

God's Promise in Focus

Colossians 3:1-2

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

“3! . . . 2! . . . 1! Happy New Year!” For those few seconds each year, thousands of people are gathered in Times Square in New York City with their eyes fixated on that famous dropping ball. All the problems of life, their sore legs from standing all day, their frozen toes and fingers—none of that matters as their attention is completely focused above in those moments. At the same time, millions of people around the world are glued to their TV screens as they also join in the countdown.

There is so much to look forward to in those last moments of December—a new year, new resolutions to do things different, hopes for what that future year might bring. It's no wonder that the hearts and minds of many are focused on that ball dropping in the sky each year.

However, how quickly people lose focus! Very soon the excitement of the year disappears, new resolutions and promises are broken, and all the regular distractions of life take our focus off those few special moments.

So often, that's true with our faith as well. How distracted have you been lately? Does your busy schedule have you running all over the place for meetings, errands, games, and events? Are you overwhelmed by how much work or schoolwork you have? Have certain temptations been grabbing your attention? Maybe you feel like your heart and mind have been in the wrong places lately, as if you have lost your focus.

Today we have great encouragement from the apostle Paul. Jesus is no longer dead! He's alive! And by faith in him, you are connected to that resurrection victory. You are no longer spiritually dead in your sins. You have been raised along with Jesus, and you will rise to life forever in heaven. What incredible news! You have a new life of faith to live now and you have the sure and certain hope of what's coming in the future.

So instead of getting caught up in all the “things” of this life that disappear and disappoint, set your hearts and minds on things above—on the heavenly life that awaits you. Make that life the center of your attention. Like the thousands of people gazing into the New York sky to see the New Year's ball dropping, so we can fix our attention on heaven. And one day, though there will not be an official countdown, Jesus himself will come down from the skies to take us to be with him eternally. What a moment that will be! Thanks be to God!

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

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 Younger Children

- Why do we want to put Jesus as #1 in our hearts?
- Why do we want to tell others about what Jesus has done? Do you know anyone that needs to know about Jesus?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What things sometimes distract you from focusing your heart on Jesus?
- What is the danger of becoming too obsessed with worldly things?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- If you are younger in age, what worldly things do you think Satan will use to lure you away from Jesus as you get older? If you are older, what things has Satan used to lure you away in the past?
- What are specific ways in your life that you can live out these verses? How can you specifically set your heart and mind on things above?

Closing Prayer:

Risen Lord, help me to focus my heart and mind on the victory you won for me. Keep my hope fixed always on heavenly things. Amen.

Hymn: CW #152 – I Know that My Redeemer Lives

1. I know that my Redeemer lives;
What comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my ever-living Head!
7. He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death.
He lives my mansion to prepare;
He lives to bring me safely there.

8. He lives, all glory to his name!
He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:
“I know that my Redeemer lives!”