

The Great Commission and Ascension of Jesus

Video Workshop

Summary of Activities

After a brief Bible study quiz game, students will watch Jesus' "final instructions"* and Ascension as depicted in the movie, "Son of God" (2014). After discussing Jesus' instructions, and the memorable response to the Ascension that Peter offers in the movie, students will make a video of the Great Commission in a special way to aid their memorization of it.

This lesson shares a number of insights into the differences between the Gospel accounts.

Scripture for the Lesson (*final instructions spoken by Jesus in the movie)

1. When the Holy Spirit comes to you, you will receive power. (Acts 1:8)
2. The power of the Holy Spirit can be with you all wherever you are. (similar to Matthew 28:20)
3. Go into the world and preach the Gospel to all creation. (Quoting Mark 16:15 and alluding to Matthew 28:19)
4. Peace be with you. (John 20:21)

*Each Gospel has a different version of what we are calling "Jesus' final instructions." In Matthew, they are expanded and known as "The Great Commission." The Son of God movie uses a line from each Gospel. This lesson's opening "quiz" looks at some of these scriptures and shares some insights into the Gospel accounts. The scripture memory activity at the end of this lesson uses Matthew's Great Commission.

Memory Verse Activity Scripture

[Matthew 28:16-20](#) ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Lesson Objectives

Link to the [Bible Background](#) at rotation.org for this set's complete list of objectives.

Preparation and Materials

- Read the [Bible Background](#) and scripture.
- Half sheets of paper, four for each students. Markers.
- Bibles.
- A copy of Son of God (2014). Preview chapter 35 and cue it up to show your students.

- Whiteboard or large sheet of paper (marker).
- A DVD player and TV screen or LCD projector to show the movie.
- A video camera or smartphone with a video camera. Don't forget the cables to connect the camera to your screen.

About the Son of God Video Clip

Chapter 35, the last chapter in the Son of God DVD menu, features Jesus speaking his final instructions before ascending. Interestingly, the movie has Jesus speaking one verse each from Matthew, Mark, John and Acts (Luke). The four lines together are similar to Matthew's Great Commission, though without Matthew's word-smithing talents. Following that scene, the very last scene in the movie features the disciple John on the island of Patmos. The movie started there with him writing his Gospel and now finishes there with an appearance of Jesus. ***It's a scene meant to evangelize the audience.*** While not in the Bible, it is biblical in the sense that it does portray the idea that Jesus is still alive and comes to us with his Word and Call. It will likely confuse younger children, but you may choose to show it at your discretion to older students. Perhaps show it at the end of class if you have time to discuss the question, "*how does Jesus come to YOU today with this same message?*"

A fan has posted a low-resolution clip of part of [Son of God's Ascension scene on YouTube](#). Here it is for preview purposes only. **The Great Commission and Ascension scene starts at 3:20.** See the next post in this thread for why we chose the Son of God movie Ascension scene for this lesson, and not those seen in other movies.

Lesson Plan

Opening and Scripture Readings

Welcome your students and describe what they'll be doing in today's lesson.

Ask your student to define the word "Ascension" and what it describes. Fill in their answer.

Conduct the following scripture reading "disguised" as a quiz. Its point is to introduce today's scripture and teach students some interesting information about the Gospel stories of Jesus' final instructions and Ascension. They are not expected to know the right answers -but will afterward!

Opening Quiz

Have each student write the names Matthew, Mark, Luke, John on four cards or half sheets of paper. They will hold up what they think is the right answer(s).

Question 1: This writer is the only writer who tells the story of Jesus going up into heaven TWICE, the first time in his Gospel, and the second time in his Book of Acts which he also wrote.

(Answer: Luke-Acts. Explain that Acts was also written by Luke to tell the story of the Disciples and Early Church. Invite your students to find both stories in Luke 24 and Acts 1.)

Bonus to Question 1: Luke tells almost the same Ascension story in both his Gospel of Luke and Book of Acts. But in only one of them he adds the story that two angels appeared to the Disciples after Jesus had gone into heaven. The angels ask the Disciples, "why are you standing looking in the sky?" Does Luke tell the story of the angels in Luke or in Acts?

(Acts. Help students find and read together **Acts 1:1-11**. Ask: What were the angels trying to tell the Disciples? What's wrong with standing around looking for Jesus? Jesus wants us to serve!)

Question 2: Which Gospels do not have a story about of Jesus going up to heaven? Is it Matthew, Mark, John, two of them or all three?

(Answer: Both Matthew and John are correct. Ask: Why do you think they don't tell that story? This is a good opportunity to teach the uniqueness of the four Gospels. You might add that in Matthew, Jesus' final words are "*I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" and maybe Matthew wanted to emphasize that promise and thus, did not include the scene of Jesus going to heaven. To make this point, and to teach the fact that the Gospels don't record every story about Jesus, have students turn to John 20:30-31 and read together John's final words: *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*)

Question 3: The ending of this Gospel is a summary of the final instructions of Jesus to his disciples as found in the other Gospels.

(Answer: Mark. Open your Bibles and **read Mark 16:15-19**. You might mention to older students that most scholars believe Mark's Gospel is missing its ending in the earliest manuscripts, and that the end of Mark was added later by somebody other than Mark, perhaps someone familiar with the other Gospels. Most Bibles mention this in a footnote.)

Final Quiz Question: In the video clip we are about to see, we will hear Jesus speak his final instructions. See if you can guess which Gospel or Book of Acts that the actor portraying Jesus is speaking from. Anybody want to guess ahead of time??

Show the Video Clip from Son of God

(Read the note about it found at the top of this lesson plan, and decide if and when you will show the final scene.)

Provide some context for this part of the story. Jesus has Risen. He's been appearing to the Disciples and talking to people, and now it is time for his body to leave the earth. *According to Matthew, Jesus meets the Disciples on a mountainside in Galilee. According to Luke, this took place near Bethany outside of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives.*

Discussion of the Video Clip:

Ahead of time, write out the "final instructions" heard in the movie on a large sheet of paper/flipchart (see below). Write the Book/Chapter/Verses answers below the four lines of scripture. Keep them covered until after the clip is over.

After the video is over, reveal the four lines, and ask the students to **MATCH** the **LINES** to the **SCRIPTURE PASSAGE**.

Ask: Which Gospels did those final words come from? Use your Bibles to find out!

1. When the Holy Spirit comes to you, you will receive power. (Acts 1:8)
2. The power of the Holy Spirit can be with you all wherever you are. (similar to Matthew 28:20)
3. Go into the world and preach the Gospel to all creation. (Quoting Mark 16:15 and alluding to Matthew 28:19)
4. Peace be with you. (John 20:21) This phrase is recorded in two of the Gospels and seems to be one of Jesus' familiar greetings to his friends.

Focus:

Ask: What were Peter's very next words after Jesus had gone?

(Ask for guesses first, and **then replay the video clip** of Jesus' last words and then Peter's exhortation. It will only take 3 minutes and will be a good reinforcement. Note that Peter's words are not in scripture.)

Peter said, "*My Brothers, My Sisters, We Have Work to Do!*"

Ask: What "work" is Peter referring to?

Write their responses on the board. then say the following: To organize the disciples and believers, Peter and the Disciples formed churches in the towns and villages where believers lived. They called these organizations "churches."

Ask: What does a church do? (Worship, Teach, Place of Compassion and Inclusion, Collect and Distribute Resources, what else?)

Ask: Where do we do this work? Just at church? Where could YOU do this work in your life?

Ask: Why do we do this work? Is it easy? Who promised to help us do it?

Make A Video Remembering the Words of the Great Commission

Say: Matthew crafts Jesus' "final instructions" into a set of very memorable and important five statements. These words are often heard in worship, and are some of the most memorized words in the New Testament.

I will assign a line to each of you to remember. Then I will turn on my video camera and when I point it at you, say your line. Here's the fun twist: if you get it wrong or stumble, I will move back to the first person to start the Great Commission all over again. Our goal is to record on video a perfect version of Matthew's Great Commission ~ Jesus' final instructions to all of us.

1. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
2. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations
3. baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit
4. teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.
5. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Notes to the Teacher:

Adjust to the needs of your students. If one student has trouble remembering their line exactly, you can help them, have them repeat after you, or whatever gets you through it. But don't make it too easy. Making them "work for it" and "do over" will help their memorization process.

You can write these five lines on the board for a practice session.

If you have more than five students, have two students say the same line at the same time. If you have fewer than five students, include yourself or a helper in the recitation, or have the entire class repeat the final line.

If you have extra time, videotape them a second time going as fast as they can through the Commission without making a mistake.

Reflect

View your Great Commission Video, and talk about ways we can share our video testimony with others (which follows Jesus' instructions to tell the world!).

You may also view the last scene in the movie of John meeting Jesus on Patmos. Set up the clip using the notes about it found above. The Point: The Risen Jesus still comes to us, calls to us and is changing lives.

Adaptations

For Younger Students: Eliminate the opening Bible study quiz, and substitute a reading from an illustrated Bible of Acts 1:1-11 or the Great Commission from Matthew 28. This will also give you more time to work on making the memory video. Non-readers can memorize lines of scripture if you work with them to "repeat after me" a few times, then have them repeat without your help. They will love seeing themselves on the screen.

Written by the Rotation.org Writing Team
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