

Session 1 – The Ascended Jesus

LEADER'S NOTES

Before you Start...

This course is intended to require minimum preparation. Before you start all you need to do is:

- *Set out the room or space and provide tea and coffee*
- *Have a means of playing the video talk. It's on the Diocesan website or on the Fruitful app. Or you can just read it out.*
- *Decide which hymn or song you want to use. You can either play it, read it or the group can sing it.*

Gathering (5 mins)

Invite the group members to introduce themselves. As well as a name ask them to say a bit about themselves. For a group who know each other well, one idea is to ask, 'Tell us something about yourself that the rest of the group may now know. You might also ask what people hope to gain from the course.'

Prayer (3 mins)

Leave a short time of silence for people to gather their thoughts and then open with this or another prayer:

Heavenly Father,
you reveal yourself to us in your Son Jesus Christ.
We thank you for this precious time of prayer and study.
As we attend to your Word and listen to each other,
help us to learn more about your Son Jesus
and come to a deeper understanding of his saving work
Above all help us to know him for ourselves,
to love him,
to trust him,
and to offer him our hearts.
For you live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit.
One god For ever and ever.
Amen.

Introduction (2 mins)

Introduce the session in these or other words.

This course is going to help us to do two things.

First it will help us to know *about* Jesus. We will seek to understand more about who he is, what he has come to do and how he sets us free.

Second it will help us to *know* Jesus. We will explore what it means to be in a deeper relationship with him and to offer our whole lives to him

This week our theme is the Ascended Jesus. Each week we will answer these two questions by focusing our attention on a passage from the Acts of the Apostles.

Bible Study (10 mins)

This week's passage is from Acts Chapter 1 verses 6 to 11. It is set in the city of Jerusalem and records what happens forty days after Jesus rose from the dead and tells the story of the Ascension.

Read the passage slowly and clearly.

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

Ask the following questions or others as you see fit:

- How do you think the apostles felt as they saw Jesus ascending into heaven?
- What do you think the angels ask, 'Why do you stand looking up towards heaven?'
- Do you often think about the Ascension of Jesus? How important is it in your own faith? Be honest!

Video (15 mins)

Now watch the video. It can be seen on the Diocesan Website or on the Fruitful app.

The text of the talk is also on the Fruitful app if you are struggling with the technology.

Discussion – Reflecting on the Talk (25 mins)

These questions are intended to prompt conversation. You don't need to use all of them and you may have better questions that you think of yourself. Just go with the flow of the conversation and pick out the questions you most like.

- What struck you in that talk? Did anything challenge you?
- How would you explain the Incarnation and the Ascension to an intelligent child?
- How does it change the way you live today to know that Jesus has prepared a place for you in his Father's House?
- How easy do you find it to speak the name Jesus in daily conversation? What stops you?
- How well do you feel you know Jesus Christ? Is your relationship with him a head one, a heart one or a bit of both?
- What would help you to grow closer to Jesus Christ?

Hymn or Song (10 mins)

If you have the technology, you might like to play the following hymn. Larger groups may want to sing it. Invite people to listen carefully to the words.

*The song this week is **How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds**.*

There is a beautiful contemporary version by [Chris Bowater here](#).

Or a traditional version [here](#).

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrow, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary, rest.

Dear Name, the rock on which I build,
My shield and hiding place,
My never failing treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace!

Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my life, my way, my end,
Accept the praise I bring.

Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought;
But when I see Thee as Thou art,
I'll praise Thee as I ought.

'Til then I would Thy love proclaim
With every fleeting breath,
And may the music of Thy name
Refresh my soul in death.

After listening to the hymns, ask people to pick out a word or a phrase that spoke to them about who Jesus is.

Prayer (10 mins)

Close with a time of prayer.

- *You can devise your own. If you are in the Diocese of Blackburn, try and incorporate the Diocesan Centenary Prayer which is below.*
- *A daytime group could end with Prayer during the Day which can be found [here](#).*
- *An evening group could end with Compline which is printed below:*

Preparation

The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.
Amen.

Our help is in the name of the Lord
who made heaven and earth.

*A period of silence for reflection on the past day may follow.
The following or other suitable words of penitence may be used*

**Most merciful God,
we confess to you,
before the whole company of heaven and one another,
that we have sinned in thought, word and deed**

**and in what we have failed to do.
Forgive us our sins,
heal us by your Spirit
and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.**

O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

The Word of God

Psalmody

One of the following psalms may be used.

Psalm 4

- 1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness;
you set me at liberty when I was in trouble;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
- 2 How long will you nobles dishonour my glory;
how long will you love vain things and seek after falsehood?
- 3 But know that the Lord has shown me his marvellous kindness;
when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.
- 4 Stand in awe, and sin not;
commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.
- 5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness
and put your trust in the Lord.
- 6 There are many that say, 'Who will show us any good?'
Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us.
- 7 You have put gladness in my heart,
more than when their corn and wine and oil increase.
- 8 In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for it is you Lord, only, who make me dwell in safety.

Psalm 91 verses 1-7

- 1 Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
and abides under the shadow of the Almighty,
- 2 Shall say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my stronghold,
my God, in whom I put my trust.'
- 3 For he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence.
- 4 He shall cover you with his wings
and you shall be safe under his feathers;
his faithfulness shall be your shield and buckler.
- 5 You shall not be afraid of any terror by night,
nor of the arrow that flies by day;
- 6 Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
nor of the sickness that destroys at noonday.
- 7 Though a thousand fall at your side
and ten thousand at your right hand,
yet it shall not come near you.

Psalm 134

- 1 Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, ♦
you that by night stand in the house of the Lord.
- 2 Lift up your hands towards the sanctuary ♦
and bless the Lord.
- 3 The Lord who made heaven and earth ♦
give you blessing out of Zion.

At the end of the psalmody, the following is said or sung

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Scripture Reading

When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

Acts 1, 9-11

Silence is kept

Responsory

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.
Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.
I commend my spirit.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.
Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Keep me as the apple of your eye.
Hide me under the shadow of your wings.

The Gospel Canticle

The Nunc dimittis (The Song of Simeon) is said

**All Save us, O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep may rest in peace.**

1 Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace:
your word has been fulfilled.

2 My own eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;

3 A light to reveal you to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel.

Luke 2.29-32

**All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now**

and shall be for ever. Amen.

**All Save us, O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep may rest in peace.**

The Prayers

Intercessions and thanksgivings may be offered here.

The Collect

Visit this place, O Lord, we pray,
and drive far from it the snares of the enemy;
may your holy angels dwell with us and guard us in peace,
and may your blessing be always upon us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Diocesan Centenary Prayer (for those in the Diocese of Blackburn)

Heavenly Father,
in our Centenary year
we rededicate ourselves and our Diocese to you.
Send the Holy Spirit to give us
confidence in our witness,
generosity in our service,
and love for our neighbours,
that your Church may be renewed
and many come home to you,
through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer ([here](#)) may be said.

The Conclusion

In peace we will lie down and sleep;
for you alone, Lord, make us dwell in safety.

Abide with us, Lord Jesus,
for the night is at hand and the day is now past.

As the night watch looks for the morning,



so do we look for you, O Christ.

The Lord bless us and watch over us;
the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us;
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace.

Amen.