainstorm different answers. Consider writing them down on a flip chart for all to see. When they are done, proceed with the following.*)

All life comes from God. When we are living without God, we are not truly living.

### **DISCUSS** (*Look first to the children for answers and reflect back.*)

- Can anyone tell me what September 1<sup>st</sup> is in our church? (*September 1<sup>st</sup> is the beginning of the ecclesiastical year.*)
- What does ecclesiastical mean? (*Ecclesiastical mean related to the church.*)
- Why do you think it begins in September instead of January? (*The new year was tied to the harvest—the farming calendar.*)

### **STATE** (Paraphrase in your own words.)

The indiction begins on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September and is observed with special ceremony in the Church. Since the completion of each year takes place, as it were with the harvest and gathering of the crops into storehouses, and we begin a new from henceforth the sowing of seed in the earth for the production of future crops, September is considered the beginning of the New Year. The Church also keeps festival this day, beseeching God for fair weather, seasonable rains, and an abundance of the fruits of the earth.

—from **The Year of Grace of the Lord**

---

His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew set aside this day to focus on the environment—God’s creation. We are considered stewards of the earth. God has entrusted it to our care. By caring for the environment, we are caring for what God has given us. We are taking care of His creation.

**DISCUSS** (*Look first to the children for answers and reflect back.*)

- What are ways we can be good stewards of the earth?
- How by being good stewards of the earth are we taking care of life?

**CLOSING ACTIVITY** (*15–20 minutes*)

*Give each family group a Family Time: Closing Activity handout. Have them follow the instructions on the handout, and when most families are done (they can continue at home if necessary) begin the wrap-up discussion.*

**DISCUSS** (*Look first to the children for answers and reflect back.*)

- What did you learn today?
- What are you going to do as a family when you get home?
- Does anyone remember the passage about Jesus we learned earlier? (*Repeat as a group.*)

**WRAP-UP** (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

As we look back over the past year, we pray you have learned more about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But hopefully this is just the beginning of a lifetime of continued learning and growth in Christ. He is our life. Through living with Him we can truly experience what it means to live, both in this world and the world to come. We pray you continue to grow in Him.

**AS FAMILIES PREPARE TO LEAVE**

- Remember to close with a short worship service or closing prayer.
- Don’t forget to give families the *Family Night: Taking It Home* handout.
- Let them know when the next Family Night is scheduled.
- Enlist families to help you clean up (*rotate monthly*).
- Thank them sincerely for their attendance and participation.

# SESSION 12

I AM THE LIFE

---

This page is intentionally left blank.

# FAMILY NIGHT: TAKING IT HOME

*“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” —John 14:6*

## I AM

BY REV. FR. ANTHONY CONIARIS

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am’” (John 8:58).

This is truly one of the most astounding statements that Jesus made concerning Himself.

Abraham, who was the father of the Jewish race, had lived approximately 2,000 years before Christ. Jesus was saying that even before those 2,000 years He existed.

### The Timeless God

These two words “I am” stand for the divine, eternal being of Jesus. They express His equality with God. Before Abraham was born, before time began, Jesus was. After time shall have ended, Jesus will be. There is only one person in the universe who is timeless. There is only one person who is above and beyond time and who can always say “I am.” And that one person is God. With these two words Jesus identifies Himself with the eternal. Timeless changeless God.

### “I Am Has Sent Me ...”

In the Old Testament God has spoken of Himself as “I am.” In Exodus 3:14 at the occasion of the bush that burned but was not consumed, God gave Moses the authority to approach the children of Israel to lead them out of the slavery of Egypt into the Promised Land. “But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?’ He (God) said, ‘But I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you ...’ Then Moses said to God, ‘If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them? God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’ And He said, ‘Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:11-14).

“I AM.” This is the name of God given to Moses by God Himself. This is the name Jesus claims for Himself not once but many times in the New Testament. When He prayed in John 17:5 Jesus said,

“And now, Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made.”

In Revelation 22:13 Jesus says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

When the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show all things. Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am he’” (John 4:25-26).

And to the high priest who asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus answered most assuredly, “I am.”

### One Who Gives Existence

Jesus could have used another word. He could have said, “Before Abraham was, I exist.” But He didn’t. And for very good reason. “Exist” means that one had a beginning. God has no beginning. So He uses the words “I am” to express the eternal present.

God does not exist in a passive way, unaffected by the flux and flow of time as the ancient Greeks believed. The Hebrew emphasis is upon divine activity, not passive, eternal being. God is the One Who gives existence. The Hebrew name of God, Yahweh, means, “I cause to happen what I cause to happen.” Moses had asked God who He was. God called Moses to obedience and assured him that he would come to know God by the events He would bring to pass in the future, i.e., the exodus, the crossing of the sea, etc ...



St. John Chrysostom put these words in the mouth of Jesus: “I am father and brother and husband; I am the house, the garment, the root, the foundation-stone. I am whatever you want. If you come to me you will never lack anything; I am even ready to be your servant, for I come to serve and not to be served. I am friend and member and head and brother and sister and mother. I am everything. I have become beggar for you and wanderer for you; I went up to the Cross for you and down into the tomb for you; for you in heaven I pray to the Father and for you I came down on earth as his ambassador. You are everything to me. Brother and co-inheritor and friend and member. What more do you wish?”

—Taken from *No Man Ever Spoke as This Man: The Great I Am's of Jesus* published by Light and Life Publishing ([www.light-n-life.com](http://www.light-n-life.com)).

# FAMILY ACTIVITY: HAPPY NEW YEAR!

On September 1<sup>st</sup>, we celebrate the Ecclesiastical (Church) New Year. In the Gospel reading for today, Jesus reads from Isaiah 61:1-4. Read this passage as a family. There are many beautiful images in this passage. As a family, find a way to create something to visually represent this passage.

Make a New Year's plan for your family's spiritual development. Consider how you will make Christ the center of your family life this year through prayer, studying His word, fasting, worship, charity and love. Post your family plan where the whole family can see. Check with your parish priest for guidance.

This day has also been set aside by the Ecumenical Patriarch as a special day of prayer for the environment. Go for a walk in your neighborhood or a nearby park. Before you go on the walk mention how we are surrounded by God's beauty every day but we often walk right by with out taking time to appreciate His creation. On your walk, give each family member a trash bag so they can pick up any garbage they see it. When you return, pray Psalm 104.

## PRAY TOGETHER

*Christ our God, who at all times and in every hour is worshiped and glorified in heaven and on earth; long-suffering, generous in mercy, and rich in compassion; loving to the righteous and merciful to the sinner; You call all to salvation through the promise of blessings to come: Lord in this hour accept our prayers and direct our lives in the way of Your commandments. Sanctify our souls, purify our bodies, correct our thoughts, cleanse our minds, and deliver us from all affliction, evil, and distress. Encompass us with Your holy angels, so that guided and guarded by their company we may reach the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Your unapproachable glory, for You are blessed forever. Amen. — Prayer to Christ*

## FAMILY CHALLENGE

All of creation comes from the Giver of life so we challenge you this month to notice and give thanks for His beautiful creation. Celebrate by picking one (or more if you like) of the following activities to take care of the blessings of life that surround us.

Start a garden. Too lofty for you? Get a plant!

Pick up trash at a local park!

Recycle: get started or find out how you can recycle even more household items!

Think of your own ways that as a family you can give Glory to God's beautiful creation!

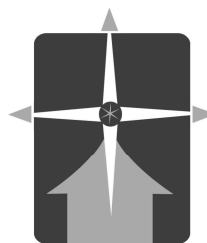
Remember, wherever we go Christ is in our midst!

## MORE ON THE LIFE

... the breath of life ...	Genesis 2:7	Want to find more? Grab your Bible and concordance and look up the word "life" or anything else you want to look for.
... finds me finds life ...	Proverbs 8:35	
... the light of life ...	John 8:12	

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* by Alexander Schmemmann, published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press ([www.svspress.com](http://www.svspress.com)).
- *The Planner: The Orthodox Daily Calendar and Resource Guide* published by the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America ([www.youth.goarch.org](http://www.youth.goarch.org)).
- *Beyond the Shattered Image* by John Chryssavgis, published by Light and Life Publishing ([www.light-n-life.com](http://www.light-n-life.com)).



KAT'OIKON EKKAHHEIA  
Family as Church

Center for  
Family Care

PUBLISHED BY  
**CENTER FOR FAMILY CARE**  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America  
79 Saint Basil Road • Garrison, New York 10524  
[familycare@goarch.org](mailto:familycare@goarch.org) • [www.family.goarch.org](http://www.family.goarch.org)  
Phone: 845-424-8175 • Fax: 845-424-4172