Great Commission and Ascension of Jesus



Scripture Reference: Acts 1:1-11

Suggested Theme: Our mission from Jesus is to share the good news until He returns.

Memory Verse: “So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have told you. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of the world.” Matthew 28:19-20, ICB

Story Overview:

After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus spent forty days with his disciples and others. Before ascending to heaven, he gave the apostles important instructions on announcing the gospel to all people and making them followers of Jesus. This is referred to as “the Great Commission.” An angel comforted the apostles by reminding them that just as Jesus rose into the clouds, He would someday come back to Earth again.

Background Study:

Click here for an overview of the Book of Acts

After Jesus rose from the dead, he was present with the apostles and a number of others. Paul refers to an occasion when he appeared to 500 people simultaneously (I Corinthians 15:3-8). During the forty days following his resurrection, Jesus gave many proofs to the apostles that he was alive. He also told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait. The Holy Spirit would be poured out in all His power. This pouring out is called the “baptism of the Spirit.” When the Holy Spirit came, He would give the apostles power to teach and prove Jesus’ power in ways they had never been able to before.

Today’s story takes place at the Mount of Olives, at the conclusion of the forty days when the apostles met with Jesus. Jesus gives the apostles His last instructions before being taken into heaven to return to His Father.

Jesus had been with these apostles for three years, so watching Jesus rise and disappear into the clouds must have been awesome and confusing at the same time. It seems the apostles stood motionless, looking up at the clouds even after Jesus had disappeared from sight. Two angels appear, bringing them back to the realisation that this was not a final goodbye. They would see Jesus again someday.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus prepared the Apostles for this very day. He had always known He would leave them and that they would carry on with sharing the Good News with others. This was always His plan.

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They were to witness Jesus's resurrection in Jerusalem, in Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. This "job description" or "commission" can be found, in one form or another, at the end of each of the gospels (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; John 20:21).

Memorising the great commission is a great way to begin the Book of Acts. You might find the version in Matthew 28:19-20 an easier one for children to understand.

As we study the book of Acts, we will see how the apostles did just as Jesus asked. Over and over, they will share the Good News (the Gospel) to make disciples. They baptised people and taught them how to be followers.

Today's lesson is another turning point in the overarching story of the Bible.

- The Old Testament emphasised the power of God, the Father.
- The Gospels emphasise the power of God, the Son.
- Now, the Book of Acts emphasises the power of God, the Spirit.

Way to Introduce the Story:

Ask the children to imagine for fun that they are just about to go away to live on another planet. Tell them that they have only thirty seconds to tell the group something very important that we all need to know. What important thing would they say? "In today's lesson, we will learn about when Jesus left this earth. He said some very special and important things to his friends. He told them about a very important job that he wanted them to do."

The Story:

After Jesus died on the cross, He was buried in a tomb. His disciples thought all was lost, but something amazing happened on the third day in the tomb. Jesus came to life again! This was called the resurrection.

After His resurrection, Jesus spent forty days visiting with His followers. He wanted to make sure they saw that He was not dead anymore.

He spent lots of time with His special friends, the apostles. He told them to wait in Jerusalem because some great things would happen, and they needed to be there. He told them that the Holy Spirit would come and they would be given power from God to show everyone how good Jesus was and that He was the world's true King. He was the Son of God and the Messiah.

Jesus told them that they would have a very important job to do. When someone tells someone to do a job and then gives instructions, that is called a "commission." Jesus told the apostles to do this important job, sometimes called "The Great Commission." Here are the words of Matthew's account of the Great Commission:

> "So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have told you. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of the world." Matthew 28:19-20, ICB

After Jesus told them these things, something very amazing happened. Jesus began to float up. He floated up into the clouds while the apostles were watching. Soon, the clouds hid Jesus, and they could no longer see him.

Another word that is used for something that is going up is the word "ASCEND." People often call this event the "Ascension of Jesus."

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Jesus' apostles might have been sad to watch Him leave. They might have been amazed and full of wonder, too. While they were all looking up into the sky, trying to catch another glimpse of Jesus, two men dressed in white (probably angels) stood beside them. These angels told the apostles that Jesus went up into the clouds and that someday (many years later), He would return to the earth on clouds again.

Now, the apostles understood. Someday, they would see Jesus return to Earth again, and everyone who followed Jesus would get to live with Him and God the Father forever. Someday, everyone who follows Jesus will see Him again.

Jesus said that while He was with the Father, He would be preparing a place for believers to live so that when He came back, they could all live with Him forever.

The apostles would miss Jesus, but Jesus had given them an important job. They could go and tell everyone about how Jesus loved them and died for them, but that God raised Him from the dead. They could tell people that Jesus was the true King of the world. They could teach people how to be followers of Jesus, too.

Where do you think the apostles went after this? Who wants to guess? Remember where Jesus had told them to go? He told them to go to Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit to come.

So the apostles went to Jerusalem and waited just as Jesus said. They knew that everything Jesus said would come true.

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.

Click here to download the slideshow or the printable illustrations.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Another really good slideshow and illustrations from the Lumo Project can be downloaded from Free Bible Images.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

Review:

1. What is the Great Commission? (The instructions that Jesus gave to the apostles. He said: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20))

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2. What is the Gospel? (The good news about Jesus. He died for us, was buried, and rose from the dead. Therefore, He is the world's true King and Lord)
3. How did Jesus leave the earth? (Rose up into Heaven)
4. Who spoke to them while the apostles were trying to get a last glimpse of Jesus in the clouds? (Two angels)
5. What did the angels say after Jesus went up into the clouds? (They said not to be sad because Jesus would come back again someday in the same way He left)
6. What does this story show us about Jesus? What about the Holy Spirit? What about God the Father?
7. When will Jesus come back to Earth? (We do not know, only God the Father knows)

Reflection:

1. What do you think it looked like when Jesus ascended into Heaven?
2. How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus left Earth?
3. How do you think the disciples felt about Jesus' commission to them? Were they excited to follow His commission?
4. Why do you think Jesus asked His disciples to share the good news with the whole world? Why does He want us to share the good news?
5. How do you feel about telling people the good news of Jesus?
6. Sometimes when we share the good news, we can share it by showing people love instead of only using our words. Have you shared the good news by loving people?
7. What would the world be like if everyone knew and loved Jesus?
8. Is there someone you think God could help you share the good news with? (Encourage the children that they are not too young to share the good news. Many children have shared the good news with other children and adults!)
9. Suggestion: pray together for people the children know who don't know Jesus or follow Him.
10. What question do you have for God about this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- I Can Be a Missionary Song
- Hello Hello Song
- L-O-V-E Song
- This Little Light of Mine Song
- Roll the Gospel Chariot Song
- ABC: Jesus Died for You and Me Song
- J-E-S-U-S Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:



- Use a globe or world map and discuss some of the different cultures and languages of the world. Talk about how you might teach the gospel in a few different countries.
- Draw and Tell Visual Aid: The teacher and the children draw pictures as they read the scripture together. Make your own, or use this Great Commission and Ascension Draw and Tell template.
- Obtain a helium-filled balloon and release it outside as you tell the story of Jesus going into the clouds.
- Please find out the names of some of the missionaries your congregation supports and share facts about their work with the children. Older children could do this research on their own or in groups. You might write notes or send the missionaries a picture of your group.
- Write “GOSPEL” on the chalkboard or a large sheet of paper. Underneath, write “Good News.” Discuss the fact that the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (I Corinthians 15:1-8). Let the children list things they might say when they share the gospel with people.
- Memory Verse: Use the “Memory Lane” method to help children learn the memory verse.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Ascension Craft Instructions: Poke a hole in the bottom of a blue or clear plastic cup and string a string through it.

Decorate the upturned cup with clouds. Tape a picture of Jesus on the lower end of the string. Pull the string so that Jesus “rises” up into the clouds.



- Make a scroll. Click here for instructions. Write this verse on it: “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20, ICB) If children are too young to write the entire verse, consider helping them write something like “Tell people about God.”

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- Colour My World (Photo at right) Lead the group in conversation about sharing the good news of Christ by using this fun activity, Colour My World (The Great Commission)

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page with text (Ministry Spark)
- Craft: Flag handprint wreath (Activity village)
- Ascension: Craft idea for a colouring picture (Bible story hour)
- Worksheet, Great Commission: Interactive Group Activities (Sermon 4 kids)
- Worksheet, Great Commission: Crossword Puzzle (Sermon 4 kids)
- Worksheet, Great Commission: Wordsearch (Sermons 4 kids)
- Worksheet, Ascension: Maze (Sermon 4 kids)
- Worksheet, Ascension: Decoder puzzle (Sermon 4 kids)
- Worksheet, Ascension: Wordsearch (Sermon 4 kids)
- Ascension: Interactive Group Activities (Sermon 4 kids)

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