

Ask for the Ancient Paths
by James Guirguis

This supplement was prepared by Lee Kopulos in 2014. *Ask for the Ancient Path* may be one of the best books we have in English as an introduction to the Orthodox Church. The goal of this supplement is to help Orthodox Christians engage with the content of this book and learn how to share the book with others.

WEEK 1

Foreword by John Maddex:

Begs the question, what happened to the early church? Is it still alive or did it die? How did they worship? Did they sing and have readings? Was there a leadership structure? Was there doctrine and theology?

The Author's Introduction

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more *abundantly*.”
(John 10:10). What does this term, *abundantly*, really mean?

What will church give you? Where in Holy Scripture is it best described? (See Biblical quotes listed on next page)

Are all churches created equal? What will “the right church” do for you that other churches won’t?

Chapter 1. Reading the Bible: My Way or the Right Way?

Now you have a good grasp of the church and the right church. How would you introduce it to someone be it friend, relative, associate or neighbor to the Orthodox Christian Church?

According to the author, why is it important to know what is right according Holy Scripture? (See the listing of Bible quotes below)

The author uses the term “extrabiblical sources.” What is meant by this term and how would you put the expression into words?

The Orthodox Study Bible, 1982

1. “But the fruits of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Galatians 5: 22-23)
2. “God is not the author of confusion but of peace” (1 Corinthians 14:33)
3. “Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake the chariot.’ So Philip ran to him and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’” (Acts 8: 29-31)
4. “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God.....rightly dividing the word of truth.” Timothy 2:15)
5. “All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)
6. “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal; life; and these are they which testify of Me.” (John 5:39)
7. “knowing this first, that ‘no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” (2Peter 1:20)

Non-Biblical Quotes of the Author, from the movie “*The Matrix*” (page 24)

1. “You take the *blue pill* and the story ends. You wake up in your bed and believe what you want to believe.

You take the *red pill* and you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.
Remember -- all I am offering is the truth, nothing more.

2. This is your *red pill-the truth about the church* and all the things Jesus meant to have and to share.
The choice is yours. Are you ready?

Chapter 2. The Church That Existed Before the New Testament

Wasn't there a Bible in the early church? How could one get the message from God without the Bible?

1. "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to *the tradition* which he received from us." (2 Thessalonians 3:6)
2. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast to *the traditions* which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." (2 Thessalonians 2:15)
3. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers." (Acts 2: 42)
4. "But the hour is coming and now is, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship him. *God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*" (John 4:22-24)

What is the roots test? What does it mean in terms of the church and the person you are speaking with?

The Samaritan Woman - The Woman at the Well (St. Photini). What is important about this event and how can we use it?

Exploring the Roots of the Christian Church.

What can we learn from scriptural texts other than the Gospels and Epistles? The early Christian churchmen said a lot. Here are some of the main Church Fathers, from each century, who made important writings and teachings before the Gospel, as we know it, was put together in 367AD.

1. The Church Fathers – Those men who led Christianity during the first centuries (antiquity) who had holiness of life, orthodox teaching and ecclesiastical approval.
2. St. Ignatius (c.30-110) - The importance of the role of the Bishop and unity. Taught by the Apostle John.
3. Justin Martyr (c. 100-165) Defended Christianity against poets and philosophers and
 - a. Platonism. His writings became the first describing how the Eucharist and Baptism services were conducted.
4. St. Irenaeus (c. 130-202) The greatest theologian of the second century. Listened to teaching of St. Polycarp the disciple of the Apostle John. Bishop of Lyons writing two important texts – “*On the Apostolic Preaching*” a summary of the proclamations of the Apostles and “*Against Heresies*” – a devastating critique of Gnosticism and powerful presentation of the Christian faith.
5. St. Basil of Caesarea (c. 329-379) Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia and founder of the monastic lifestyle for Eastern Orthodox monks. Especially known for his defense of the full deity of both the Son and Holy Spirit.
6. St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) The “Golden-Tongued” outstanding, eloquent preacher for the churches of Antioch and Constantinople. Archbishop of Constantinople and fearless preacher on morals. Given us extensive commentary on all the Gospels and a primer on the responsibilities and tensions of the clergy with his treatise “*On the Priesthood.*”
7. St. John of Damascus (c. 675-749) Commonly recognized as the last of the Church Fathers. He synthesized the doctrinal teachings of the Fathers before him in his essay, “*On the Orthodox Faith.*” It stood for 1,000 years as the best comprehensive study on the faith of the Eastern Church. He was the chief defender the use of icons during the first phase of the iconoclastic controversy. He penned many hymns that we use today in the Eastern and Western Churches.
8. *The Didache. (Unknown Author)*
 - i. A document written somewhere between 50 and 80 A.D., which reflects the teaching and practice of the earliest church. It contrasts the lifestyles of the early Christians with the nonbelievers. Comments on the attitudes and practice of Baptism and the Eucharist. Begins with this truth:
 - ii. “*There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two.*”

Remember the Red Pill? Let us see in the remaining chapters how deep the rabbit hole goes!

Optional Handout: Brochures from ancientfaith.com (“The Timeline of Church History”, “Are You Looking for A Church That Is..” and “What on Earth is the Orthodox Church?”).

Which one(s) would you use with the person we discussed in chapter 1?

WEEK 2

Chapter 3. How Faith Works

On the issue of Faith versus Works, other doctrines

- Sola Scriptura means –
- Sola Fide means –
- Believing that Christians are saved by _____
- Biblical references are John _____; Acts _____ and Ephesians _____

Orthodox Christians believe in all of these scriptural texts and adds more based upon the story of the “wealthy banker.”

What is this story and how does it relate to additional Holy Scripture?

What Scripture?

What is necessary on our part?

The Lord gives _____ freely. The Lord writes the check. By accepting the check, we _____.

What famous section of Matthews Gospel is important here?

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven.” (Matt; _____)

What other epistle speaks of Faith and Works? _____.

According to St. Peter salvation is not the end of our walk in faith, not the _____. (1 Peter 1:9)

If you give up the million-dollar check or get tired and stop walking to the bank, what will happen? (See Hebrews 3:14)

What did St. John Chrysostom say?

When we misread the Bible, we make a _____ of _____ and give people a false sense of _____ and a cheap sense of the value of _____.

What are works proof of?

“Works can’t save us: it is works that demonstrate that we are indeed saved people with the fingerprint of God all over our lives.”

Optional Handout: “St. Athanasios and His Relevance Today” by Fr. Athanasios Papagiannis in The Word Magazine; Feb. 2014; pages 17-19. (Note: The author is a Priest at Assumption G.O. Church, Chicago)

WEEK 3

Chapter 4. Biblical Leadership

One Christian Objective: What is missing in the church today?

How is Leadership chosen by God?

How according to the Gospel was Leadership chosen? Give 3 Bible references

Why was the diaconate established? (Acts 6:3-6)

What is the main point of this exercise on leadership?

Chapter 9: 10-18 of the Book of Acts is important here. What was the first act of significance to the church in this chapter? Who are the main characters?

If Jesus is crucified in 30AD. When was Paul converted in Damascus? _____

What Patriarchate is still there on a street called straight? _____

The First Council of the church was called in Acts 15. Why was it called and what was its conclusions?

What does Fr. James conclude about this event relative to today and the many churches out there?

What is the purpose of the quote by St. Peter?

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

On the priesthood see Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10 and 1 Timothy Chapters 3-4. In your OSB the Articles “The Four Orders in Church Government”. The presbyters are visible throughout the New Testament with the objective to govern the local church, labor in the word, and teach true doctrine.

- “Consider us servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” (1Corinthians 4:1)
- Leadership in prayer and God’s blessings through the Holy Mysteries “according to the order of Melchezedek.” (Hebrews 5:10 and 6:2) (Psalm 110:4)
- “So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they believed.” (Act 14; 23)
- In your OSB see the Article “Ordination”

Jesus is our High priest. He never abolished the priesthood anywhere in his teachings but revealed the true nature of it through His ministry and teachings.

In our study of the first 200 years of the church we found that the local leader was deemed priest and or bishop. Sometimes the terms priest/bishop or overseer were used interchangeably because the Christian communities were small. Irenaeus of Lyons and Ignatius of Antioch both clarified the early teachings that the communities were managed by a bishop who was ordained by the Apostles and therefore Apostolic Succession was established to this day by a “laying on of hands.”

St. Paul writes, “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. (Romans 16:17)

In Matthew 18: 17-18 the Lord Jesus teaches, “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Conclusion

“Finding the right Church puts us in a position to receive the mysteries of God from men who are stewards of those mysteries.”

Chapter 5. A Mysterious Life

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” (! Corinthians 4:1)

List the major mysteries _____

How do Orthodox Christians view communion and baptism?

For the Orthodox the Mysteries are:

- Christ’s crucifixion and interaction with the world causes _____.
- Mysteries are fundamental way God _____.
- Point of the Christian life is to enter into life with Christ not just believe in _____ but to commune with Him and allow His presence in our lives.

“that through these you may, be partakers of divine nature...” (2 Peter 1:4)

- The church is a spiritual hospital. The medicine used is the _____.

How am I becoming a partaker of divine nature?

How am I growing in spiritual health with Jesus?

Optional Handouts

“The Call of the Laity” by Deborah Malacky Belonick
Associate Editor, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press.

“Christ’s ministry, our ministry” by Denise Jillions
The Orthodox Church, Spring /Summer 2010.

WEEK 4

Chapter 6. A Life of Communion

The Holy Eucharist

... gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

... gave it to them saying, "Drink of it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant... for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26: 26-28)

Luke 22: 19-20 says _____

What is the meaning of 1Corinthians 11: 23-26?

This sacrament of the church is considered a _____. It is not a _____.

The change of bread and wine is a _____ change. Yet, it is _____.

What other reference is important here? Hint: Gospel of John _____

Explain what happened on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 30-35). Who were the participants and give two meanings of the event for us today?

Where is the earliest evidence of the proper understanding of the Holy Eucharist outside of the New Testament?

As we learned in the study of the first 200 years of the Christian Church, the early Christians went to the Temple for worship on Saturday and then what? (Hint: see Book of Acts 2:43)

Chapter 7. Holy Baptism & Chrismation

Is baptism real or symbolic or something else?

For the Orthodox, Baptism is viewed as a special gift from God and is the _____ of our _____.

What did Jesus say to Nicodemus and what was his reaction?

St. Peter baptized many on Pentecost and taught that it is for _____.

According to the Book of Acts, Baptism alone does not grant the gift of the Holy Spirit. What then is necessary? (Acts 8: 14-17)

- Anointing can be found in 1 John 2:20 and 27.
- A complete review of Chrismation is found in your OSB on page 1471 in the Old and New OSB and in the New Testament OSB on page 274.
- The main Old Testament quote on the Spirit is from _____.
- In Book of Acts chapter 8: 14-17, the Samaritans had been baptized but lacked _____ which was given to them by _____ and _____ by the _____.

But Jesus says it best, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3: 3-5)

Optional Exercise: Appendix A

Optional Handouts:

“The Road to Emmaus” by Jim Forest, The Orthodox Church periodical, Winter/Spring 2012.

Article “Chrismation,” Orthodox Study Bible, New Testament, page 274.

WEEK 5

Chapter 8. A Life of Confession

What is confession?

Where in the Gospel of John is the instruction for confession given by Jesus and what does it say?

What did the Lord do to his disciples as a blessing for them to heal one's sins?

What verse do some misinterpret when disclaiming confession as Biblical?

List two other biblical verses which proclaim the rite of confession?

What is another word for confession?

The _____ who hears a confession from a person is a _____.

List 3 reasons a person should go to a priest for confession?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In the first 200 years of the Christian church what Church Fathers recommended confession?

According to John Chrysostom temporal rulers can only bind the _____ but priests in contrast can bind the _____ itself.

G. K. Chesterton commented that counselors and psychiatrists can analyze confession without _____.

Only the pure in _____ will see _____.

Chapter 9. Unction for the Sick

In Mark's Gospel he writes that they cast out demons by anointing the sick with _____.

The 5th chapter of St. James says?

We believe strongly that sin causes _____ and _____ harm.

Why is sickness allowed by God?

Chapter 10. Holy Matrimony

The Crowning in an Orthodox service symbolizes what?

There are no vows in an Orthodox Wedding Service, why?

We pray that the couple will be _____ so as to grow in _____ for each _____ and the _____.

According to the Orthodox, procreation is not the main reason for marriage but to reflect _____.
It is a way to _____ through sacrificial _____.

WEEK 6

Chapter 11. The Angelic Life

What is monastic life? How and when did it get started?

Name a few Old and New Testament figures that lived the celibate life.

What references in Holy Scripture speaks of the celibate life?

According to St. Paul the unmarried and widows can marry again under what conditions?

He/she who is unmarried cares for the things _____.

He/she may be Holy both in _____.

She who is married cares about _____ and how she may _____ >

The father of monasticism is _____.

List 3 ways how monasticism can affect all of us in the real world?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 12. Mary and the Cloud of Witness

Why are we all called “saints”?

Canonized saints are people who _____ for their contributions to Christ in _____.

What is meant by the expression “so great a cloud of witness” in Hebrews 12:1-2?

List at least 3 reasons why we honor Mary, Birth-giver of God.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Give three Bible verses that confirm the Orthodox Christian practice of praying for the dead.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Chapter 13. The Physical Life

What is the goal of fasting according to Fr. James?

Give 3 Biblical references for fasting and comment on what they say.

According to St. John Chrysostom fasting is a _____ for those who know _____.

Why does Anthony the Great strongly recommend to us to fast the whole Great Lenten period?

In all cases fasting must be accompanied by _____.

List a few ways that you feel fasting has helped you and is a good thing.

According the book, developing a relationship with God requires _____.

Why is it important to control the flesh? Give a Bible reference.

When the physical disciplines are controlled with the right attitude, we can enter into a _____ understanding of Christian life.

Optional Handout: The Life of St. Anthony the Great and “Is Hobby Lobby Class Objective”, Stephen Prothero; USA Today Article 5/12/14.

WEEK 7

Chapter 14. The Life of Worship

The people who reject organized religion usually have little understanding of who _____ really is.

How we Orthodox worship is central to what we _____.

In Orthodox Christianity we _____ our _____.

What is very important here is to have the _____ of the early church and its understanding of _____.

Christian worship in the early church consisted of 4 principle functions, name them and cite the scripture.

Where did the early church practice worship and why?

During the Eucharistic celebration it was important to read _____ and then to collect _____ for the _____.

The order of the worship service was as follows:

Who is the first person to explain the order of worship services in the early church and when was it written?

Justin Martyr’s description of early church worship centers on the partaking of _____, reading of _____, _____ and _____.

He says that this kind of service is short-lived a _____.
Rather it is far more important to reach for a _____ that is _____
_____.

Sunday worship must be set apart for the worship of _____.

When worshipping, it is important to spend time on _____ and _____.

Orthodox worship allows us to be filled with _____ and the _____.

The Orthodox Liturgy is loaded with _____ and _____. It is
an extension of the _____.

Chapter 15 . The Goal of the Christian Life

“Perfect Love casts our fear” (1 John 4:18)

Our goal is not to be saved from _____ or _____ but to be perfect like
_____ himself. (Ephesians 4:15)

The early church guarded _____ and gave us the _____.

Psalm 50:17 (51) says that the sacrifice _____ and _____.

Our step of faith starts with heartfelt _____.

According to Fr. James, what kind of church is best overall?

We never stop learning as Christians because God is _____ and _____.

Appendix A

Optional Exercise

“What do you say when...”

Purpose of the Exercise

One of the things that we find among the Orthodox Christians is their lack of either using the Holy Bible regularly and/or failing to understand how the Gospel fits within our Christian heritage. Yet, it has been said that we Orthodox use Holy Scripture in our worship services far more than any other Christian body. This book study is a wonderful primer giving all of us an easy way of fitting Holy Scripture to our beliefs. Every day we are confronted with religious ideas from friends, neighbors or even our own relatives that is surely different than what our Church teaches. Why does our Church claim to be the Ancient Church of Jesus Christ, His Apostles and Martyrs? Certainly, we can develop some skill in translating or expressing the truths of Christ and His church in a simple straight forward manner to anyone. The “Ancient Paths” sets a nice framework for answering basic questions about the Christian Faith from an Orthodox standpoint. This exercise will help us to practice what we have learned. It is designed to help you respond to a person in the form of “What do you say when she/he asks the question...”

According to the author, “The simple truth is that not all churches are created equal.” And, “God is not the author of confusion but of peace.” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Some say that the Bible does not hold all the truth. Yes, that is true but according to the Gospel of John it is not everything about Jesus for “there were many other things that Jesus did.... I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.” (John 21:25). Or, what about our teaching of Holy Tradition, the passing of instruction orally or by word of mouth, which our Church equals Holy Scripture? St. Paul is very clear on this issue “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Not everyone could read in the early days nor did they have a printing press to check out the New Testament for answers on their questions. They relied on their Church and its leaders. It is written that the early Christians. “continued steadfast in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers” (Acts 2:42). A Eucharistic church giving thanks to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for all we have in this world.

Test 1

You are taking a lunch break while at work. You are reading “Ask for the Ancient Paths.” A person whom you do not know very well settles in next to you and happens to observe the title of your book. You feel that she is a Christian woman. She sees the cover of your book and gets interested in what you are reading and begins to ask a few questions. Your “job” as a disciple of Christ is to respond accordingly based upon your Scriptural and/or historical knowledge learned in this book study. In addition, you carry 2 brochures in your bag – “A Timeline of Church History” and “What on Earth is the

Orthodox Church.” In all cases you are to respond to this woman’s questions in short simple response taking care not to be too wordy but always with SMILE. You have maybe 15 minutes to make this woman interested in our Church and to meet with you again.

Question 1. “Excuse me; the book you are reading has a very interesting title. What is it about?”

Question 2. She responds. “Oh, that's interesting I always thought the church in the Book of Acts was dead and gone. How is it I missed that part in my old church. How can I learn about this early church you are a part of?”

Question 3. How can I find out more about your church? Do you have a web-site? (Okay disciple what else do you have in your “bag”? Don’t forget to get her name, address or e-mail address)

Test 2. You are on a train ride from work someone sits next you while you are reading *Ask for the Ancient Paths*. You find out that this person has a Christian background but not active in any church now. Raised a Protestant, the individual explains that she has a hard time with the idea of a church. Organized religion, you know!

Question 1. “Why would a God allow himself to be crucified?”

Question 2. Accepting your answer, she continues “Don’t I just have to have faith in Jesus to be saved? Isn’t that what the Bible teaches as I remember?”

Question 3. She exclaims, “so by accepting the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ is just the beginning! Then what?”