

SPECIAL LESSON

St. Vartan and His Courageous Faith

Teacher Preparation and Materials Needed:

Craft Activity: Shield of Faith Craft

Materials Needed: Paper plates, markers or crayons, construction paper, glue, and stickers (use the image printouts in the lesson as an optional decore if desired).

Words of the week:

քաջ - kach - brave

պատերազմ - ba-de-raz-um - war

յաղթանակ - hagh-ta-nag - victory

Objective and Moral Character Focus:

To help children understand the historical significance of St. Vartan, his role in defending Christianity, and how they can apply his example of bravery and faith in their own lives.

Memory Verse:

**“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid,
for the Lord your God will be with you.”**

-Joshua 1:9

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՛ գիս. 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, 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.

**Wisdom Prayer, written by St. Nersess the Grace-filled (Shnorhali).*

Lesson Body:

Q: Can you think of a time when you had to stand up for something you believed in? Was it easy or hard?

Today, we are going to learn about St. Vartan, a man who stood up for his faith in God even when it was very difficult. His story teaches us about bravery, leadership, and trusting God.

Q: Have you ever heard of St. Vartan? Please share.

St. Vartan Mamigonyan was an Armenian hero who lived in Armenia in the fifth century. He was a brave general and a strong leader who loved his country and his faith. Armenia was the first nation to accept Christianity as a state religion, and the people were proud of their Christian heritage. They loved and followed Jesus, just like we do today. The people lived peaceful lives, thanking God for their blessings every day.

Unfortunately, not everyone shared Armenia's pride in Christianity. One day, this peaceful life was interrupted. The king of the neighboring Persian Empire wanted to force the Armenian people to stop worshiping the one true God and worship his gods instead. This worried the Armenian people. They didn't want to lose their Christian faith.

Vartan, however, wasn't worried. He knew the Armenians needed to defend their religion and show the Persian king that their faith is stronger than the king may think. He loved Jesus with all his heart and knew that the people of Armenia did too. As a leader, a soldier, and someone who wanted to do what was right for his country and for God, Vartan knew he couldn't let the king take away their faith. When the king's demands were rejected, the king became angry and sent a huge army to fight the Armenians and forcefully change their religion from Christianity to Zoroastrianism (the Persian religion that worshiped fire and other gods).

Vartan knew the battle would be tough, but he wasn't afraid. He gathered the soldiers and their families, and they all prayed to God for courage and strength. They celebrated the Holy Badarak and baptized those who had not been baptized yet. Even though Vartan's army was smaller than the king's, their faith in God was stronger. They knew they might not win the battle, but they trusted in God and believed they were doing the right thing.

This battle, called the Battle of Avarayr, was a very important in Armenian history. Vartan and his soldiers fought bravely to protect their faith. Even though Vartan and his army lost their lives and the battle, they never lost their faith in God. This courageous example inspired the Armenian people to stay strong and continue loving Jesus and fighting for another 30 years until they finally won the war.

Because of Vartan's bravery and the prayers of the Armenian people, Christianity was saved in Armenia. The people kept praising God and never lost their faith.

St. Vartan and his soldiers were true heroes who showed us that even when things are hard, we can be brave and trust God. Their story teaches us that standing up for what is right is always worth it.

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Memory Verse:

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid,
for the Lord your God will be with you.”

-Joshua 1:9

Talk with your classmates about practical ways you can show courage in your lives, such as standing up for a friend, sharing their faith, or making good choices when others pressure them to do wrong. Encourage each other to think of ways you will be brave this week.



Craft Activity: Shield of Faith Craft

Materials Needed: Paper plates, markers or crayons, construction paper, glue, and stickers of religious symbols such as crosses. (use the image printouts below as an optional decore if desired).

Directions:

1. Give each child a paper plate to be the base of their shield.
2. Have them color and decorate their shields with crosses, hearts, or any symbols of their faith.
3. On the back of the shield, help them write or glue a simple message, such as "Be Brave with God" or "Faith is My Strength."
4. Once finished, let them hold up their shields and pretend to be brave soldiers like St. Vartan.



Review

Memory Verse Review:

“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, for the Lord your God will be with you.” (Joshua 1:9)

Words of the Week Review:

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Lesson Review:

Questions:

1. Who was St. Vartan? (St. Vartan was a hero and a leader who fought to protect the Christian faith and his people in Armenia)
2. What did the king want Vartan and the Armenians to do? (The king wanted them to give up their Christian beliefs and follow a different religion)
3. Why did Vartan say no to the king? (He said no because he believed in God and wanted to stay loyal to his faith, even if it was dangerous)
4. How did Vartan show his bravery? (He led his army into battle, standing up to the king's forces to protect Christianity and his people's freedom)
5. What can we do when we need to be brave like St. Vartan? (We can trust in God, pray for strength, and stand up for what we believe is right, even if we feel scared)

Life Application

What are we going to do with what we have learned today?

Just like St. Vartan, we are called to stand firm in our faith, even when life is difficult or when others may not understand our beliefs. This means being brave enough to do what is right, trusting that God is always with us. Whether it's standing up for a friend, telling the truth, or staying committed to our faith, we can pray and rely on God's strength to guide us. Vartan's story reminds us that when we trust in God, we can face any challenge with courage and confidence.

** Departing Prayer, written by St. Nersess the Grace-filled (Shnorhali).*

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 ճանապարհ, 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 vog-hormya 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.