



Secondary School KS 3&4

The Ascension

To explore the idea of Jesus' Ascension, and to think about how we need to be confident of our potential as people by *Vicky Scott* Downloaded from Assemblies.org.uk

Aims

To explore the idea of Jesus' Ascension, it's relevance to the disciples, and to think about how we need to be confident of our potential as people.

Preparation and Materials

- A Bible.
- Two Jenga sets (or something similar that is stackable).
- Two tables to place the games on.
- Two volunteers (prepared for activity in advance)

Assembly

1. Define the term *Ascension*: after rising from the dead Christians believe Jesus ascended/rose into heaven to be with his Father God.

This event is depicted in most detail by Luke in his book in the Bible called Acts. It is also referred to in other books in the Bible: Matthew 28.16-20; Mark 16.15-20; and Luke's Gospel accounts 24.49-53. But Luke's second account in Acts is the most detailed of all.

2. Just to set the scene: Jesus has recently been crucified and subsequently risen from the dead. Luke writes that Jesus apparently returned to live on the earth for another 40 days before going up on top of a mountain. In those days high places would be used by various groups of people to worship their god/gods. Jesus took them there, to the undisturbed stillness of the mountain peak, to part from them in style. It was here that he was 'taken up to heaven' - he ascended. Read Acts 1:6-11
3. While he stood on top of the mountain Jesus informed his followers that they should get on with the work he had trained them to do without him: heal the sick, take care of the poor and tell everyone about God's love for humankind. However, the disciples doubted their ability to achieve such things without him.

Jesus then went up to heaven and left the disciples alone, transfixed, staring into the sky. They had to choose what to do with their lives now.

4. So Jesus once again leaves his friends. They had only just got used to the fact that he was back from the dead, but now he had left them for a second time! Jesus saw great *potential* in each of them and knew that they could cope without him, but at that point they were unable to see or believe it themselves.



5. Sometimes in life it is easier to see talents and abilities in those around us than perceive our own skill and worth. How we grow and mature into adults and independent people is shaped by other people's input and our own self-belief. It is often those who believe and accept the encouragement given to them by parents, friends, or teachers, who will succeed in life.

If you are someone who struggles to see what you're good at, it is so important to make sure you're around others who can see the potential in you instead and trust in them.

Likewise, if you know someone who lacks confidence and self-esteem, try to encourage them and spur them on to greatness. By doing this they will initially trust in your vision, but eventually learn to see it themselves. All humans have potential; it is accessible to all, whatever your family history or background.

6. Sadly there is a mindset in the UK that reflects a poor self-image and a lack of external confidence. For example, in American culture it is perfectly acceptable to be outwardly confident, whereas in the UK, we are judged arrogant or rude to believe that success and happiness is possible for us.

There needs to be a balance in life where we realistically push on and work at the things in life we are passionate about, disregarding any doubt and negativity, whoever it stems from. Moreover, it is those who choose to stand out from the crowd and make themselves vulnerable, who push themselves forward, who will succeed.

Apparently, the paralysed scientist Stephen Hawking was told in a school report that he would succeed in life. Despite such physical affliction, someone was able to see potential in him. This would have, without a doubt, encouraged and equipped him and he certainly has proven that potential.

7. Luke writes that Jesus left by disappearing into the clouds. This extraordinary event would obviously leave anyone stunned, so it is of no surprise that the disciples were left staring into space wondering what to do next. It is at this point that an angel came and snapped them out of their frozen state, informing them that Jesus had gone now, but will return again one day.

The disciples not only needed to listen to Jesus' encouragement that they could do it without him, but they needed to act. They needed to stop staring transfixed into space and get on with their work. Life often provides distractions and whatever they are they can stop us from achieving our potential.

8. Get two willing students to come and participate in this illustration. Set up two tables with scattered Jenga blocks on them. Ask one person to face away from the table and look up at the ceiling, putting their arms behind them hovering over the blocks. Ask the second person to stand in front of the second table facing the



scattered blocks, holding their hands over them.

Then ask them both to assemble the blocks into a tower as fast as possible. One of them will have a clear view of what they are doing, while the other is impaired by looking away from the blocks and trying to do it blindly.

After a short time ask them to stop and sit down. Show the students how much better one construction is than the other. Explain that this is due to that individual being able to see and focus on their job, whereas the other was distracted by looking elsewhere.

9. This illustration shows us how distractions can stop us from being effective. The disciples stayed looking into the sky for so long that God needed to send them an angel to snap them out of it. To remind them that if they stayed on top of the mountain they would not be able to do the work they had been trained for.
10. The tongue can be a powerful weapon and often people say very hurtful things with it. If you have been told that you are worthless, or incapable of succeeding in life, then you need to choose to discard that and believe in yourself. The disciples had Jesus to encourage them; you need to make sure that there are people around you that are honest and encouraging. Listen to those things and allow them to spur you on to greatness.
11. Sometimes life throws distractions at all of us. Some of us choose to ignore them and carry on, but others are so distracted by people, events, worries and the like that those things stop them being effective and focusing on the present. Try and stay focused on the present and the future, and don't allow things from the past to stop you from achieving now.

Time for reflection

Ask the students to look at the Jenga blocks.

Which stack is more like your life at the moment - the one where the builder could see what they were doing, or the other one?

Reflect for a moment on the areas of your life where you feel you aren't any good.
Where do those feelings come from?

Think about where you would like your life to be heading.

Now think of one thing that you can do to get to that place that you have just thought about.

Make a mental note of your one thing - and then decide to do it!

Prayer

Lord God,
Help me to see my own potential,
rather than the potential that I've had crushed.



Help me to aim for the place I would like my life to go towards
and start out on that journey.
Amen.