

UP, UP, AND AWAY

The Ascension

GOAL

The goal of this session is for middle school youth to see judgment and Jesus' Second Coming positively and entrust themselves to God's mercy.

Scripture

Luke 24:36-43, John 14:1-3, Acts 1:6-11, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

Catechism

CCC 659-664, 668-679

Resources

Article

Fr. Charles Grondin, "Should We Fear Our Final Judgement?" (catholic.com)

Handouts

"The Great Adventure" handout

"Up, Up, and Away" Parent Letter

Media

Catholic Productions, "The Particular Judgment" (youtube.com)

GATHER

In small groups, youth complete challenges with some of their senses limited, demonstrating the need for communication and leadership to accomplish unknown tasks.

PROCLAIM

The following are the main teaching points of the Proclaim:

- Jesus remained with the apostles for 40 days after his Resurrection until his Ascension.
- Jesus ascended to heaven, taking his place as the just judge who would return at the end of time.
- We do not need to fear judgment, as God is unfailingly merciful to those who recognize their need for mercy.

BREAK

Youth draw and fill in a comic book style summary of the entire series as a reminder and reflection on what they have learned.

SEND

Youth imagine themselves in the future as a part of the same story with Jesus.

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Show your drawing of “The Great Adventure” comic to your family and tell the story.

UP, UP, AND AWAY

The Ascension

PREP

Read through the task options for the “Senseless” Gather game and determine which two or three tasks are best for your group. Collect the supplies needed for the chosen tasks.

Collect all other materials needed for the Edge Night.

Download, print, and copy the “The Great Adventure” handout found online at lifeteen.com.

SETUP

Follow the Environment suggestions for the series.

Test all audio-visual elements of the Edge Night.

Project the environment image, and play the “ES - Unsuspecting Hero” Spotify playlist as the youth enter.

SUPPLIES

Prepare the following supplies:

Gather

- ☐ Blindfolds or bandanas, one per small group
- ☐ Senseless game items

Break

- ☐ Bibles, one per small group
- ☐ Markers, colored pencils, or other drawing supplies, one set per small group
- ☐ “The Great Adventure” handout, one per youth

Send

- ☐ Pencils, one per person

NOTES

CORE ASSIGNMENTS AND NOTES

This youth minister worksheet provides writing space to detail core member assignments and notes specific to running this Edge Night. Write the names of core members assigned to the roles listed.

Highlights:

- Review the “Senseless” Gather game with the core team and ensure everyone clearly understands the object of the game and the various roles.
- Core members who are small group leaders should set up the supplies for their small group’s tasks.

Setup: _____

Opening Prayer: _____

Gather – Senseless

- Leader: _____

Proclaim – Up, Up, and Away: _____

Break – The Great Adventure, Small Group Discussion

Send – Becoming a Main Character

- Leader: _____

Weekly Challenge: _____

Parking Lot: _____

NOTES

UP, UP, AND AWAY

The Ascension

GATHER

Introduction (5 min)

Welcome the youth and introduce those who are there for the first time. Invite the preselected core member to begin in prayer. Give a brief overview of the Edge Night topic, using the following as an example:

The hero often tells the people to call upon them for future help before exiting into the sunset. While Jesus did not leave Earth to return to his Fortress of Solitude, he did ascend to heaven and take his place at the right hand of God. As the just judge, Jesus will mete out justice at the end of our lives, but we have no need to worry because he is also merciful to those who call on him.

Senseless (20 min)

Divide the youth into small groups or teams of six to ten. Pick one player on each team to be the doer and give them a blindfold or bandana. Pick another player on each team to be the receiver. The remaining players are the task givers.

Organize the teams with the task givers facing the receiver, and the doer standing behind the receiver. The goal of the game is for the doer to accomplish the set task. However, the doer is blindfolded and can only receive verbal instructions from the receiver.

The receiver may speak, but does not know the task and cannot see the doer. The task givers know the task and can see the doer, but cannot speak and must silently communicate the task and directions to the receiver.

Once everyone understands the rules, instruct the doers to put on their blindfolds. Core members set up a task from the list below with the supplies required and describe the task to the task givers.

Count down from three and begin! The first team to complete the task wins, but continue playing until all teams accomplish the task.

If time allows, set up a second or third challenge, replacing the doers and receivers each round.

Suggested Tasks:

1. Place two cones about 15 feet apart. The goal is to stack one cone on top of the other.
2. Place a piece of rope on the floor. The goal is to find the rope and tie a knot in it.
3. Place a party hat and sunglasses about 15 feet apart. The goal is to find and put on both items.
4. Place a pitcher full of water and an empty cup about 15 feet apart. The goal is to fill the empty cup with water.
5. Mark two spots on the floor with masking tape. The goal is to do a jumping jack on one of the spots and a push-up over the other.
6. Place one hula hoop on the floor. The goal is to pick up the hula hoop and place it over the receiver.

Suggestion

Consider using the projector to display the task to the task givers. Make sure the teams are set up so that the receivers cannot see it!

Step It Up

Lay out all of the supplies and other “red herrings” on the floor as obstacles and distractions. If you play this way, do not use task 4 (with the pitchers of water). Other items could be pool noodles, cardboard boxes, various sports equipment, costume pieces, etc.

PROCLAIM

“Up, Up, and Away” Teaching (10 min)

Peace Be With You

Ask the youth if they have ever read a book that ended with a big cliffhanger. Share with them your answer, too. Write your thoughts here:

- The Resurrection is a big cliffhanger. Our next logical question might be, “What did Jesus do next?” After all, you could probably think of many things you would want to do if you returned to Earth after death in a glorified body! The Bible tells us that after he rose from the dead, Jesus remained with his disciples for 40 days. **(Acts 1:3)**
- Jesus first appeared to them when they were locked in a room, afraid of what might be done to them by the Jews. When he appeared, the disciples were terrified. They thought Jesus was a ghost!

Project and read **Luke 24:36-43**.

- Jesus convinces them of his Resurrection by showing the wounds he received during his Crucifixion. He also proves he is really there in bodily flesh by eating food. **(Luke 24:30-31)**
- While he was there, Jesus continued to teach them, and then, after 40 days, he ascended into heaven. **(CCC 659)**

Project and read **Acts 1:6-11**. Ask a few youth to share what they would have thought if they witnessed this event with the apostles. Write your own thoughts here:

Going Deeper

The Acts of the Apostles was written by the same writer as the Gospel of Luke. The Ascension is mentioned in both books. In the Gospel of Luke, the Ascension is the conclusion of Jesus’ work on Earth. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Ascension marks the beginning of the life of the Church. The author is clearly stating that this event marks a turning point in Christianity.

- Though Jesus is again going away, like in his Passion and Death, the Ascension is far more triumphant.
- Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit to the apostles and that his ministry would continue through them as witnesses throughout the whole world. **(Acts 1:8)**
- As in his life and ministry, Jesus leads us down a path for us to follow. His Ascension to heaven paves our journey to life after death.

Show Us the Way

- It can be hard to understand the Ascension, and it was probably a bit of a roller coaster experience for the first followers of Jesus.

Give the youth a few scenarios that illustrate times when it is preferred to have someone go before you to show you the way. For example, ask, “Would you rather hike with someone who knows the trail or by yourself with no trail?” or “Would you rather get directions from someone who knows the way or from someone who does not?” Give some practical ways that it is good to follow someone who knows where they are going. Write your thoughts here:

- If we want to make it to a certain destination, it makes sense to follow someone who has already been there and who can give us directions. Jesus goes before us to show us the way to get to heaven.

Going Deeper

When Jesus ascended to heaven, he did not leave us without a guide to come after him. In the Gospel of John, Jesus promised, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” **(John 16:7)**. This Counselor is the Holy Spirit, who descended on the apostles at Pentecost and gave them the power to preach and be witnesses of Jesus throughout the world. **(Acts 2:1-11)**

Project and read **John 14:1-3**.

- Jesus desires for us to be in heaven with him, and he sits at the Father’s right hand in heaven as our just judge. **(CCC 679)**
- We believe that one day Jesus will come again, at the end of time, to judge the living and the dead. We often think of judges and being judged as a negative thing. However, it is really unjust judges and judgments that we dislike. **(CCC 682)**

- Jesus is not unjust; he is perfectly good and just! From him, we will receive what we are rightly owed, but we will also see how our poor actions and sins are deserving of punishment.
- Hand in hand with God's justice is also God's mercy. We will never be perfect, but we can trust that God shows mercy to all those who recognize their need and ask for it.

Going Deeper

The virtue of justice is one of the four cardinal virtues. Justice is the virtue by which each person is given what is owed to them. This can be exercised positively (a worker is justly owed their wages) or negatively (a thief is justly imprisoned for the crimes they committed).

Mercy and Love

- What we do matters. Jesus tells us, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." **(Matthew 16:24)**
- He has shown us the way to live. He is present to us in the Church, and he has made a place for us in heaven. But it is up to us to respond to all that he has given us.
- We will be held accountable for the things we have done or have not done, but Jesus is merciful and loving. He did not come to condemn us but to save us, and he gives us so many things to help us when we sin and as we continue to grow in our faith. **(John 3:16-17, CCC 679, 682, 2 Corinthians 5:10)**
- Mercy is the loving kindness and compassion given to one who has offended. In order to receive mercy, we must recognize our need for it. **(CCC 1422)**
- In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we name the ways that we have sinned against God and others, followed by receiving God's mercy through absolution.
- There is no limit to how often we can receive Reconciliation, and the Church encourages us to go regularly — not because we are "so bad," but because God is so good!
- You do not have to be afraid: Jesus loves you and he wants you to be in heaven with him and will give you everything you need to get there.
- Remain in him and remain in his Church, and see all the good things he has in store for you in this life and in the next.

BREAK

The Great Adventure (20 min)

Divide the youth into their small groups. Pass out a copy of “The Great Adventure” handout to each youth and distribute the art supplies among them.

In each box of the handout, the youth are guided to write and draw a scene representing each of the six sessions of the series. They can include dialogue or scene descriptions as well. Leave the final cell blank to be completed in the Send.

Use Bibles and the session summaries provided to refresh their memories or for youth who were not present for a session.

Session Summaries

1. “Secret Identity” – Jesus is a historical person who lived in the first century and is the Son of God. We use the titles of Lord and Christ to describe him. Jesus desires a personal relationship, and we can foster one through prayer. Refer to **Isaiah 42:1-4**.
2. “Origin Story” – Mary is the Mother of God. The Catholic Church honors her special place in the life of Jesus and our lives of faith. Mary was given to us as our mother, and we can ask for her special intercession. Refer to **Luke 1:26-38**.
3. “Heroic Deeds” – The miracles of Jesus’ public ministry reveal him as the Son of God. He showed his authority over the natural world by multiplying food and calming storms, and his authority over the spiritual world by forgiving sins. If we believe Jesus is who he says he is, how we live our lives has to reflect our belief. Refer to **John 2:1-11**.
4. “The Final Battle” – Jesus’ Passion commemorates his arrest, torture, and Death. Jesus took the punishment for our sins, redeeming and saving us from an eternity separated from God. Through the Passion and Death of Jesus, God proves his great love for us and the lengths he would go to bring us back to him. Refer to **Luke 23:26-49**.
5. “Saved the Day” – After three days in the tomb, Jesus rose from the dead! We celebrate his victory over death on Easter Sunday. Jesus’ Resurrection proved his identity as God and opened the path to new life for us. We can live in hope because we know there is life after death. Refer to **John 20:11-22**.
6. “Up, Up, and Away” – Jesus remained with the apostles for 40 days after his Resurrection until his Ascension. Jesus ascended to heaven, taking his place as the just judge who would return at the end of time. We do not need to fear judgment, as God is unfailingly merciful to those who recognize their need for mercy. Refer to **Acts 1:6-11**.

Suggestion

Once youth get started on the activity, foster conversation about their drawings. Feel free to begin the small group discussion as they work.

Step It Up

Provide each small group with a large poster of “The Great Adventure” handout for them to work on collaboratively. At the end of the Break, gather all of the posters for the youth to look at.

Small Group Discussion (10 min)

Use the following questions to foster a discussion within the small group:

- Whip Around: Would you rather be able to fly for one week or teleport for one day?
- What is something you learned in this series?
- What does it mean to you that Jesus is our judge?
- How are you going to continue building a relationship with Jesus after this series?

Eighth-Grade Adaptation

Use the following questions for a more challenging discussion for eighth-grade youth:

- How can we say that God is just and merciful?
- Where do you think you are in your relationship with Jesus? How do you want things to grow or change?

SEND

Main Character (10 min)

Gather the youth back together in the main meeting space with their “The Great Adventure” handouts. Pass out a pencil to each person. Lead a closing reflection, using the following as an example:

Jesus will return. Christians call this event the Second Coming of Christ. While popular media fantasizes about the disastrous end of the world, we have no reason to fear. For us who love Jesus and desire to be close to him, we await the Second Coming with joy! When Jesus comes again, it will be to bring all people to himself, to be closer to him than ever before. Until then, our life with Jesus can still grow and deepen.

This is the next step in the story. In the final box of your handout, draw an image of yourself in the future. How are you living your faith? What does your relationship with Jesus look like? Who do you hope is there with you? Take some time to reflect and then draw and write.

Play soft, instrumental music while the youth work on their drawings. At the end of time, close with a Glory Be.

Weekly Challenge

Invite the preselected core members to present the Weekly Challenge.

Show your drawing of “The Great Adventure” comic to your family and tell the story.

Dismiss the core members preassigned to parking lot safety.

Make announcements related to your program.

Dismiss the youth.

NOTES

NOTES