

The Apostles of Jesus Christ

Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:25-26; 13:1-4 & 14:14; Romans 16:7; Galatians 1:19

Learning Objectives

1. The children will explore the responsibilities of the apostle ministry.
2. The children will recognize the importance of the quality of perseverance as followers of Jesus.

Memory Verse: *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” --Matthew 28:19*

Getting Started

“Behind a Twenty Dollar Bill”

For this quick activity you will need a twenty-dollar bill or some other large currency. The object is to describe that the power behind the money is the full faith and credit of the United States of America (that and some gold in Fort Knox). This is relevant that it is not the man that makes the apostle ministry it is the power and authority that Jesus gave them – they were sent by Jesus.

Your presentation could be something like this...

“I have something pretty significant in my wallet (or billfold). Let me show you. (Pull out the twenty-dollar bill). Here it is. A twenty-dollar bill. What could I buy with it?”

“Well, I could buy almost seven gallons of gas, or perhaps that many gallons of milk. I could buy two tickets to the movies with a little left over, or I could buy a whole lot of hamburgers. I could even purchase a real nice set of new strings for my guitar.”

“However, what makes it possible to buy all those things with this little piece of green paper? The truth is, there is a whole economy behind this slip of paper – not to mention the United States is behind every dollar. Because of that, and only because of that, this green piece of paper is worth something, we treat it with a certain amount of respect.” *(Carefully place the bill back in your wallet or billfold)*

“Now, I want you to think a moment about our apostle. We see him a few times a year. He speaks well, always presents himself well. But what gives him the authority to carry the apostle ministry?”

“It is because of Jesus and His connection with our Heavenly Father that He did the wonders and miracles that He did. Jesus spoke God’s word. Well, Jesus gave this power and responsibility to apostles. These men represent the Lord Jesus and His work and ministry. They were sent by Him and have many responsibilities that the Lord Jesus gave them.”

adapted from: www.teensundayschool.com → Object talks → “Behind a twenty-dollar bill”

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions

Message: *The apostle ministry came from the Lord Jesus and is still active today.*

Introductory Remarks:

Note: The information contained in this section is background material that will serve as a basis for information when the teacher presents the lesson. Teachers should familiarize themselves with this information before the lesson is presented. (Adapted from *God’s Ways* Volume 2.)

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions – *continued*

The Commission and Authority of the Apostles

Apostle means ambassador or envoy. Jesus Christ, who was sent by His Heavenly Father for the salvation of man, is referred to as an Apostle in Hebrews 3:1. He commissioned his Apostles: *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore^[e] and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28: 18-20)

According to the commission, *“Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...”* the Apostles’ teaching firstly comprises what Jesus himself taught. In addition, the Lord announced to his Apostles that the Holy Ghost would provide further revelations, saying, *“I have much more to say to you. It is more than you can handle right now. ¹³ But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own. He will speak only what he hears. And he will tell you what is still going to happen. ¹⁴ He will bring me glory by receiving something from me and showing it to you.”* (John 16: 12-14)

To enable the Apostles to fulfill their commission, Jesus Christ gave them the authority to baptize (cf. Matthew 28:19) and forgive sins. *“If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”* (John 20:23). With this authority, the Apostles are able to reconcile man with God (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20).

Someone who has authority, Acts in the name of the one who gave him the authority. Everything done by the authorized representative, is as valid as if the one granting the authority were doing it himself.

God and his son Jesus Christ are almighty (i.e. they have power and omnipotence in heaven and on earth). Jesus, for example, acted with divine authority when he healed the sick, raised the dead, or drove out unclean spirits. The authority Jesus also conferred on his Apostles, which showed itself, for example, when Apostles Peter and John healed the lame beggar at the entrance to the temple. The rulers, elders and scribes of the people of Israel asked them, *“By what power did you do this?” they asked. “And through whose name?”* (Acts 4:7). Apostle Peter then explained that he had acted in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Biblical Designations for the Apostle’s Ministry and the Apostles

In the Bible, the Apostle’s ministry is also referred to as the ministry of:

- Reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18)
- Grace (Ephesians 3:2 – Use the following translation as it comes closest to the original Greek text “...to the extent that you have heard about the authoritative commission of God’s grace, which has been conferred upon me [Apostle Paul] for your benefit)
- The spirit (2 Corinthians 3:6-8)
- The new testament (2 Corinthians 3:6)
- The word (Acts 6:4)
- Righteousness (2 Corinthians 3:9)

In the New Testament, there are formulations, making the Apostles’ responsibilities clear:

- Ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- Those who seek the bride (2 Corinthians 11:2)
- Light of the Gentiles (i.e., nations) (Acts 13:47)
- Ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1)
- God’s laborers and master builders of God’s spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:9-10)

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions – continued

The Apostles of Christ's First Church

The Apostles of Christ's first church include the twelve disciples appointed by Jesus, upon whom he conferred the Apostle's ministry (cf. Luke 6:13-16), namely, Simon called Peter, his brother Andrew, James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, the son of Alphaeus, Simon, called the Zealot, Judas, the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, the traitor.

Furthermore, the Bible refers to the following who carried the Apostle's ministry: Matthias, who replaced Judas Iscariot, Barnabas, Paul, Andronicus, Junias, Timothy, Silvanus, referred to as Silas in Acts, and James, the Lord's brother.

It may be assumed, that there were additional Apostles in the first church. According to non-biblical accounts, John was the last living Apostle of Jesus at that time.

In accordance with Jesus' commission to teach and baptize all nations, the Apostles worked in different areas.

Whereas Apostles Peter and James proclaimed the gospel mainly among the Jews, Apostles Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, and Silvanus went to the heathen countries in the area of the Mediterranean. Based particularly on Eusebius of Caesarea's (AD 260-340) history of the church, other Apostles spread the gospel in additional Asian and African countries.

In accordance with their commission, the Apostles converted Jews and Gentiles to Christ's teachings, and thus began to gather the new people of God (cf. 1 Peter 2:10).

Following the death of the first Apostles, the Bishops and other ministers took over the responsibility of caring for the congregations spiritually as well as spreading the Christian teaching further. However, for the salvation of the faithful, the Apostle's ministry was needed.

The Apostles of the End Time

In the year 1832, in England, John Bate Cardale was called as the first Apostle of the end time through prophecy. Currently, there are 346 Apostles, including the Chief Apostle.

The Apostles of the end time are equipped with the same commission, power and authority as the first Apostles. The Apostles' responsibility is to gather a congregation for the Lord, to lead it, and prepare it for the union with Jesus Christ.

Lesson/Discussion:

Note: This lesson is a discussion on the Apostle ministry which will incorporate the following biblical references. The presentation of the material as a story is not applicable. The lesson should build and outline the commission of the Apostle ministry.

Luke 6:12-16 ~ The twelve Apostles appointed by Jesus:

¹² On one of those days, Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray. He spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called for his disciples to come to him. He chose 12 of them and made them apostles. ¹⁴ Simon was one of them. Jesus gave him the name Peter. There were also Simon's brother Andrew, James, John, Philip and Bartholomew. ¹⁵ And there were Matthew, Thomas, and James, son of Alphaeus. There were also Simon who was called the Zealot ¹⁶ and Judas, son of James. Judas Iscariot was one of them too. He was the one who would later hand Jesus over to his enemies.

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions – continued

Acts 1:25-26 ~ Additional Apostles of the first church:

²⁵ Show us who should take the place of Judas as an apostle. He gave up being an apostle to go where he belongs." ²⁶ Then they cast lots. Matthias was chosen. So he was added to the 11 apostles.

Acts 13:1-4

¹ In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers. Among them were Barnabas, Simeon, and Lucius from Cyrene. Simeon was also called Niger. Another was Manaen. He had been brought up with Herod, the ruler of Galilee. Saul was among them too. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke. "Set apart Barnabas and Saul for me," he said. "I have appointed them to do special work." ³ The prophets and teachers fasted and prayed. They placed their hands on Barnabas and Saul. Then they sent them off. ⁴ Barnabas and Saul were sent on their way by the Holy Spirit. They went down to Seleucia. From there they sailed to Cyprus.

Acts 14:14

But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out

Romans 16:7

⁷ Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Galatians 1:19

But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are apostles supposed to do? Explain. Hint: the "Great Commission:" See Matthew 28: 18-20. (*They are ambassadors, they are to teach and baptize all nations...*)
2. Who commissioned the apostles? (*Jesus*)
3. How many apostles did Jesus commission? (*Jesus commissioned 13 apostles. Somewhat of a trick question. Jesus commissioned the original 12 apostles during His living ministry. Judas killed himself so 11 were left. The number was restored to 12 (Matthias, Acts 1:26) by the 11 remaining apostles. However, Jesus (already ascended) himself appeared to Saul/Paul on Saul's way to Damascus and eventually was commissioned as an Apostle*)
4. Who were the original 12 apostles? See: Luke 6:12-16. (*Simon (this is Peter), Andrew (Peter's brother), James and John (brothers), Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (the son of Alphaeus), Simon (called "the Zealot"), Judas (the brother of James), Judas Iscariot (the traitor)*)
5. By the time the feast of Pentecost came, how many apostles had been commissioned? (*There were 13 that had been commissioned. Only 12 were alive – Judas Iscariot killed himself leaving only 11. The number of 12 was re-established with Matthias.*)
6. Were there any other apostles? (*Yes, Barnabas, Paul, Andronicus, Junias, Timothy, Silvanus (referred to as Silas) James (Jesus' brother). It is assumed that there may have been even more.*)
7. Why do you think there were more than just 12 apostles? (*Apostles were selected as they were needed to fulfill God's work.*)

Bible Lesson with Discussion Questions – continued

8. The apostles were to accomplish an amazing task as outlined in Matthew 28:18-20. On whose authority did they act on? (*Jesus gave them all power and authority to act on his behalf cf. John 20:23; Acts 4:7*)
9. What “nations” did the apostles go to? (*Apostles Peter and James proclaimed the gospel mainly among the Jews. Apostles Paul, Barnabus, Timothy, and Silvanus went to the heathen countries in 7 the area of the Mediterranean. Other Apostles spread the gospel in additional Asian and African countries.*)
 - a. First Missionary Journey: <http://www.thejournal.org/studylibrary/maps/bible-map-apostle-paul-first-missionary-journey.gif>
 - b. Second Missionary Journey: <http://www.thejournal.org/studylibrary/maps/bible-map-apostle-paul-second-missionary-journey.gif>
 - c. Third Missionary Journey: <http://www.thejournal.org/studylibrary/maps/bible-map-apostle-paul-third-missionary-journey.gif>
10. According to historical records, who was the last Apostle alive after Jesus? (*John*)
11. When was the Apostle ministry re-established and where? (*1832 in England.*)
12. Who was the first apostle of the “end-time”? (*John Bate Cardale*)

Application to Real Life

Choose one of the activities, then continue with “gifts of ministry – leadership”.

How Long Can You Squat?

Perseverance is hard. This activity will determine which one will be the last one standing.

Challenge each student to assume the squatting position, like they are sitting in a chair but without a chair. The goal is to see who can stay in that position the longest. They can't straighten up too much, and they're eliminated when they give up or fall.

1. At first, was the activity easy or hard? Did the task get harder as time went on?
2. What helped those of you that lasted the longest make it to the end?
3. What other things in life, both physically and spiritually, require perseverance?
4. How does having an attitude of perseverance help you mature?

Back to Back

Arrange the room so you have a large empty space. Start by asking for two volunteers. Have them sit on the floor, back to back and lock arms together. Then, at your command, tell them to stand up while keeping their arms in a tightly locked position. It will not be too easy, but they will succeed by each pressing against the other's back. When accomplished, ask for two additional volunteers to join. Have the four of them sit on the floor in a small circle, and lock arms with the one next to them. Again, at your command, have them stand up keeping their arms in the locked position. Continue to add additional volunteers by twos until the whole class is participating. For smaller classes, you can add only one additional volunteer at a time.

Additional Discussion Questions:

1. What's the hardest thing you've ever done? (a job, a practice, a dare, etc.)
2. Why was it the hardest?
3. While you were doing it, did you ever want to quit? Why?
4. Did you quit? Why?
5. If you didn't quit, what helped you to finish?
6. Why do you think perseverance is an important quality to acquire? How did it help the Lord Jesus?

Application to Real Life - continued

Gifts of Ministry - Leadership

The gift of leadership is the divine enablement to clearly cast a vision, direct, and motivate people to work together toward a common goal. Those with this gift lead to Christ, not themselves. Individuals with the gift of leadership contribute direction.

In Matthew 10, Jesus called the twelve apostles to follow Him. Over the next three years, Jesus worked with and taught them about God and His Kingdom. Jesus exemplified to the disciples that a true leader is a follower first and serves the one he leads. In everything He did, Jesus always sought His Father's will so that His will that all souls could be saved would be accomplished.

While we will never be able to live up to Jesus' example, we still look to Him and strive to live and lead like Him. He is our model of how to be a leader because He is the greatest Leader, the Servant of all.

Memory Work Suggestions

5 minutes

1. Recite the memory verse. Practice finding the memory verse and/or Bible text in the Bible.
2. Play a game to review an article of faith (toss the bean bag/stuffed animal, the person who catches it says the next word...try to go faster and faster).
3. Allow a volunteer (child) to lead the class in an opening/closing prayer.
4. What fruit of the spirit could be found in today's lesson? (Patience, Self-Control). Explain what they mean in your own words.

Activity Ideas

Bible Scavenger Hunt

In the Bible the Apostle's ministry is described as many things. Look up the Bible verses listed below and use a word or phrase to summarize what the verse(s) are describing.

The Apostle's ministry is a ministry of...

- reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18)
- _____ (Ephesians 3:2¹)
- _____ (2 Corinthians 3: 6-8)
- _____ (2 Corinthians 3:6)
- _____ (Acts 6:4)
- _____ (2 Corinthians 3:9)

Next, using the Bible write a word or phrase that best describes the Apostles' ministry:

- Ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- _____ (2 Corinthians 11:2)
- _____ (Acts 13:47)
- _____ (1 Corinthians 4:1)
- _____ (1 Corinthians 3:9-10)

Activity Ideas - continued

¹ (Ephesians 3:2 – Use the following translation as it comes closest to the original Greek text “...to the extent that you have heard about the authoritative commission of God’s grace, which has been conferred upon me [Apostle Paul] for your benefit)

Answers:

- Reconciliation
- Grace
- The Spirit
- The New Testament
- The word
- Righteousness
- Ambassadors for Christ
- Those who seek the bride
- Light of the Gentiles
- Ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God
- God’s laborers, and master builders of God’s spiritual temple

Journal

Choose One

In your own words, describe the Apostle ministry as demonstrated by what you have noticed and observed from your Apostle.

You found out what the responsibilities of an Apostle is from the lesson. Being as realistic as possible, what could the apostle ministry do for you? Write about it.

You know all the things and people an Apostle must serve. What could you do help him accomplish all his tasks? Write about it.

Homework Ideas

- Read the lesson on **Apostle Peter** (Matthew 16:18-19; John 21:15-17; Luke 22:32; Acts 10; Acts 11: 16-18; Acts 15: 10-11, 22-29).
- Learn the Memory Verse:
“But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.” --Acts 15:11
- Learn the _____ Article of Faith
- Do you know who all the Chief Apostles are? Ask a grown up if you need help. Write down as many of the nine names as you can. Bring them to class.

Take Home Page: The Apostles of Jesus Christ

Today I learned...

Today your child was reminded that **the apostle ministry came from the Lord Jesus and is still active today.** The children explored the responsibilities of the apostle ministry. They also talked about the importance of the quality of “perseverance” in followers of Jesus.

Help me learn my memory verse...

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” --Matthew 28:19

Ask me...

1. What is the “Great Commission” that Jesus charged His apostles with?
2. What do you think it was like for the apostles who walked with Jesus long ago?
3. How do we benefit from having apostles today?

Live Your Faith...

Take the “how long can you squat” challenge. Have everyone in your family take the squatting position like they are sitting in a chair but without a chair. The goal is to see you can stay in that position the longest, without straightening up or falling. When you recover, talk about how easy or hard the squatting challenge was. When life gets hard, will you each still choose to follow God and trust Him? Talk about what that would look like in your lives and how you can encourage and pray for each other every day.