

*This workshop was written for Augustana Lutheran Church, St. James, Minnesota, by Rick. It was adapted for Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA, by Beth Tobin in April of 2012. The original lesson plan may be found at [www.rotation.org](http://www.rotation.org) and is copyrighted for educational uses for congregations.*

# The Ascension and The Great Commission

## Moved by the Spirit – Games Workshop

### **Bible Texts and References:**

“The Great Commission” – Matthew 28:16-20

“The Ascension” – Luke 24:44-53; Acts 1:6-11

### **Memory Verse:**

**Matthew 28:18-20** (NRSV)

*Go therefore 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 remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

### **Objective:**

- To help the children understand how the disciples may have felt when Jesus died, was raised from the dead, and then ascended into heaven.
- To show the class that we can share the story of Jesus not only by what we say, but by what we do.
- To reflect on our Faith Practices and how they can help us as we carry out the mission of the Great Commission in our lives today: Pray, Serve, Worship, Give, Encourage, Invite, Study God’s Word

### **Supplies:**

- “Jesus’ Ascension” Bible story from *The Children’s Bible in 365 Stories*, p. 383
- Faith Journal Sheets
- Colored Pencils
- 14 index cards with the following words written once on a card - most cards will be blank - "Pray, Serve, Worship, Give, Encourage, Invite, Study God's Word"
- Ice Cream Pail - empty - I have several if you need them...
- The seven words (Faith Practices) from above typed out on a sheet and printed off for the teacher to display. (I have this and will send it to you.)
- Mini Hershey Bars
- Six foot step ladder
- Tape
- Large Dice - I've seen these in the supply room. I think they are blue.

### **Advance Preparation:**

- Read through the Bible story to familiarize yourself with it.
- Check the index cards to make sure the 7 words are written on 7 of the cards
- Decide how you will remove the candy bars from the room at the beginning of class
- Think of some examples of kindness in case the children need help thinking of some.
- Set up the ladder if you will be in the room so the children will not be climbing on it without your knowledge. Otherwise, it can be set up during class.

### **Opening:**

Welcome the students when they arrive. Make sure the Hershey's candy bars are sitting on the table. A child will most likely ask about them. If they don't, pretend to notice them. Tell the class they these must be left over from last month and either remove them from the classroom or put them someplace in the room where the students cannot see them. Please wear your name tags and greet each student and Shepherd. Shepherds will take attendance.

Ask the children the following questions: Have you ever lost something that was really important to you? How did you feel when you lost it? Did you ever find what you lost? How did you feel when you found it?

This may be a sensitive area for young children. They may be willing to say they lost something but may not want to share details. Allow the children to give as much or as little information as they would like. Someone might even mention the candy bars that you just removed.

Tell the class that today's story is about a group of men who lost something very important to them. These men then had what was lost returned to them, but only for a little while.

### **Opening Prayer:**

Dear God, please be with us when we are sad about losing something that is important to us and thank you for those things that we were able to find. Amen.

### **Read the Story:**

Help students know how to find today's stories in the Bible. Ask them to demonstrate how to find the Gospels by opening their Bibles half way and then half way again.

- Ask them to recall the names of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.
  - Ask them what Gospel means? "Good News!"
  - What is the "Good News"? "The birth, life/ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus."
- Please make sure students understand that the only place you can find these stories of Good News is in the Gospels - that's why they are called the Gospels.

Explain that today you will be reading the story to them from "The Children's Bible in 365 Stories." (p. 383) Check to make sure students know the meaning of the word "ascension" - to rise up.

When you are finished reading the story, ask the students the following questions: How many days did Jesus spend with His disciples? (40 - more than one calendar month) What did Jesus want His disciples to do? (Tell His story to people all over the earth.) How many men appeared to tell the disciples that Jesus was in heaven? (2)

### **Activity:**

Tell the children to think about the part in the Bible story where Jesus told His disciples that they would receive the power of God and they should tell the story of Jesus to people all over the earth. Ask if someone knows what this is called? It's called the Great Commission and is also our memory verse. Say the verse together:

### **Matthew 28:18-20** (NRSV)

*Go therefore 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 remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

Ask the class to think about how they can share the story of Jesus with others.

Tell the students that, in addition to telling people about Jesus, we can also show people how to act in a way that would be pleasing to Jesus and God. Have the children think about something they could do to show this. You may have to give the class some examples to get them started.

**Pass out the Faith Journal Sheets.** Tell the students to draw a picture of someone sharing the story of Jesus or a picture of someone sharing God's love by doing a kind deed. Tell the children that they will need these pictures to play today's game.

Ask the class if anyone remembers what the word ascension means from today's Bible story. Remind them that the word ascension means "to rise" as Jesus did when He went from earth to heaven. Tell the students that the goal of today's game is to see who can RISE to the top of the ladder.

Set up the ladder with the ice cream pail on top. Show the class the set of index cards. Tell them that 7 of the cards contain the words of our Faith Practices. Our Faith Practices help show us how we can share the story of Jesus or share God's love. Display the Faith Practices Chart: Pray, Serve, Worship, Give, Encourage, Invite, Study God's Word. As you read the words, add the appropriate card to the ice cream pail and explain that you are putting some blank cards in as well. Shake up the ice cream pail to mix the cards.

Take the index cards from the ice cream pail and throw them all over the room. One the count of three, have the students pick up one or two cards so that all cards are being held. Add more cards if needed.

Point to and call out one of the Faith Practices. The student who is holding the Faith Practice you called will shake the dice. If they shake a "4" they will place the picture

they drew earlier on the fourth step of the ladder. (Note: You may want to use some tape to keep the pictures from falling off the ladder.) Have that student share about their picture. Which Faith Practice does it tie in with?

Call out the rest of the Faith Practices so that everyone has a turn to roll the dice. If a child feels uncomfortable going on the ladder, you may place the picture on the ladder for them.

There is no set order on which word you choose. You may even choose to select multiple words for some of the rounds.

Tell the class that you may also say “Blank Card.” Blank cards are for sharing other ways we can tell or show about God’s love to others. Suggestions might be ways to: Love, Help, Share...

At the end of the game, all of the students may place their pictures on the top of the ladder. Tell them that this is to remind us that, Jesus rose to heaven, and then sent the Holy Spirit to be with all of us here on earth and to empower us to witness to others. Let their papers flutter down “filled with power” from the Holy Spirit. Have students find their paper and put their hand on it as you say the following blessing:

Lord, thank you for sending your Spirit to empower us. Bless these children and their gifts of kindness. Help them to help others know about you. Amen.

Bring back the candy bars that you removed from class earlier and give one to each child. Ask them, “How did you feel when I took them out of class earlier?” You were probably disappointed. Ask them, “How did you feel when I brought them back and gave one to you?” You were probably excited.

Tell the class that this is probably how the disciples felt. First they were sad that Jesus had died. Then they were excited when He was alive again. And while they were probably sad again when He rose into heaven, they were probably happy in knowing that they would see Him again, just as we will someday.

### **Faith Journals:**

Ask students to add more ideas of ways they could share the story of Jesus with others to their journal page. Have the write or reflect on ways that their faith practices can help them share with others.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Dear God, thank you for dying for our sins so that we have a place in heaven. Help us to live in a way that will make You happy and to help other people learn about you. And all God’s children said: AMEN.