

WEEK 3: ORAL TRADITION TO THE GOSPELS - STORIES

ALL GRADES

GOAL

To develop a deeper understanding of the role of oral tradition within the context of the Gospels and Holy Tradition

LESSON

Needed: Sharing experiences of life from parents, grandparents, & older generations' with classmates and students

We will be listening to the life experiences of our students' families and our own during class today. These are the stories about the lives and experiences of their family within the context of the Gospels and Holy Tradition. We are providing this opportunity because it tangibly shows our children how living our faith is applied to daily life. It shows how it shapes our decisions, our relationships, and placing God first in our lives.

Remember to point out that the Gospels were first the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Next, His life and teachings were shared with others after His death and Resurrection by the apostles. Finally, these accounts were written down. As Orthodox Christians, the Bible is part of our Holy Tradition preserved in writing. The Bible is our experience of God and is the collective experience of the saints.

Great care went into accurately preserving these experiences in the Bible, just as we put a tremendous amount of effort into accurately sharing the life experiences from our own family here today.

The Bible is part of the Holy Tradition of the Church. Holy Tradition is what Jesus Christ taught the apostles and they taught to their disciples. It has been passed down from one generation to the next, without change or error, yet is not confined. It is the life we live and experience as Orthodox Christians.

EXAMPLE STORY - FROM JENNIFER HOCK

This story was preserved with a family video camera and was told by my grandfather along with his brother and sister not long before all of them fell asleep in the Lord. I shared this story with my team of Sunday School teachers during our weekly Thursday Zoom meeting as an example of our family histories that are passed down through the generations. We used this activity as a way of explaining to our students that our Holy Tradition has been preserved and passed down through the generations as well.

My great grandparents were from the country known today as Turkey. They lived in a village just outside of Bursa and raised silkworms. In 1923, they immigrated to the United States after being forcibly made refugees from their home.

As they were escaping and stopped to cook food in a valley, with everything they could carry piled in a wagon, they began to be shot at by Turks above them. My great aunt instinctively pulled her two brothers (one of them being my grandpa) to the ground and laid on top of them in order to protect them from the bullets being fired at them. All three of them survived without any injury. The Turks were testing to see if anyone in their group had guns, which they did not, and then left as suddenly as they appeared.

Along the route, my great grandfather asked my great grandmother if she had remembered to pack their only icon (of St. Nicholas). She responded no and he immediately went back for the icon, on foot, even though he knew full well that he could be killed by the Turks if he was caught. He went anyway. Thankfully, he retrieved their icon and made it back to them safely.