

Teen Devotion

Year A – Lent 5

Our Greatest Needs



One truth shared: Jesus gives you real life.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die."

John 11:25

Life

Have you ever wondered how people would remember you if you were gone? Kind of a morbid thought to be sure, but also something that seems to affect the way many people think and act. Athletes will put off retirement, perhaps longer than they should, in the hopes that they might be able to finish off their career with just one more championship. Presidents and other public figures build massive libraries to display their accomplishments long after they have left office. Even for people for whom death is statistically unlikely to occur in the near future, the impressions made on other people and what others think of you when you aren't around remain influential factors in life! For many, and perhaps for Christians too, it's tempting to find meaning and purpose in life based on what others think of us and how they remember us when we are gone.

Today's scripture reading gives us a different perspective on all of that. The scene is this: Jesus' good friend Lazarus died, and Jesus is comforting Lazarus' sisters Mary and Martha. The focus of the conversation has nothing to do with how people will remember Lazarus now that he is gone. Instead, Martha expresses her Christian faith that she will see her brother again in heaven but remains understandably devastated by his untimely death. Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die!" Death is sad and hard to deal with, but Jesus dealt with death in a way like no one else could—he overcame it! Because death comes from sin, and because Jesus paid the price for all sin on the cross, death could not hold him! And death cannot hold Jesus' followers either. He went on to raise his friend Lazarus from the dead, and he will do the same for you and your loved ones.

That reality grants a new perspective to God's children. Instead of worrying about what others think of us and how they might remember us if we aren't there and using such measures as a source of meaning and purpose in life, remember what Jesus' resurrection promises you! No matter what others may or may not think, Jesus values you so highly that he was willing to lay down his life for you! And then he took it up again, so that you too might live again after you die. You don't need to worry about how others will remember you, because you'll live again, and you'll be in heaven where the last concern possible on your mind is some hollow earthly monument that points back to a few human achievements. Your legacy and reputation aren't based on the value other people place on you—it's based on the price your Savior paid for you. Your legacy is this: child of God. Beyond that, nothing else matters!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, you valued me so much that you were willing to give up your own life! Thank you for your sacrifice and all you've done for me. Teach me look at my life as you do and help me use it to serve you in any way I can. Teach me to prioritize my relationship with you above all others. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

Year A – Lent 4

Our Greatest Needs

One truth shared: Jesus gives you real life.

Life

Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

- Outside of the Bible, who do you think was the most significant/important person in the history of the world? Why?
- If you were to die today, how would people remember you? How would you want people to remember you?
- Why do we care so much how people will remember us when we aren't even going to be here to see it anyway?
- *Point:* Humanly speaking, we value life based on what we accomplish, money we make, etc. That's what makes someone important. But what do all those significant people have in common? *They all died!*

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

- Can you think of times when people DIDN'T die? (*Enoch, Elijah*) How about when they "un-died"? (*Lazarus, widow at Nain's son, Shunammite's son, Jairus' daughter, Jesus*)
- What do these have in common? (*God was involved.*)

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Assign each of the following accounts. Then consider these two questions for each account: (1) Who was raised from the dead? (2) For what reason (or reasons) did God raise this particular person from the dead?
 - 1 Kings 17:17-24
 - 2 Kings 4:17-37
 - Luke 7:11-17
 - Luke 8:49-56
 - John 11:17-27, 38-45
- Why do you think God chose to raise these particular people from the dead? (*To demonstrate his power over death—first as the covenant God of the OT and then as the Messiah who fulfilled that covenant in the NT*)

- Why specifically does Jesus have power over death unlike anyone else? Try to find a deeper reason than “because he’s God.” (*Where does death come from? It’s the wages of sin. What was Jesus paying for on the cross? All sin. If all sin has been paid for, what does that say about death? It can’t last. If sin is truly paid for, Jesus MUST rise because death is no more!*)
- By appearances, it would seem as though Christmas is the most significant day of the Christian year. Others contend that Easter should be the most significant. What do you think, and why? (*It’s a matter of emphasis—they’re all connected, and you can’t have one without the other. But, without Easter, none of the rest matters anyway! Read 1 Corinthians 15 if you desire to pursue this line of thought farther.*)

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the “connecting question” above.*

Imagine talking to someone who has had a relative or friend die recently. What kinds of things would be comforting to remind them of? What kinds of things might be well-intended but not as comforting as planned? (*Reminders of the resurrection are comforting, but they don’t take away immediate sadness. Sadness is okay. Despair for the future is not and is only removed by the reality of Jesus’ resurrection.*)