

## Cycle B

### The Ascension of the Lord

Lectionary #58

#### Reading I: Acts of the Apostles 1:1-11

The Acts of the Apostles is actually a continuation of Luke's Gospel, which is made clear by the opening lines, *In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote...*, where the writer wishes to continue instructing the readers about the ways of Jesus Christ. The writer is being a **witness** to the **faith**, and his teaching and instruction calls others to be **witnesses** to the **faith** in Jesus Christ. Jesus' ascension concludes this particular passage, and the disciples are caught off guard as they stare up to the skies. Suddenly, they are reminded that they cannot stand around *looking up at the heavens*, for they have work to do. That work is to be **witnesses** to their **faith** in Jesus Christ. We are also called to be **witnesses** to our **faith** in our every day life.

#### Reading 2: Ephesians 4: 1-13

In this letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul is imprisoned, but he will not allow his imprisonment to stop the word of God. He urges the Christian community to be united with one another and to appreciate the various roles through which they **witness** Christ Jesus. Saint Paul makes it clear that the Lord has given each person unique gifts and that those gifts are to be used for the good of the entire community. In using their gifts, they are **witness** to Jesus through their words and actions. Ultimately, the **witness** to **faith** in Jesus can be shown through unity among believers.

#### Gospel: Mark 16: 15-20

Originally, the Gospel of Mark ended with verse 8 of this final chapter. The subsequent verses that we hear today were added later to bring Saint Mark's Gospel to a fitting conclusion. Earlier, we heard of Mary Magdalene and other individuals **witnessing** the resurrected Lord. Yet the response to them is the same—those whom they told do not believe them. Finally, Jesus appears to the eleven disciples and tells them to refrain from their disbelief. He then commissions them to be his **witnesses** in the world. He tells them to preach the good news, baptize others, and bring the good news to every corner of the world. In this reading, the same commission has been extended to people of all times and places. It is only after this final commission that Jesus ascends to the Father.



build. plant. grow.  
*the word this week*



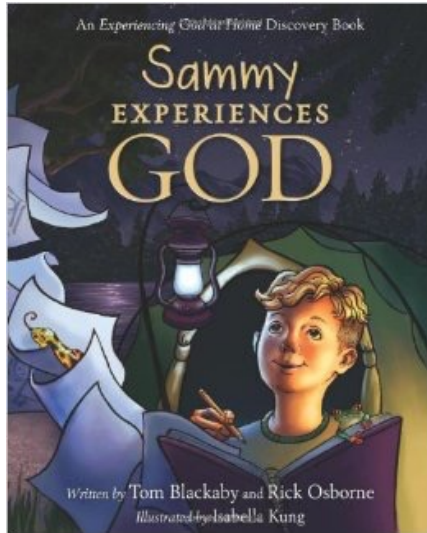
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lectionary  
reading



## children's story



### *Sammy Experiences God*

Written by Tom Blackaby and Rick Osborne

Illustrated by Isabella Kung

Publication: 2013 B&H Kids

ISBN-10: 1433679809

ISBN-13: 978-1433679803



character  
education  
activity

**Being a witness to faith means giving a firsthand account of something seen, heard, or experienced. In this case, it is Christ we have heard in the scriptures and in prayer and the experiences of Christ in daily life that shape how we are witnesses to faith.**

## Sammy Experiences God

*Sammy Experiences God* is a wonderful book to assist children in their search for God. It will help children understand that God is not far off or hiding from them, and that they can experience God's love and involvement in their lives as they follow God. One evening, after saying his bedtime prayers, little Sammy announces that he is going to look for God. When a night of sleeping under the stars and hiking up a small mountain don't bring Sammy what he is looking for, his mom and dad try to explain that God is everywhere. But Sammy does not understand and becomes discouraged. Then, Grandpa Henry sees that Sammy wants to have an encounter with God like the ones that he has read about in the Bible. Grandpa introduces Sammy to another Sammy, the Samuel from the Old Testament, who was Sammy's age when God called him. This story describes a journey of faith that is appropriate for children.

## Activity: Fishers of People Bulletin Board

Step One: Provide the students with three or four 3x5 fish cutouts on colorful construction paper.

Step Two: Invite the students to think about who they would like to share their **faith** with over the next few days and then have them write the name of that person on the fish cutout.

Step Three: Have the students carry the fish cutouts with the names written on them as a reminder of who they intend to share their **faith** with. They should take some time to talk with those people about their relationship with and their **faith** in God.

Step Four: On the perimeter of the fish cutout, students should write some words about what they shared with that particular individual.

Step Five: Upon returning to class, students should put the fish on a bulletin board with a blue backdrop to signify the sea and fishing hooks or nets to indicate fishing. All of these names will then be remembered during the week in the students' prayers. Students should take turns calling out the names of the people they shared their faith with during prayer time.

**Faith involves trusting that God will see you through the unknowns in your life. Completely giving yourself over to God's will is true faith and is a lifelong journey.**



**case study**

**Look.  
Feel.  
Know.  
Act.**

## **What could you do today?**

Make a poster that you can mount on the wall of your bedroom that is large enough for you to see across the room each day. On that poster, write the phrase: *Never be fearful of an unknown future when you have a known God...Who loves YOU!*

Be certain to read the words on the poster every morning when you wake up and every night before you fall asleep. Memorize the phrase and offer it to people you encounter who may be worried or frightened about something.

## **Look Feel Know Act**

Ask your parents to introduce you to some of the people in the Bible who are seen as people of great faith, and recognize that there are many challenges and opportunities placed before us to be people of faith. There are moments when those people in the Bible felt that God was distant from them, but in the end, God came to their assistance. Can you recall some of the times when you felt that God was a long ways away from you? What did it feel like? How would you describe it? If you are in such a place now, think about previous times when you may have felt the same and remember how God eventually came through. Find comfort in trusting that God will come through again.

Recalling these times will give you confidence that God is always with you even when you feel that God is hiding from you. Make a conscious effort to be a person of trust and hold on to your faith in God, who will ALWAYS see to your greatest good. Always believe that the best is yet to come!



## closing tool

All of the people spoken of in the readings for this weekend were **witnesses** to the **faith**. However, that does not mean that they did not have moments of doubt. Rather, these moments of doubt eventually led them to a deeper faith in God. Take this to heart and know that all people of faith have had struggles with things that occur in life that may be beyond their understanding. A true person of faith acknowledges that there are things that will always be beyond their grasp of understanding, but that the lack of understanding does not mean that you are lacking in faith. Clarity sometimes means learning to live with the questions and let the answers find you.

**Pray that you will advance in your faith and come to a place in your life that will compel you to be a witness to others regarding what God has done in your life. Amen.**



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