

Read: Acts 11:1-11

Life Is Looking Up

Acts 11:9-11

After Jesus said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Linda and her 13-year-old daughter were upset at another teenager who said bad things about her daughter. So after school at a bus stop, the mom encouraged her daughter to go beat her up. "Hit her, hit her," she instructed her 13-year-old. "That's what you get for backstabbing your friend!" she yelled.

That's shocking to hear, isn't it? Does it make you shake your head in amazement and wonder, "What is our world coming to? Before we drop our heads into depressing thoughts, let's remember something worth celebrating. Because Jesus ascends into heaven, life is looking up! Life is looking up because he left and because Jesus is coming back.

Forty days after his resurrection on Easter Sunday, Jesus left earth. There's a part of us that wishes he would have stayed longer and never left. If Jesus would have stayed, he'd set straight that mom encouraging her daughter to be a bully. Think how much better life would be if Jesus lived next door to us! When we see the mess we make of our life, we wish, "Dear Jesus, why didn't you just stay with us? Why did you have to leave earth?"

"I left because I won and my work is finished, that's why!" Jesus answers. It's as simple as that. Jesus left because his work was done, and he didn't need to stay any longer. No more sacrificing. No more suffering, no more dying. Everything was exactly as God wanted: All your sin is forgiven, and heaven's door swings wide open. So Jesus left.

Now what do we do? To the sky-gazing disciples and our hurting hearts comes this comforting message delivered by two angels: "This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back." And with those words, life is looking up again because Jesus is coming back for us! He's come back for us to take us home. The more we look up, the more we long for that day when he will set on our heads the crown of life, eternal life.

As you look up to Jesus, look around at each other. For many people, life is not looking up—life is a confusing mess with no end in sight. You know some of them. So the last command he

gave us before he left earth was: “Be my witnesses.” Don’t ever stop reaching out to someone with the message of Jesus. Turn their eyes and hearts heavenward to Jesus. And when you do, it will cause their lives to look up as well!

There is one thing that can truly lift us up—it’s Jesus! With him, *life is looking up!*

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- The word “ascension” means to go up. Where did Jesus ascend to?
- Until Jesus returns to take us to heaven, what does he want to do?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why did Jesus ascend back up to heaven?
- Name two reasons why your life is looking up because Jesus ascended back up into heaven.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Share the biggest thing that’s got you a little down right now.
- Why is it so important to spend more time reading, thinking, singing, and praying about God’s goodness, *especially* when you are feeling down?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, we celebrate that you ascended back into heaven where you now live and rule. But don’t leave us alone. Send your Holy Spirit to help us finish the purpose for our lives and share your love. After that, take us to live with you forever and ever. Amen.