

I Am Orthodox Study Themes

Here are some highlights of the basic content for a six session study theme on the “I Am Orthodox”



Session 1

Every Family Has A Story

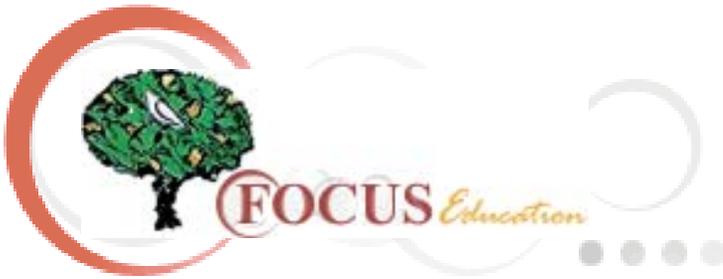
- ◆ Every family's story is different, and each generation tells a different story about their ways of life, joys and hardships.
- ◆ Exchanging stories, pictures and mementos are ways of remembering one another and keeping them in our lives.
- ◆ A Family Tree is a means of tracking and appreciating our family's history for ourselves and future generations.
- ◆ Faith and Values provide the foundations for life in the family, church, school, jobs and all of life.
- ◆ Lessons learned and shared among generations in the family help us to reflect and “grow in wisdom and stature.”
- ◆ The Church blesses families and helps them to live and grow as God's children and members of God's family.



Session 2

Life Together As Family

- ◆ Our life together as a family helps us to understand what it means to “belong” together, to love, to share, to cooperate and to be faithful to one another.
- ◆ Family members need to work together on rules, daily tasks, good habits and relationships to “make families work” as a unit.
- ◆ Every family member should be able to contribute in some way to the life and good health of the family, through love, mutual support, good humor and small gestures of appreciation for one another.
- ◆ Time spent together as a family can become a source of many memories as we grow together in love, sharing both joys and sorrows.



Session 3 *God's Story and God's People*

- ◆ When God created people, He created family. God's faithful families became God's people.
- ◆ Some of God's people turned away from God. They sinned against Him, doing evil and separating themselves from God and each other.
- ◆ God called many leaders and prophets from among His people, to call them to turn away from their evil ways and return to God, but they did not listen or change.
- ◆ God sent His own Son Jesus Christ to us to bring His people back to God. Jesus tells us to repent, to turn away from evil and to change our lives. Jesus also shows us how to care, to love and to help one another.
- ◆ God's Son Jesus gave His own life for us so that we might turn back to God, to do His will and become again God's faithful People.



Session 4 *Members of God's Family*

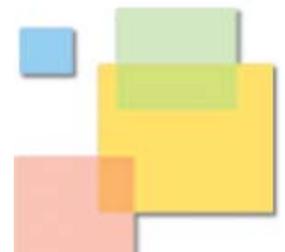
- ◆ Jesus died in order to give us new life! Through His death on the Cross, Jesus defeated the power of death. By His Resurrection from the dead, He gives new life to all who believe in Him and do His will.
- ◆ After Jesus ascended into heaven, He sent God's Holy Spirit to live in us.
- ◆ We become members of God's family when we are baptized. We are made clean in the waters of baptism. We "die" and are given a new life in Christ when we are raised up from the baptismal waters.
- ◆ The white robe given to us by our god-parents is a sign of the new life we are given as new members of God's family. Our godparents also become members of our family.
- ◆ We are sealed with the gift of God's Holy Spirit when we are anointed with the oil of holy chrism on all parts of our bodies.
- ◆ God's Holy Spirit now lives in us. We are to become "living temples" of God and, as God's children, are called to live together as God's own People.



Don't forget to explore the other
Group Levels in this study theme!



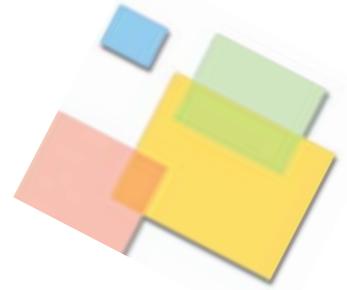
- ◆ Level 1
- ◆ Level 2
- ◆ Level 3
- ◆ Level 4
- ◆ Level 5
- ◆ Level 6





Session 5 *Every Parish Has A Story*

- ◆ Just as our own families have many stories, our Church family has stories about how it began, where it's people came from, how it grew larger (and sometimes smaller), and what events in its life are remembered as special times.
- ◆ Every parish needs to keep and to share its memories, about good times and bad, the past and the present, in order to look forward and plan the life of its future.
- ◆ Keeping a record of memories of pastors, leaders, teachers, and events (both small and large) are important for both families and parishes. What can we learn today from the history and memories of our parish?
- ◆ Changes in the life of our parish, e.g., in terms of membership, proximity of members to the church, the relationship of the church to people in the immediate neighborhood, and the inter-relationship of parish families, etc., helps clarify who we are and what we are called to do as a parish community today.
- ◆ How do we celebrate the new life in Christ in our parishes today? How do we engage each member in this life? What do we do for children, parents, single adults, the elderly, widows or widowers, the physically disabled, etc.?



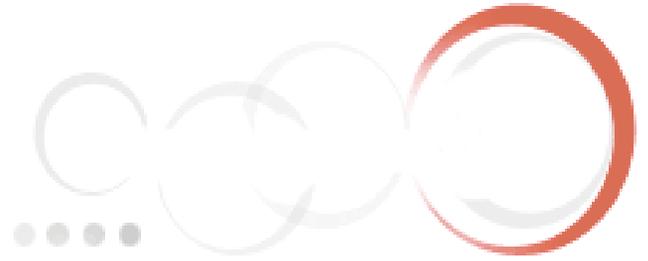
Session 6 *Being an Orthodox Christian*

- ◆ God calls us to love all people, for our “neighbor” is any person who stands before us at any given moment.
- ◆ Being Christians and being Orthodox should not isolate us from neighbors or strangers who are not Orthodox Christians, or who are members of different faiths, nationalities or racial backgrounds.
- ◆ How we are known, recognized or accepted as Orthodox Christians is tempered by how we approach or respond to other people, whether in a positive, negative, or indifferent manner.
- ◆ A periodic personal inventory of our lives: e.g., values, behaviors, relationships, attitudes towards work, other people, groups, etc., can help us to become more aware of who we are, what strengths we need to build upon and what weaknesses we need to correct.
- ◆ The very word “Orthodox” tells us what or who we are as a people: a truly (and/or correctly) believing, acting and worshiping people of God.



Session 7 *The Work of God's People*

- ◆ Building community in our local neighborhoods and in the neighborhood where our church is located is an important form of witness, mission and outreach.
- ◆ How do we bring the new life in Christ to others who are outside our Church family, e.g., in hospitals and institutions, in our neighborhoods, and to all in need?
- ◆ What can you do as an individual or in groups to support and assist in the upbuilding of community life and spirit in your neighborhoods?
- ◆ What can you do to address critical needs in neighborhoods (the neighborhood in which you live, as well as the neighborhood of the parish church).



Session 8 *Following God in Our Lives*

- ◆ We are accountable to God for our lives and the lives of those who surround us. This implies the manner in which we govern our own lives, raise our children, and relate to others in society.
- ◆ Through our engagement and involvement with others, we learn more about our own beliefs, values, attitudes and willingness to understand how God truly wants and expects us to live.
- ◆ Our behavior and practice as Orthodox Christians is a strong influence on our own families, neighbors, co-workers and strangers.
- ◆ As faithful Orthodox Christians, we reveal our commitment to God through our steadfastness, integrity, compassion, and responsibility for and to all God's people.



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Group Levels in this study theme!



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| ★ Level 1 | ★ Level 4 |
| ★ Level 2 | ★ Level 5 |
| ★ Level 3 | ★ Level 6 |

