

SPECIAL LESSON

Bible Study: St. Vartan Mamigonian – A Defender of Faith

Bible Study Preparation and Materials Needed:

Reflecting on: Faith and Martyrdom

Passages and Verses Used in this Bible Study

Acts 4:18-20 – “Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, ‘Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to Him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’”

2 Timothy 1:7 – “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.”

John 15:13 – “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

Memory Verse:

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.”

- Isaiah 41:10

Bible Study Lesson

Open with prayer:

Իմաստութիւն Յօր՝ Յիսուս, տո՛ւր ինձ իմաստութիւն, զբարիս խորհել եւ խօսել եւ գործել առաջի Քո՝ յամենայն ժամ. ի չար խորհրդոց, ի բանից եւ ի գործոց փրկեա՛ զիս. եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Eemasdootyoon Hor Heesoos, door eents eemasdootyoon uzparees khorel yev khosel yev kordz arachi ko hamenayn jham. Ee char khorhrtos, ee paneets yev kordzots prgya zees yev voghormya ko araradzots eents pazmameghees. Amen.

Wisdom of the Father, O Jesus, grant to me the wisdom to think, speak, and do that which is good in Your sight. Save me from all evil and distracting thoughts, words, and deeds. Have mercy upon your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.

St. Vartan Mamigonian – A Defender of Faith

St. Vartan Mamigonian was a heroic Armenian general and leader who lived in the fifth century, a time when Armenia proudly identified as a Christian nation. Armenia was the first country to officially adopt Christianity as its state religion in AD 301, and its people were deeply devoted to their faith. They followed Jesus, thanking God for their blessings every day.

But peace didn't last forever. The powerful Persian Empire, led by king Yazdegerd II who practiced Zoroastrianism, wanted to expand its influence and force the Armenians to abandon Christianity and worship the Persian gods. The Armenian people were afraid, but their strong leader, Vartan Mamigonian, had faith that God would guide them through the challenges ahead.

Together with his brave soldiers, he defended the faith of all Armenians. Vartan knew that the battle would be difficult. The Persian army was much larger and was armed to the teeth, but St. Vartan was not afraid. He believed that the strength of their faith was greater than the size of the enemy's army. He gathered the Armenian soldiers and their families and led them in prayer, celebrating the Holy Badarak and baptized those who were not. baptized.

Together, they asked God to give them courage and strength. They knew they might not win the battle, yet trusted that God would guide them and that they were fighting for something far more important than just victory—they were fighting for their faith and their future. Knowingly, they marched to face death because they knew they are marching towards martyrdom, toward eternal life.

Let's explore how Vartan's actions reflect the courage and dedication of the early disciples and how we, too, can defend our faith today.

Biblical Connections

1. The Disciples and the Call to Stand Firm:

Acts 4:18-20 – “Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, ‘Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to Him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.’”

In the early church, the disciples faced persecution and were often commanded by religious and political leaders to stop preaching the risen Christ. Like Vartan, they refused to give up their faith, even when threatened with punishment. Their boldness and conviction remind us that standing firm in our beliefs may come with challenges, but it is a sign of true devotion.



2. Faith Over Fear:

2 Timothy 1:7 – *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.”*

Vartan and his soldiers knew they were outnumbered and faced a powerful enemy, but their faith in God gave them the strength to move forward. Just as God empowered the early church through the Holy Spirit, He gives us the courage we need to face difficult situations and defend what we believe.

3. The Power of Sacrifice:

John 15:13 – *“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”*

Vartan’s ultimate sacrifice in the Battle of Avarayr parallels the sacrificial love shown by Jesus and His disciples. Vartan knew that fighting for the Christian faith could cost him his life, but he believed that staying true to God was worth any price.

Discussion Questions

Faith in Action:

How does Vartan’s decision to stand up to the Persian king reflect the actions of Peter and John in Acts 4? What does this tell us about the importance of trusting God when faced with difficult decisions?

Fear vs. Faith:

Vartan and his soldiers prayed before the battle, asking God for strength and courage. How does this relate to the verse in 2 Timothy 1:7? Have you ever faced a situation where you needed to pray for courage?

The Power of Sacrifice:

Vartan’s willingness to sacrifice his life for his people mirrors Jesus’ teaching in John 15:13. What does this kind of sacrifice mean in today’s world? How can we show sacrificial love in everyday situations?

Application:

In what areas of your life do you feel called to stand up for your faith or your values? What challenges do you face, and how can you rely on God’s strength to overcome them?

Faith and Legacy:

Although Vartan and his soldiers lost the battle, they inspired the Armenian people to stay strong in their faith. How can your actions today leave a lasting impact on others?

Reflection and Life Application

Take a few minutes to reflect on a time when you had to make a hard choice. Did you rely on your faith to help you through it? What did you learn from the experience? If you are currently facing a challenge, how can you follow Vartan’s example and trust God to lead you?

St. Vartan’s story is a powerful example of standing firm in faith even when the odds are against us. Like the disciples, he trusted God and did what was right, not what was easy. We, too, are often faced with situations where our beliefs or values are tested—whether it’s in school, with friends, or in the choices we make every day.

When you face peer pressure to go against your beliefs, remember Vartan’s courage and pray for strength. Be willing to stand up for others who are treated unfairly, even if it costs you popularity. Share your faith through your actions by living with integrity, kindness, and love.

Optional Activity: Faith in Action Reflection

Materials Needed: Journals or notebooks, pens/pencils.

Directions:

1. Ask students to reflect on a situation in their own life where they might face a challenge to their faith or values.
2. In their journals, have them answer the following prompts:
3. What challenge did you face or could you face?
4. How did you or could you respond in a way that shows courage and faith?
5. What do you think God would want you to do in that situation?
6. Encourage volunteers to share their reflections if they feel comfortable.
7. Guide a short discussion on how they can apply the lesson in their daily lives. Some examples may be:
8. Standing up for a friend who is being treated unfairly.
9. Speaking out when someone pressures them to do something wrong.
10. Remaining true to their faith even when others question it.

Post-reflection group discussion:

“What is one thing you can do this week to show courage and faith?” Let students share their commitments.

Close with prayer:

Պահապան ամենայնի Քրիստոս, աջ Քո հովանի լիցի ի վերայ իմ, ի տուէ եւ ի գիշերի, ի նստիլ ի տան, ի գնալ ի ծանապարհ, ի ննջել եւ ի յառնել, զի մի երբեք սասանեցայց եւ ողորմեա՛ Քո արարածոց եւ ինձ բազմամեղիս: Ամէն

Bahaban amenayn Kreesdos, ach Ko hovanee leetsee ee vera eem; ee dveh yev ee keesheree, ee nsdeel ee dan, ee knal ee janabarh, ee nunchel yev ee harnel, zee mee yerpek sasanetsayts yev voghormya Ko araradzots yev eents pazmamyghees. Amen.

O Christ, guardian of all, let Your right hand guard and shelter me, by day and by night, at home and abroad, in sleeping and in waking, that I may never stumble. Have mercy upon Your creatures and upon me, a great sinner. Amen.