

The Great Commission

Grades
5-6

EVANGELISM

MATTHEW 28:16-20

What is happening in this story?

Matthew presents Jesus as the one promised in the Old Testament—both sovereign king and humble servant. This is very different from what most people anticipated in a Messiah. Followers of Jesus are invited into the understanding that God’s kingdom is both present and future, now and not yet. One day it will be fulfilled completely. However, in the meantime, we are to follow the ways of Jesus and lead others into a life that changes things both here and now, and for all eternity.

Why does this story matter for kids?

Kids—especially younger ones—know what it’s like to be excited to share. Whether sharing toys, stories, or just information, kids know this impulse well. While challenging for some church communities, evangelism, at its core, is simply this fervent desire to share with others something that gives us joy. When we truly experience the love of God and the good news of Jesus, we are compelled to share it through our words and deeds.

Why this theme?

Evangelism comes directly from the Greek for “gospel” or “good news.” What better news is there than the assurance that Jesus is with us “always, to the end of the age”? Whenever we share Jesus’ teachings and love with others, we evangelize—we spread the good news. Kids are some of the very best at doing this!

AGE LEVEL TIP

Chances are most kids in your group don’t talk much about their faith outside of church. Today’s lesson is an opportunity to share openly and honestly about why we are called to tell others about Jesus and when and how we can share our faith.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Pens
- White paper
- Colored pencils

LESSON SUPPLIES

- None

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Write a note that says: "Share some good news you received this week. Write it on this note and pass it to the next person who arrives for them to add to it." Read the good news together after everyone has arrived.

Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

Do you have a friend who is really passionate about a specific topic? How do they sound when they're talking about their favorite subject? What kinds of words do they use? Give kids a chance to share some examples. **There's a word for that kind of passion and sharing of good news in the church: evangelism. Evangelism is the act of spreading the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Gospel even means "good news." And evangelists are people who share the good news. Today, we're going to take a closer look at evangelism and how we are called not just to talk about faith, but to live it out with passion.**

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for the work of evangelists, without whom we might never know about your Son. Help us to share the good news of your love with others. Amen.**

Pass out leaflets, pens, and colored pencils.

In some ways, commercials are a form of evangelism—not for Jesus, but for a product or service. When a famous person promotes a product or idea, they lend their credibility to whatever they are selling. Think of a product that has a famous spokesperson, and draw a picture of the product or write its name on your leaflet in the big starburst. In the smaller starbursts, write the spokesperson's name and words used to describe the product. Give kids a few minutes to work. **Would you buy—or have you ever bought—a product because of a spokesperson? Why? What makes someone's testimony meaningful?**



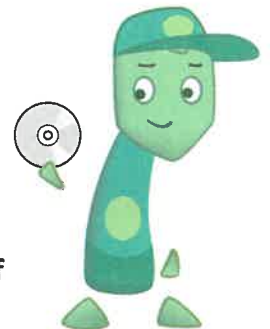
Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

There are lots of ways to tell people about something or send a message. Let's watch as Gabe tries on the role of evangelist.

View Episode 9, "Awkward Evangelist," on the Year Gold Spring Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- Why do you think Gabe's first few tries at evangelism weren't very successful?
- What could Gabe have done differently?
- Have you ever been inspired by someone's words? Who? What did they say?
- What is it like to talk to someone about Jesus? If you have done it, how did it go? If you haven't done it, why not?
- How is serving other people a form of evangelism?



Open your Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Today's passage is from the book of Matthew. It's in the New Testament in the Gospels and Acts section of the Bible. If this is your first time reading from Matthew, invite kids to check out the book introduction and comic on page 1156.



Today's reading comes right at the very end of Matthew's gospel. The two Marys have just discovered the empty tomb and relayed Jesus' message to the disciples: "Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Matthew 28:10).

Help kids find Matthew 28:16-20 and read it in this creative way together: **Let's read this scripture out loud together. When we get to Jesus' words in the three final verses, read loudly and with passion.**

Invite kids to check out what Gabe says about Matthew 28:16-20.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- What do you think it means to *make* a disciple?
- What are some ways you can *teach* people about Jesus?
- Why do you think it's difficult to tell people about Jesus sometimes?
- How do you think the disciples felt to hear Jesus give them the authority to go out and carry on his ministry? How does it feel to know that the same authority has been given to you?
- Do you know someone who might make a good pastor or other leader in the church? Would you want to do that?

Make your mark on the Wall Chart.

Look at the chart and find the theme for today. Give kids time to find the word *Evangelism*. Jesus' words are about telling *and* doing: *go, make, baptize, and teach*. What can we add to the box by *Evangelism* to help us remember Jesus' message?

Help kids reach a consensus and make their mark.



BIBLE BIT

This passage refers to eleven disciples because, according to Matthew, Judas committed suicide after he betrayed Jesus.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, count the times Gabe gives evangelism a try before he realizes he needs a different approach.

OUR CHURCH

Does your church have a mission or vision statement? If so, how does it reflect Jesus' words to "go therefore and make disciples"?

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out pens and colored pencils.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. Our lesson today is called **The Great Commission**. *Commission* means a command or authorization to do something. The Bible passage we read is essentially the last thing Jesus says to his disciples: go out into the world and share the way of Jesus so that other people will believe, follow, and become disciples themselves.
2. If you were heading out like Gabe to do your part, how could you share Jesus' message with others? Brainstorm ways you could evangelize with potential new believers, and write them in the brain on your leaflet.
3. Give kids a couple of minutes to work. Help them brainstorm ways they can serve others, feed the hungry, heal the sick, comfort the afflicted, welcome the stranger, and so on.
4. How we communicate with each other has changed a lot since Jesus' disciples received this commission. They probably had only one option: literally traveling around to meet and teach people face-to-face.
5. Today, one of the most common ways to communicate with others is through social media. Choose three of your best ideas, and sketch them out as pictures that could be shared on social media. Create a catchy hashtag for each one that helps communicate that you're sharing Jesus' message.
6. Give kids a chance to work. After a few minutes, invite kids to share their posts with the rest of the group.

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

Evangelism—sharing our faith with others—can be one of the most difficult things Jesus asks us to do. How does our congregation do evangelism well? What could we do better?

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out pens.

Remember our discussion in the beginning about spokespersons? You are all spokespersons for Jesus. That's evangelism. Write your name on the back of the leaflet panel in the "spokesperson" starburst. In the empty starburst, write words you can use to describe Jesus to other people.

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest). **And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world**.

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.