

PRAYER JOURNAL LESSON GUIDE





IOCC Prayer Journal Lesson Guide

This guide is a companion piece to IOCC's prayer journal. It's meant to help Sunday School teachers and families start conversation about the needs we see in the world and how we can help. The aim is to introduce young people to International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) as a way for them to serve Christ by serving others.

This series of five lessons is best suited for elementary- and middle-school-age children (grades 3-8); activities are split into two age groups, with options for each lesson and age. The curriculum can be used any time throughout the year, including in the weeks before IOCC Sunday, which is the Sunday before Thanksgiving each year (designated by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States). This will help contextualize IOCC Sunday by offering concrete examples of how the organization helps people in need around the world.

A digital version of the prayer journal is available to view at

iocc.org/prayerjournal

Information about ordering print copies is at the bottom of that page as well.

Above: Sarah (not her real name) is a high-schooler in rural Uganda who plans to be a doctor. She's one step closer since IOCC built a science lab at her school.

Cover: Preschoolers in the Holy Land learn the importance of handwashing and receive hand-hygiene kits.



What Is IOCC?

International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) is the humanitarian and development agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America. Through IOCC, Orthodox Christians serve people around the world who need help. These people and families have survived natural or human-caused disasters, and some face extreme poverty or even war. IOCC helps them and helps the Orthodox Church to meet their needs.

Matthew 25:35-36, 40 is the inspiration behind IOCC. In this scripture, Christ asks His people to serve others and show our love for Him by caring for others—even if we don't know them and even if they aren't like us (e.g., sick, in prison).

As Christians, we are called to love Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Lord and Savior. He explains in this parable that we can serve Him by serving others, by showing them kindness and compassion, and by making sure they have what they need to live in good health and dignity.

This booklet explores how you and IOCC, together, can help people who may not have the most basic items they need in life—our neighbors, whether they are down the street or around the world.



IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.

Notes:

Inspired by Faith, Driven by Purpose

I was thirsty and you gave Me drink;
I was a stranger and you took Me in;
I was naked and you clothed Me;
I was sick and you visited Me;
I was in prison and you came to Me.”
... And the King will answer and say to them,
“Assuredly, I say to you,
inasmuch as you did it to one of the least
of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

— Matthew 25:35-36, 40



IOCC has helped farmers in Kosovo, including this boy's family, learn how to manage their crops so they have better harvests.

CHAPTER 1



Read Together & Discuss

- Introduction (pg. 7)

Why is food important, in life and in Church? (*need food to live, stay healthy; central spiritual practice of the Church is a meal, the Eucharist; sharing food as a community, as the Body of Christ*)

- One of the stories in the chapter

What a Difference a Bee Makes: How many different foods can you think of that use honey as an ingredient? Aside from honey, how else are bees important to the environment?

New Growth under the Sun: How did IOCC help these farmers create a better life for themselves and their families?

Growing Hope in Her Backyard: How has Meseret's life changed since she worked with IOCC?

Notes:

Activities

Grades 3-5

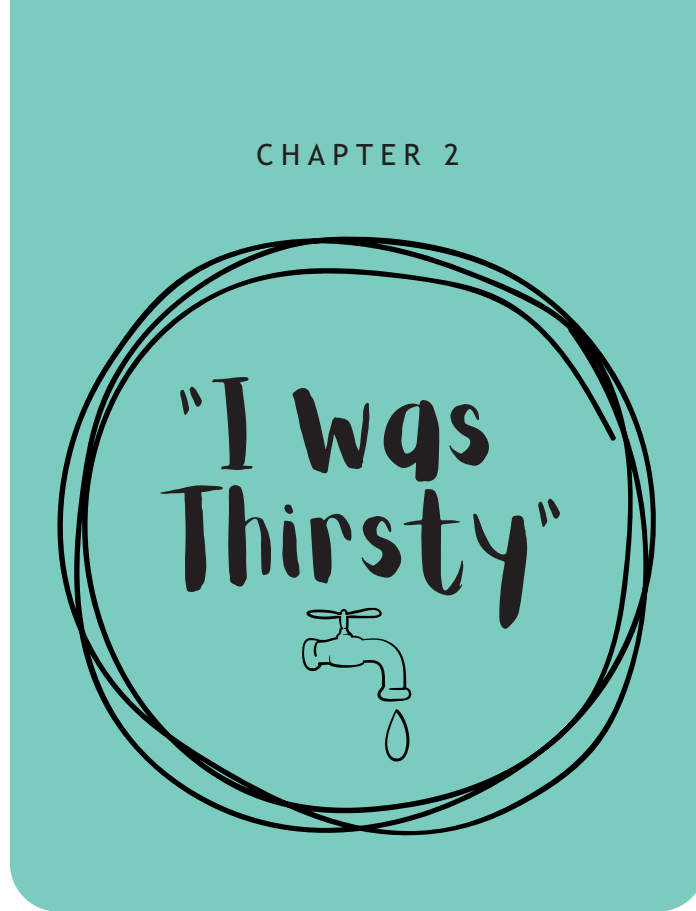
- 1. Prayer Stand-Ups.** Take a blank sheet of paper, and fold it in half horizontally, making two sides of $5\frac{1}{2} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Next, fold each edge in 1 inch. These will make the bottom of the stand-up. Write the prayer before meals on one side and the prayer after meals on the other. Fold the 1-inch margins toward each other until they barely touch, and tape together. Lead your family in these prayers for one week.
- 2. Posters to Raise Awareness of IOCC.** Ask your priest's permission to put up posters in your parish showing the work of IOCC combatting hunger, or find a place in your home or room to hang one. Make one or two posters with stories and photos cut out of the prayer journal. The poster should show IOCC's work and encourage donations. Two key phrases are "International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) Feeds the Hungry," and "You Can Help: Donate at iocc.org." Add graphics and your own comments, and put up the posters. If at home, use the posters to discuss IOCC's work with your family. Read one of the stories aloud each night as you have dinner.

Grades 6-8

- 1. Food Bank Challenge.** Research food banks near your parish or home and contact one to find out which food items they need; also ask how many people they serve in a day or week. Challenge one another, or do a grade-level or family challenge, to bring in at least one item for every person they serve in a day or week. Use a portion of your allowance (perhaps one-tenth) to help your family pay for these items. As a class or as a family, deliver your collected food to the food bank, and thank them for the work they do.
- 2. Understanding Global Hunger.** Research the top 5 or 10 causes of global hunger, and the consequences of food instability or malnutrition. In small groups, act out this scenario: You are the newly elected officials of a country that has recently gained independence from its larger neighbor. Your country is small and poor. You know that in order to begin building your economy, you must first address the hunger issue—65% of your population suffers from malnutrition. IOCC has agreed to let you make a presentation to request aid for the hunger crisis. Working together, write a convincing presentation using the information from your research and making up plausible reasons for the hunger problem. If at home, research the hunger situation in a specific country—perhaps one where IOCC works—and write the presentation as if you were representatives from there. Ask your parent(s) or an older brother or sister to read your presentation and tell you one thing they learned from it.

Notes:

CHAPTER 2



Read Together & Discuss

- Introduction (pg. 13)

Turn into activity? Go find information/pictures, cut out about water being important (*online, phone, glass that teacher has, old magazines*)

Why is water important to you? (*health, cooking, staying clean, washing clothes, dishes, etc.*)

What do they already know?
- One of the stories in the chapter

Water Is Life: Have you ever been in place where there was no water? What was it like?

Making the Most of Fresh Springs: What would it be like to live in a place where you had no water in your home?

Catching the Rain: What is rainwater harvesting? Why do you think this is helpful for this farmer and his community?

Notes:

Activities

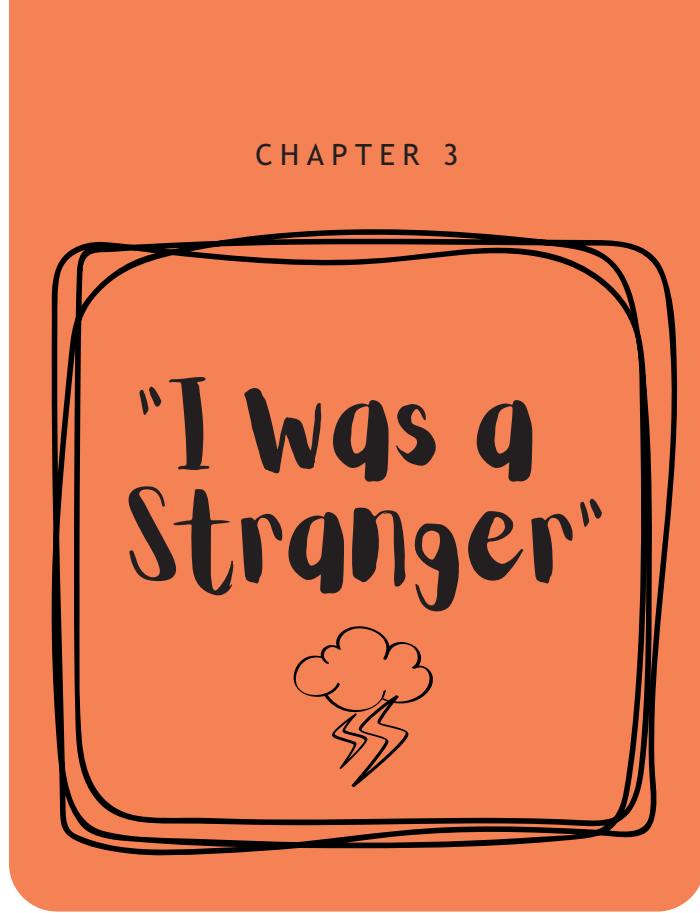
Grades 3-5

- 1. Prayer for Water.** Choose one of the stories from the chapter and pretend you are a child living in that situation. Write and illustrate your prayer to God; have your prayer include what life was like before the IOCC program, and make sure to include your gratitude for the project. End with “Lord, have mercy on [insert the country].” If you want to go further and raise funds for IOCC projects, plan to bring in an almost-empty water bottle, write your prayer on a half-sheet of paper, and tape it to the bottle. Make a display and ask for donations which can be placed in a gallon water jug. If at home, ask your parent(s) for permission to read your prayer when the family prays together.
- 2. Living with Water Shortages.** As a class or family, experience what it means to live where water is scarce by baking cupcakes or making lemonade to sell as a fundraiser for IOCC’s work, including water projects. The only catch? All the water you use, whether to wash hands or dishes, for drinking, or for baking, must be carried in from an outdoor source. While making the treat, put on some water to boil and discuss how those with water shortages often have to boil the water for one to three minutes to kill any contaminants before it can be used. If at home, share your treat, and tell your family what it was like to walk for the water.

Grades 6-8

- 1. How Bad Is the Water Problem?** Acquire further knowledge on the water shortage by research. Consider these questions: How widespread is the problem? Which countries are affected? Why do they have water shortages? Keywords regarding the water problem: accessibility, availability, and levels of contamination. Assign countries or keywords to students, asking them to bring in their research. The class can make a poster with statistics or other information. If at home, research why there are water shortages, and share one of the stories from chapter 2 with your family, or make a poster as a family.
- 2. Water Challenge.** We have many choices for what to drink, like soda, power drinks, and juices. Most children in the world have water as their main, and in some cases only, drink, and it is often not clean water. In solidarity with those children, challenge yourself and your family to see how long you can go drinking only water (give consideration to children with medical issues). Milk is the only exception, and no more than usually consumed. The money that participants’ families save (e.g., the cost of a can of soda or a power drink) can be donated to IOCC.

Notes:



Read Together & Discuss

- Introduction (pg. 19)
- One of the stories in the chapter

Every Bit of Help Matters: What would happen if someone you know lost his or her home in a fire? How would they go about rebuilding?

Preparing and Responding: Do you remember any natural disasters in your hometown? What happened? How were people affected?

Home Is Where the Love Is: Have you ever had to leave your home because of an emergency? What happened?

Help Starting Over: What would happen if you had to move to another country? What would make the transition easier?

Notes:

Activities

Grades 3-5

- 1. How Does It Feel to Be a Refugee?** Learn the meaning of the word refugee.* Discuss how you would feel if you were a refugee being introduced to your class. Would you be afraid as you walked into the room? Why or why not? Then consider the situation from the other side. What might people in the class be thinking? Even if a person isn't a refugee, how do you treat new students? For example, what about a new student with an accent, or one who brings lunch every day with foods you don't know? Would you want to be friends? Why or why not? If at home, ask one of your sisters or brothers or a parent to answer the questions above, or lead a discussion with your family based on the questions.
- 2. What Do You Really Need?** Consider the situation of refugees who left home because of conflict. Imagine having to travel by foot to a refugee camp. Imagine having to travel by foot to a refugee camp and having only 10 minutes to prepare. Besides food, water, and clothes, what would be the first, second, and third items you would bring? How would you feel when you were packing? What questions would you be asking your parents? What might your thoughts be when you arrive at your refuge? If at home, on a piece of paper record each family member's response to the above scenario. Share answers at the dinner table.

Grades 6-8

- 1. The Needs of Displaced People.** Split the class/family into two groups to deal with the following situation: "You live in a remote area, and the next town over is in a valley which is quickly being flooded. The school gym will have to shelter those who can make it out and those who are being rescued, about 200 in all. You're on an emergency planning committee." Each group is to make a list of resources/people required to meet the needs of these displaced persons and families. Consider the physical, spiritual, and mental needs of those who will be arriving, in both the short term and the long term. Compare the lists. If at home, ask a parent or sibling to also make a list, then discuss them together.
- 2. The Life of a Refugee.** Divide the class/group into an even number of groups of 3-4. Ahead of time, write out scenes to role-play. Consider these ideas: (1) "The Refugee Student Speaks a Different Language"; (2) "The Family Barely Escapes the Floodwaters and Finds Refuge"; (3) "The Drought and the Long Walk to a New Country." Each group acts out a scene. Afterward, share thoughts.

**A great place to look for a definition is the United Nations.*

Try <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

Notes:

CHAPTER 4



Read Together & Discuss

- Introduction (pg. 27)
- One of the stories in the chapter

Staying Strong and Healthy: How do you stay strong and healthy? Do you think it's important to get vaccinated?

Healing Wounds We Can't See: Have you ever had an experience that left you sad or depressed? How did you cope? What did you do to make yourself feel better?

More than a Meal: Have you ever been so hungry that you didn't feel well? What can happen to people who don't eat regular, healthy meals?

Notes:

Activities

Grades 3-5

- 1. Praying for the Sick.** Ask your priest for the names and mailing addresses of those who are sick, and, if possible, share a little about each. Students or families can choose a parishioner and make and send a card to that person. They can also write out one of the prayers in chapter 4, and pray for their parishioner daily. In class, for three weeks, say the prayer, having students mention their parishioner's name. If at home, ask to pray for the parishioner at family prayer time.
- 2. Encouragement Posters.** Using a piece of unlined paper, make a "poster" for the rooms of those who are shut-ins or sick, to bring them comfort and strength. A good scripture verse is "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13). Others are John 16:33, "In the world..."; Psalm 17:1-3, "I will love you, O Lord..."; Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd..." Give the posters to your priest to take with him when he visits the sick.

Grades 6-8

- 1. What Are We Protected From?** Children typically receive a vaccination called "DPT." Teachers or parents should collect information or have children research what the initials stand for, and then discuss the symptoms for one or more of the three. Think about and discuss which illness you would least like to get and why. Research whether children worldwide still get the disease(s).
- 2. If You Could Be There.** Research how many children, or how many people, in the world do not have access to basic health services, including vaccines. Then read the four stories in chapter 4. What role do the adults play in each of these programs? Even if you don't have any interest in medical careers, choose one of the stories in which you would like to be the person working for IOCC. What difficulties might that person face? What would be the reason to do that job? Is there a program run by IOCC that you would like to earn money to support?

Notes:

CHAPTER FIVE



Prayer is an important part of our daily lives as Christians.

When you pray, you can start with some of the Orthodox daily prayers on the following pages. Then, use your own words to offer God thanks and to pray for children and families around the world.

Many people like to pray early in the morning or before they go to bed, but you can pray any time. The most important thing is to pray every day.

Notes:

PRAYER BEFORE MEALS

O Christ our God, bless the food, drink,
and fellowship of Your servants,
for You are holy always, now and ever
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER MEALS

We give thanks to You, O Christ our God, that
You have satisfied us with Your earthly blessings;
deprive us not also of Your Heavenly Kingdom.
As You did come to Your disciples and did grant
them peace; so come to us and save us, O Savior.

HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS

It is truly meet to bless you, O Theotokos,
ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother
of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim,
and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim,
without defilement you gave birth to
God the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify you!

LENTEN PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the
spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of chasity,
humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.
Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own
transgressions, and not to judge my brother,
for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE HOURS

You Who at every season and every hour, in Heaven
and on earth are worshipped and glorified,
O Christ, God; long-suffering, merciful,
and compassionate; Who loves the just and shows
mercy upon the sinner; Who calls all to salvation
through the promise of blessings to come—
O Lord, in this hour receive our supplications, and
direct our lives according to Your commandments.

Sanctify our souls. Purify our bodies.
Correct our minds; cleanse our thoughts; and deliver us from
all tribulations, evil, and distress. Surround us with
Your holy angels that, guided and guarded by them,
we may attain to the unity of the faith, and unto
the knowledge of Your unapproachable glory.
For You are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

O Christ, Who alone are our Defender: Visit and heal
Your suffering servant [Name], delivering him/her
from sickness and grievous pains. Raise him/her
up that he/she may sing to You and praise
You without ceasing, through the prayers of the
Theotokos, O You Who alone loves mankind.

PRAYER FOR THOSE IN NEED

O Christ, Who alone are our Defender:
Be mindful, O Lord, of the young and the old;
orphans and widows; the sick and the suffering,
the sorrowing and the afflicted, all captives,
and the needy poor; upon them all send forth Your
mercies, for You are the Giver of all good things.



*The icon of Matthew 25:35 was generously donated to IOCC by an anonymous iconographer.
Prayers courtesy of the Orthodox Church in America (www.oca.org)*



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