



First Things First:

MAKING TIME FOR WHAT MATTERS MOST A SIX-WEEK LENTEN STUDY

Join us Wednesday evenings during Great Lent



March 1 First Things First: *Worship*

Dinner Sponsored by the Sunday School

March 8 First Things First: *Community*

Dinner Sponsored by the Choir

March 15 First Things First: *Love*

Dinner Sponsored by the AHEPA/Daughters

March 22 First Things First: *Learning*

Dinner Sponsored by the Young at Heart and Welcome Ministry

March 29 First Things First: *Service*

Dinner Sponsored by the Philoptochos

April 5 First Things First: *Priorities*

Dinner Sponsored by the Young Adults and Bible Studies

EACH WEDNESDAY EVENING SCHEDULE:

6:00 pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

7:15 pm Lenten Dinner provided by one of our ministries

7:45 pm Presentation by Father Stavros

8:05 pm Small group discussion

8:30 pm Concluding remarks and closing prayer



GREAT LENT 2023
ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
TAMPA, FL



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Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well.
Matthew 6:33



PART FOUR: *Learning*

LIFELONG LEARNERS

- Learning has been emphasized throughout the Bible and Church history. Learning is not intended to be about just gathering knowledge. It is a continuous pursuit of deepening knowledge and applying it with greater commitment. For the ancient Jews, the goal was to know God's Law and for it to always be in your heart and to define who you are. **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**
- We should be intentionally looking toward the Lord, through prayer and Scripture, for how we should learn and live. **Psalms 143:8-10**
- In any learning environment, there is knowledge, teachers to share the knowledge and students to absorb the knowledge. Learning is enhanced when there are others to learn with and from. **Acts 8:30-31**

LEARNING FROM JESUS

- A disciple, *Mathitis* in Greek, is a student, one who learned from a teacher. Jesus had twelve core students who followed Him closely in His ministry for three years. **Matthew 10:1-4**
- A significant part of Jesus' ministry was spent teaching. As the consummate teacher, He taught in specific ways to specific people, using images and examples that people would understand, talking about the sea for fishermen, the farm for farmers, etc. **Matthew 13:44-50**
- Jesus taught in both large crowds and in small groups. Two of the best examples of this are:
 - The Sermon on the Mount, as recorded by Matthew chapters 5-7, was given to thousands of people and discussed topics including prayer, marriage, almsgiving, anxiety, and fasting.
 - Jesus' farewell discourse, as recorded by John chapters 14-17, was a lengthy sermon given to just the Twelve Disciples before His death and included the way to the Father, the Holy Spirit coming, peace, and love.
- Jesus used dozens of parables to teach complicated life lessons with a hidden meaning. **Matthew 7:24-28** Jesus said that some people would not understand them. **Luke 8:9-10**
- He taught us how to pray. **Luke 11:1** He taught us how to love. **John 15:13** And He put into action what He taught. Ultimately, He taught us a way of life. **Matthew 11:29-30**

LEARNING IN THE CHURCH

- The book of Acts recounts the history of the early church, defines the purpose of the church, and spells out how we are to live as Christians. **Acts 2:42, Acts 6:1-4**
- The early Church Fathers valued learning and teaching. The greatest examples of these are the Three Hierarchs: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom. Their compositions of liturgical services, prolific writings, and sermons are still used today.
- The liturgical services themselves are rich resources for learning. Great Lent in particular places an even greater focus on learning with special elements including the Anaphora of St. Basil, Holy Week services and special prayers such as the Prayer of St. Ephraim.
- Even our church buildings offer opportunities to learn through architecture and iconography.

LEARNING IN OUR HOMES

- Learning shouldn't be limited solely to what we see, hear and do in our church community. We must continuously take responsibility for our own learning in our homes. We are to create an atmosphere that includes icons, Bibles within easy reach, and wearing a cross or prayer rope.
- Now more than ever, the Church encourages learning and studying in various ways, whether Bible study, retreats, both in person and online. The challenge for us modern Christians is to be able to apply what we learn in every day life. **Isaiah 1:17**
- We are all called to be disciples of Christ and also to go make disciples. **Matthew 28:19-20**



SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

DEUTERONOMY 6:4-9	<i>4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; 5 and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. 6 And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; 7 and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.</i>
PSALM 143:8-10	<i>8 Let me hear in the morning of Your steadfast love, for in You I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul. 9 Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord! I have fled to You for refuge 10 Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God! Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground!</i>
ACTS 8:30-31	<i>30 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless some one guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.</i>
MATTHEW 10:1-4	<i>And He called to Him His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity. 2 The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.</i>
MATTHEW 13:44-50	<i>44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it. 47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind; 48 when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. 49 So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous, 50 and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.</i>
MATTHEW 7:24-28	<i>24 "Every one then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; 25 and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And every one who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; 27 and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it." 28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at His teaching,</i>
LUKE 8:9-10	<i>9 And when His disciples asked Him what this parable meant, 10 He said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.</i>
LUKE 11:1	<i>He was praying in a certain place, and when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."</i>
JOHN 15:13	<i>Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.</i>
MATTHEW 11:29-30	<i>29 Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."</i>
ACTS 2:42	<i>And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.</i>
ACTS 6:1-4	<i>Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."</i>
ISAIAH 1:17	<i>Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.</i>
MATTHEW 28: 19-20	<i>19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.</i>

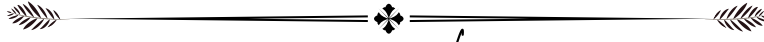


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PART FOUR: *Learning*



1. How does Christ encourage learning? Do you have a method of learning/reading scripture? How can technology help us to learn about scripture?

2. Have you ever given much thought to Jesus being a teacher? Have you ever thought of yourself as a disciple?

3. How do you best learn? In our church, what draws you closest to Christ - the readings, the hymns, the prayers, the icons? Why?

4. How can you create an atmosphere in your home or among your friends for better learning about our Faith?