



TRANSFORMED

DEVOTIONS CONNECTING TEENS TO CHRIST

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8,9

Higher thinking

Are you still bringing a teddy bear to school?

“Uh...no? How old do you think I am?” You might be thinking. “I wouldn’t be caught dead bringing a teddy bear to school!”

Well, why not?

Teddy bears, in basic psychology, are often referred to as *comfort objects*. As small children grow, they discover they are extremely small and dependent. This smallness and dependence can cause major stress and anxiety—especially when the child’s parents are away for any given point of time. So to cope, children ascribe characteristics of their parents (that is, protection, warmth, love) to comfort objects—such as a security blanket or a stuffed animal. When the parents feel distant and that feeling of dependence arrives, kids cling to their comfort objects for dear life. They will *not* let go.

So, are you still bringing a teddy bear to school?

As a teenager, you might think deriving comfort from a teddy bear is completely ridiculous. But is that anymore ridiculous than deriving your self-esteem from how many ‘Likes’ your latest profile picture got?

“Well, that’s different.”

Is it really?

Is that anymore different than defining your self-worth by how many ‘Followers’ you have on TikTok? Is that anymore different than defining ourselves by how well you can work an Xbox controller? Is that any different than infinitely scrolling through Instagram and envying the photoshopped lives of *other* people?

But those aren’t the only comfort objects in our lives.

We hold on to grudges—when we, in Christ, have every reason to reconcile with one another. We hold on to bad company—at expense of our physical and even spiritual well-being. We hold on to constant bitterness and nonstop complaining—when we, in Christ, have every reason and then some to be joyful. We hang on to our shame and guilt—when, in Christ, our sins were taken away and are remembered no more.



Higher thinking - continued

Suddenly, it seems naïve to think clinging to teddy bears is beyond *any* of us.

Here's some higher thinking for you: you already have the greatest comfort object in the world: Jesus.

To a world that would cling to trash for life, God the Father sent his Son to this fallen world to give us life! To a world that was held captive by sin, death, and hell, our Savior lived a blameless life in our place and sacrificed himself on a cross so *we* would be set free! That is the *same* God who holds you through the bad days at school, who holds you through the bullying, who holds you in every heartbreak, who holds you when you're afraid, who holds you when you're too weak to stand. After all, he's the God whose love for you held him on the cross—so he could hold you in his arms in heaven with him forever.

So, fix your eyes heavenward. Let go of the "teddy bears" and hold on to what's truly good—specifically, the highest good and most important: your Savior Jesus. Cling to his Word—his divinely-inspired love letter to you. Cling to every promise your God has personally made you in his Word. Hold on to the joy we have in sins forgiven. Hold on to the hope we have in Jesus' empty tomb. Hold on to the unassailable identity you have in Christ as God's dearly loved child.

There is no higher comfort outside of Jesus. So, hang on to your Savior. He's hanging on to you!

Prayer: Dear Jesus, there is so much in my life that seeks to steal my attention away from you. When I'm tempted to look to other things to derive self-worth, direct my eyes to you. No one loves me more than you—and you proved that by dying for me on cross. Move me to live for you as you lived for me. Amen.