

Read: John 3:14-21

Moses, Jesus, and You

John 3:14-16

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

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

Earlier this week, there was a devotion from Numbers 21 entitled, “A Promise of Life in Death.” It was a story about poisonous snakes and how God rescued his people. He told Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole.” Whoever looked at it in faith was healed.

Jesus points back to that event in our opening verse: “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.” The picture is the same, and the point of comparison is the same: God made a promise; faith trusts that promise. God used an image of death (the snake on a pole) to give life to his Old Testament people; God used the death of Christ on the cross to give life to all believers.

God’s promise here is certain and sure. Everyone who looked at the bronze snake was healed from their snakebite; everyone who looks to Jesus in faith is saved from eternal death. There’s no wondering, no worrying, no conditions or contingencies. God made a promise, and he is serious about keeping that promise.

But here’s something else; we see that God hides his glory in everyday ways. God hides his glory so that he can be near his people and heal them. On the cross, Christ hides his glory so that he can suffer and die; Christ concealed his glory so that his promise of life would be yours, exactly as he said: “Just as Moses lifted the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up—so that everyone who believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

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

- When was Jesus lifted up?
- How do we “look to Jesus” the way that Old Testament believers looked to the bronze snake?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- How did the bronze snake foreshadow Jesus dying on the cross?
- Why does God use images that are simple and clear to tell us about our salvation?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Respond. Someone says, “It doesn’t make sense that God would use the death of Jesus to give life to us.”
- Name another tool God uses to create or strengthen faith, where God hides his power in plain sight. (*Hint: The water of baptism or the elements of the Lord’s Supper.*)

Closing Prayer:

Lamb of God, pure and holy, who on the cross did suffer,
ever patient and lowly, yourself to scorn did offer.
All sin you carried for us, else had despair reigned o'er us:
have mercy on us, O Jesus! O Jesus! Amen.
(*Christian Worship* 947:1)