

Teen Devotion

Year C – Proper 14

Focused



One truth shared: Focused living helps us to value heavenly treasures above all other things.

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 11:1-2, 13-16

Focused Living Properly Values Heavenly Treasure

Have you traveled to a different country before? It can be so exciting to visit new places—new sights and sounds, new food, new culture, and so much more! It's often very eye-opening and a wonderful learning experience to explore another country.

As fun as this can be, often when you travel—especially to places far away—you quickly realize that you don't belong there. You don't look or act like those people. The food is not what you prefer. The sleeping arrangements may be uncomfortable. Everything about this "other" place builds up over time to the point that you just want to scream, "I just want to be home!"

Funny example: Once I went on a mission trip to Africa with eight American teens. It was the trip of a lifetime and we had been looking forward to it for weeks. But after many hours of exhausting travel, arriving to accommodations that were not usual for Americans, and seeing a rather large wall spider, one young lady screamed, "I want to leave! I want to go home! Now!" We hadn't even been there 10 hours. These are the times we remember just how special "home" truly is.

Sometimes we get a little too used to the things of this world. We fall in love with the possessions, experiences, and desires of this world. But while there are many blessings of God to enjoy in this life, we have to realize that we don't belong here. This isn't really our home. When we forget this, sometimes God allows reminders in our lives. Suffering, sickness, problems, and persecution will quickly remind us that we need God and we need something better, or rather, some *place* better that doesn't have any of these problems.

Thanks be to God that he has given us just that. We have a different home, a citizenship in a better country. Jesus' life and death for us gives us full and free citizenship in God's city. We have the sure and certain hope of living in an eternal home with God in heaven.

In Hebrews 11, the great Heroes of Faith chapter of the Bible, we are reminded of how many believers of the past had the proper focus. Instead of worrying about all the troubles and problems of life in this world, "they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one." That home with their Savior was their ultimate goal. It's not that nothing else mattered, it just didn't matter as much as being with God in heaven.

So too for us. Enjoy your journey through this life. There is much to see, do, and experience! There are many blessings of God to enjoy, and it is a good gift of God to enjoy them. Yet all the while, remember what the famous hymn says, "I'm but a stranger here, *heaven* is my home!"

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for the pastors you have given to me. They aren't perfect, but they are from you. Help me to honor them as I honor you. Through them, help me to lean on you. Amen.

Foundations Teen Facilitators Guide

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***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.*

- What is the furthest you have traveled away from home? What was that experience like?
- Have you ever been homesick before, or do you know someone who has?

***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.*

- Why is it such a challenging temptation from Satan when he tries to convince us that this life is most important?
- What is Satan trying to accomplish with this temptation?

***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.*

- Agree/Disagree: Heaven is what really matters, so Christians shouldn't care about worldly things. Explain your answer.
- What are times in life when it's easy to forget that heaven is our home, and what are times in life when it's easy to remember that heaven is our home?
- We pray about having a proper worldly focus all the time in the Lord's Prayer when we pray, "Deliver us from evil." Explain.

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

What is the one thing you are looking forward to the most in heaven?