



GOYA

Y²AM

Ministry Plan

2019-20

Finding Christ
Through Scripture (December 2019)



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LEARNING SESSION ONE

DECEMBER 2019

Finding Christ Through Scripture

MONTH:

December 2019

GOAL:

To learn about scripture

OBJECTIVE:

To recognize how scripture is applicable to their
daily lives

ESTIMATED DURATION:

45 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. blank paper for each participant
2. pen for each participant
3. Bibles
4. poster board

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Lord, allow us “to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice,” one that is, “holy and acceptable to God for this is Your true and proper worship.” Allow us “not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of our minds.” So that we may be able to “test and prove what is God’s will, His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Amen.

(a passage from Romans 12:1-2)

LEARNING SESSION:
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ICEBREAKER:

10 minutes

Tell us your name, your favorite book, and why it's your favorite.

Remember:

It's always helpful to start with an activity to help participants relax and allow community to build. Early in the session, focus primarily on getting participants to open their hearts and connect with what's happening in the group. This is an opportunity to encourage participants to share their honest opinions and thoughts, as well as listen to those of others. Take this time to connect with what's important to them, and to understand what they've connected with.

ACTIVITY 1:

10 minutes

Pass out a piece of paper and a pen to each participant. Read the following passage and write it on a white board or poster board for participants to see. Ask the debrief questions below and write their answers on their paper. Ask for volunteers to share what they wrote. After a few minutes of silent writing, ask participants to share what they wrote and help facilitate a discussion, based on their answers.

“If an earthly king wrote you a letter, would you not read it with joy? Certainly, with great rejoicing and careful attention.” But what, he asks, is our attitude toward the letter that has been addressed to us by no one less than God Himself? “You have been sent a letter, not by any earthly King, but by the King of Heaven. And yet you almost despise such a gift, so priceless a treasure.” To open and read this letter is to enter into a personal conversation face-to-face with the living God. “Whenever you read the Gospel, Christ Himself is speaking to you. And while you read; you are praying and talking to Him.”
Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724-83)

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Debrief:

- When did you hear in this passage?
- What is your current relationship with scripture?
- How could our outlook on scripture change if we viewed the bible as love letters from God?

ACTIVITY 2: DISCUSSION

10 minutes

Read the following blog: [How Hamilton Taught Me to Love the Scriptures](https://blogs.goarch.org/blog/-/blogs/alex)

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I can't stop listening to the soundtrack of the hit Broadway show, Hamilton.

It's amazing. The genius of Lin-Manuel Miranda is astounding as he finds rhyme after rhyme to tell the story of the "ten-dollar founding father without a father."

When I was in high school, I dreaded U.S. History. To be perfectly honest, history still frequently bores me. It often seems like a bunch of things that happened to a bunch of people a bunch of years ago that, apart from setting the stage for the present, really has no bearing on my life now.

Hamilton, however, has opened my eyes to the riches of history.

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I wish someone would have produced this musical when I was in high school so if I needed to recall some detail of the establishment of the national bank, I could have remembered that Hamilton's idea was strongly opposed by Jefferson and Madison, as dramatized through a rap battle in cabinet meeting. Genius.

But history retold through the lens of hip-hop isn't simply engaging because of the phat beats. Rather, by interpreting history in a new light, I can see that the problems the founding fathers faced are really no different than the problems we face today.

Hamilton explores the reality that politicians form coalitions, quid pro quo arrangements to further their own agendas. Those in power have affairs, hide scandals, and blackmail one another. They get upset by petty disputes and take professional slights personally, calling people out publicly (even to the point of being willing to kill each other). In other words: nothing has really changed.

It took hip-hop to reveal this to me. In a lot of ways, the America of today looks a lot like the America of then. By looking at history with new eyes, we can see that it has a lot to tell us about our current context. It is not just the story of the founding fathers; it is the story of America. It is our story, too. So, if this is true with the story of America, how much more true must it be with the story of Christianity, the story of God's people?

Often we look at the scriptures and are baffled that the apostles didn't understand who Christ was; after all, they saw the miracles, the healings, the resurrected Christ. Perhaps we look at the

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stories of the scriptures and feel the same way I felt about American history: good stories about people who are all dead. Or perhaps more arrogantly, we read the scriptures and think, if we had been there, we would have recognized Him as the Son of God. Of course, apart from the one time Peter proclaims Christ as the Son of God and Longinus' revelation following the death of Christ, the Gospels make it abundantly clear that the only people who recognize Jesus as the Son of God are those who are possessed by demons! Suddenly, I'm not so confident I would have gotten it either.

But if we read the scriptures with the same eyes we've learned to have through things like Hamilton, we may see that the story of faith is not just a series of events that happened to people millennia ago, but rather it is a living story, a story that we are a part of. It is not just the story of the founding fathers of Christianity; it is the story of God's people. It is our story, too.

Perhaps the cast of Hamilton has taught us that it is indeed possible to look back at the stories of yesteryear and realize that we have much to learn from those who have gone before us. Perhaps when we look at the stories in scripture we realize that we are not simply reading about apostles who don't seem to get what Christ is saying; we are reading about ourselves, disciples of Christ who still don't understand what He wants. Perhaps when we open the scriptures we can see ourselves in its pages. Perhaps we can take great comfort in realizing that even those who literally walked with Him had no idea what He was

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doing, so we, too, might begin to feel a little more comfortable in our own questions of discipleship to Christ.

The story of following Jesus is something that is written anew for everyone baptized into Christ, but it is indeed the same story. It is the story of a ragtag group whom Christ has chosen, people He has commissioned to be His witnesses in all parts of the world. It is a story that happens in this moment, in every moment, and it is a story to which we know the ending: Christ wins.

So while we may feel disconnected or lost as if we are seeking Christ in a dark room, we can have hope as we realize that our struggle to take hold of Christ now is the same struggle people have encountered for the last 2,000 years. And if we can learn to rap, it'll just make it all the more fun in the meantime.

Debrief:

- What is this blog about?
- What is one new thing you learned through reading this blog?
- How can scripture still be relatable today?
- What are some ways to incorporate scripture into your daily life?

ACTIVITY 3: SCRIPTURE

10 minutes

Read the following passage:

Luke 4:16-22

“16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; 17 and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

20 And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” 22 And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth”

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Debrief:

- How is an Old Testament passage, written many years prior to Christ's birth, applicable to Christ's life at the moment He read it?
- How are New Testament passages, which were written many years ago, still applicable to our lives today?
- Can you think of some scripture passages that are specifically important to your life today? Can you share an example?

CONCLUSION: WRAP-UP

5 minutes

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new idea they learned during the session.

CLOSING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

*“Thank You, Lord, for Your strength and guidance in my work. You are the fulfillment of all good things. Fill also my soul with joy and gladness, that I may praise You always.”
Amen.*

LEARNING SESSION TWO

DECEMBER 2019

Finding Christ Through Scripture

MONTH:

December 2019

GOAL:

To learn about scripture

OBJECTIVE:

To describe the importance of prayer and
scripture reading

ESTIMATED DURATION:

45 minutes

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

1. Divine Liturgy books
2. blank paper for each participant
3. pen for each participant
4. a few copies of the Saint story below
5. a few copies of the debrief questions

OPENING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Lord, allow us “to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice,” one that is, “holy and acceptable to God for this is Your true and proper worship.” Allow us “not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of our minds.” So that we may be able to “test and prove what is God’s will, His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Amen.

(a passage from Romans 12:1-2)

LEARNING SESSION:
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ICEBREAKER:

10 minutes

Tell us your name, and your favorite scripture passage or prayer.

Remember:

It's always helpful to start with an activity to help participants relax and allow community to build. Early in the session, focus primarily on getting participants to open their hearts and connect with what's happening in the group. This is an opportunity to encourage participants to share their honest opinions and thoughts, as well as listen to those of others. Take this time to connect with what's important to them, and to understand what they've connected with.

ACTIVITY 1: SAINT STORY

10 minutes

Break up the large group into three small groups based on their answer to the icebreaker question. Give each group a copy of the story of Saint Anthony and the debrief questions.

<https://iconandlight.wordpress.com/2013/11/13/st-paul-inspiring-and-guiding-st-john-chrysostom/>

Instruct groups to read the story and work together to answer the questions. After a few minutes, have the groups come back together into one and have each group share their answers.

Saint Paul Inspiring and Guiding Saint John Chrysostom

Saint John Chrysostom completely devoted his mind to the understanding of the divine Scriptures, and especially loved the epistles of the holy Apostle Paul, whose icon he kept in his cell. Once, while writing an exegesis on one of the epistles of Paul, Saint John thought to himself, “Who knows whether what I am writing is pleasing to God or not? Have I understood the power of this portion of the sacred Scriptures?” He began to pray God to reveal to him the truth of the matter, and soon the Lord hearkened unto His servant, granting him the following sign.

One night, John was alone in his cell, writing a commentary on the Scriptures by candlelight, Proclus, his attendant, came to the door to

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tell the saint the request of someone in need, but before knocking, he looked through the keyhole to see whether the Patriarch was occupied. He saw that Saint John was sitting and writing and that an elder of most venerable appearance stood behind him, bent down toward the ear of the Patriarch and speaking softly to him. The man entirely resembled Saint Paul as he was depicted upon the icon which stood against the wall. Proclus was amazed, for he did not know who was speaking with the Patriarch, nor could he understand how the elder had entered the cell, since the door was locked. He waited for the man to depart, and as soon as the hour for Othros (Matins) drew near, the elder disappeared. Proclus saw this for three nights in succession, and finally dared to ask the Patriarch, “Master, who is it that speaks into your ear at night?”

“No one has been with me,” answered John. Then Proclus told him how he had seen through the keyhole an old man of venerable appearance, whispering into his ear as he wrote. Proclus also described the man’s face and clothing, and John marvelled greatly. Then Proclus glanced at the image of Saint Paul and exclaimed, “The man whom I saw resembled in every way the saint depicted upon this icon!”

John then understood that it was the holy Apostle Paul whom Proclus had seen and that his work was pleasing to the Lord. Falling to the ground, he gave thanks to God, praying with tears in his eyes for a long time. After this he devoted himself to the writing of sacred books with still greater zeal. These works he left to the Church of Christ as a precious treasure

St. John’s ear in which St. Paul spoke to him is still incorrupt to this day, and is visible on his Sacred Head, treasured by Vatopaidi Monastery on Mount Athos.”

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Debrief:

- How does this story relate to the theme of scripture?
- What is the connection between prayer and scripture?
- How can we follow the example of Saint John Chrysostom and practice this type of prayerful reading of scripture?
- What is the lesson learned from this story?

ACTIVITY 2: DIVINE LITURGY

10 minutes

Read the following lines from the Divine Liturgy and then ask participants the questions below and facilitate a discussion:

“Shine in our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind that we may comprehend the proclamations of Your Gospels. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having trampled down all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the illumination of our souls and bodies, and to You we offer up glory, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.”

Debrief:

- When is this prayer said during the Liturgy?
- What is the importance of this prayer?
- What is the importance of our heart and mind in prayer and scripture?

ACTIVITY 3: PRACTICE

10 minutes

Pass out a bible to each participant. Ask them to open it up to the Gospel (the first 4 books of the New Testament) and start reading for a few minutes. Ask them to pause, and then ask a few participants the following questions:

Debrief:

- What did you read?
- What did you discover?

Next, ask participants to read the Gospel again. Then, pray with the group for a few minutes. Pray the Trisagion Prayer, the Lord's Prayer, and then the prayer from the Liturgy in Activity 2:

“Shine in our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind that we may comprehend the proclamations of Your Gospels. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments so that, having trampled down all carnal desires, we may lead a spiritual life, both thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the illumination of our souls and bodies, and to You we offer up glory, together with Your Father, Who is without beginning, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.”

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Then, ask participants to turn to the New Testament and read a few lines. After a few minutes, ask them to stop. Ask a few participants the following questions:

Debrief:

- What did you read?
- What did you discover?
- Was this second experience of reading scripture different? How and why?
- How do you feel now after reading the Bible for the second time?

CONCLUSION: WRAP-UP & COMMITMENT

5 minutes

Go around the circle and ask each individual to name one new idea they learned during the session.

CLOSING PRAYER

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“O Lord, You who steadied the hand of Peter as he began to sink on the stormy sea, if you are with me, no one is against me. Grant to me the shield of faith and the mighty armor of the Holy Spirit to protect me and guide me to do Your will. The future I put into Your hands, O Lord, and I follow You to a life in Christ.”

Amen.