

MIDDLE SCHOOL IDENTITY IN CHRIST

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UNITE
I AM CALLED

JESUS FOLLOWERS EMBRACE SURRENDER

SERIES:
GOD IS KING —
I AM A DISCIPLE



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UNITE: I AM CALLED

The Unite Year is an exploration of what it means to be united in Christ as the family of God (Romans 12:5). When we are saved, we are given a spirit of adoption as sons (Romans 8:15-16), are made a child of God, and we are also saved into a family- the Church. The Unite Year explores how we are to live as a part of a family, and to live in light of our calling as servants and disciples of Christ. We use our gifts to build up the church as we pursue unity, humility, and gentleness with our brothers and sisters in Christ (Ephesians 4:1-2).

BIG TRUTH: JESUS FOLLOWERS EMBRACE SURRENDER**BIBLE VERSE: MARK 8:34**

“And calling the crowd to Him with His disciples, He said to them, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”

BIG IDEAS

- Following Jesus means denying self.
- Following Jesus means accepting suffering.
- Following Jesus means making Him our model.

BIBLE PASSAGE: MARK 8:27-38**SERIES AIMS****[KNOW] Every student should know that...**

- Jesus is the One True King
- Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen
- There is a cost to following Jesus

[DO] Every student should strive to...

- Examine their own heart and repent of how they have followed false saviors
- Pray regularly asking the Lord to grow their faith in Him
- Endure through discouragement and difficult circumstances

[FEEL] Every student should feel...

- Confident in the steadfastness of the Lord
- Grateful for the cloud of witnesses that we have as a model for faithfully following Christ
- Grounded in Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith

[WANT] Every student should desire to...

- Devote themselves to pursuing holiness
- Suffer well for the glory of God
- Use their lives to point others to a better Savior, King, and treasure

STUDENT WORKOUT OVERVIEW:

Followers of Christ live surrendered lives. This week we will ponder what it looks like to live a surrendered life. We will pray for awareness of ways we aren't surrendering, and we will practice living a surrendered life.

FAMILY WORKOUT OVERVIEW:

Jesus followers die to themselves daily. This week we will consider how to discuss with our son or daughter what it a surrendered life looks like. We will pray with them to have hearts willing to take up their cross daily and we will lead them to practice dying to themselves every day.

Help families explore the Big Truth by encouraging students and parents to utilize this week's Workouts at www.tcbchurch.org/msfdp

BIBLE VERSE: MARK 8:34

“And calling the crowd to Him with His disciples, He said to them, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”

Believers must deny their sin natures.

“...If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself...”

- The first step in surrendering our lives to Jesus is to recognize that we are sinners and have a sin nature that we cannot overcome. Once we acknowledge this, we must repent, or turn away from our old way of life. This means we pursue holiness and being like Jesus rather than being led by our sin nature.
- Denying our sin natures is a step in denying ourselves. Anyone who wants to follow Jesus must deny themselves and the first step in that is putting to death what is earthly in us and choosing to obey God instead of our fleshly desires.

Believers must take up their cross daily.

“...If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross...”

- When we follow Jesus, we turn away from our sin nature and choose obedience to God’s Word. We also must take up our cross every day. Taking up our cross is a picture of the death of our old, sinful selves. It’s a picture of our daily denial of the desires of our flesh.
- Jesus died for our sins on a cross. He took up the cross and took on our sin, though He was holy and blameless. If we are to follow Him, then we must follow Him in walking in victory over our sin nature by daily dying to and fleeing from the desires of our flesh nature.

Believers must follow after Jesus.

“...If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

- Following Jesus isn’t just a prayer asking for forgiveness. It isn’t just a turning away from our sin nature. It is those things and an active pursuit of Jesus. Believers must actively pursue Jesus and do so every day.
- Denying the desires of our flesh and taking up our cross daily are the first two steps in following Jesus. The next step is intentionally and actively pursuing Jesus every day. In order to truly know Jesus and become like Him, we must follow after Him.

BIG IDEA #1: FOLLOWING JESUS MEANS DENYING SELF.¹**[THIS]**

In Mark 8:27-30, Jesus asks His followers a simple question: Who do they think He is? Peter answers this question by declaring that Jesus is the Christ, which means He is the Savior. The way we answer this question reveals the condition of our hearts. Everyone has to answer this question because we are all faced with our eternity. In order to be a follower of Jesus, we must first acknowledge that He is the Savior. Acknowledging He is the Savior is a recognition of our own sinfulness and our need of salvation. Jesus asked this question first to lead His followers to understand what it really means to follow Him. In order for a person to follow Jesus, he or she must acknowledge that Jesus is the one true Savior. He alone is able to forgive sins and He alone is worthy of our devotion and sacrifice. If we want to follow after Jesus, we must make this first step and turn away from our sinful desires.

[THEREFORE]**Who do you say that Jesus is?**

The writer of Hebrews describes Jesus as the radiance of the glory of God in Hebrews 1:3. Jesus is God. He is divine and one of the three persons of God. He is the Son of God and our Savior as Acts 4:12 and John 5:18 show us. How we identify Jesus reveals what we believe about Him.

How does your life reveal that you believe Jesus is the Christ?

We stand out in the world because we live in obedience to God's Word and not to the world's standards. Colossians 1:20-22 and Galatians 2:20 teach this truth. Knowing Jesus means acknowledging He is the Savior and living for Him. Our lives will be different because our sin natures are crucified, and we are set free to live for God.

[THIS]

In Mark 8:31-34, Jesus explained to His followers the life of surrender they must live. In order to be fully surrendered to Jesus, a believer must deny himself or herself. It is impossible to cling to our earthly lives and follow Jesus, too. In Mark 8:35, Jesus taught that His people would have to deny themselves and give up their lives in order to follow Him. It is our rejection of our old selves and an embracing of the new life that we have in Jesus. Denying ourselves involves choosing God's plans and purposes no matter what. It means delighting ourselves in Him and aligning our hearts with His heart. In order to really follow Jesus, we must live as the crucified people we are.

[THEREFORE]**What attitudes or wrong ideas keep you from daily denying yourself in order to follow Jesus?**

Sometimes, if not often, we can wrongly think that following Jesus involves losing all the things we love. This isn't the case when we truly acknowledge Jesus as Savior and die to our flesh natures. 1 John 1:15 and 2 Timothy 3:1-2 also show us that a love of our self and the things of this world can keep us from living for Jesus every day. We must put to death these things in our hearts and lives and pursue Christ every day.

What are some things that you need to deny in order to more fully follow Jesus?

Romans 6:6 reminds us that if we are in Christ, we have been crucified with Him. This means we must put to death what is earthly in us and put on Christlikeness as Colossians 3:5 teaches us. Anything we love more than Christ or anything we worship other than Him we must deny in order to follow Him.

1. Matthew 16:24: To follow Jesus is to die to self and to seek after Him.

BIG IDEA #2: FOLLOWING JESUS MEANS ACCEPTING SUFFERING.²**[THIS]**

In Mark 8:31-33, Jesus foretold of the suffering He would endure on the cross. Peter found this truth hard to accept, yet Jesus corrected Peter and in doing so taught a truth about the suffering that we all must accept as part of following Jesus. Surrendering our lives to Jesus means joining Him in suffering. Jesus suffered many, many things while on earth. He emptied Himself and willingly endured difficult and terrible things for our sake. Following Jesus means we, too, will suffer. Our suffering involves giving up our pleasure and comfort. It means experiencing some of the same things that Jesus did for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus was rejected, abused, beaten, and falsely accused. We, too, must endure the same things in order to truly follow Jesus.

[THEREFORE]**Read Matthew 16:21. Why was what Peter said such a big deal?**

When Peter rebuked Jesus for saying that He was going to suffer, Jesus called Peter Satan. Jesus' statement revealed that Peter's focus wasn't on God, but on man. Peter wasn't thinking about the things of God. When we focus on the things of man, we get our perspective on suffering wrong.

What does it mean to suffer like Jesus in our world today?

1 Peter 4:1 teaches us that we must arm ourselves for suffering in our flesh. To suffer like Jesus today doesn't look like it did when Jesus' disciples were living. Suffering like Jesus means feeling the rejection of the world and being willing to stand apart and to stand up for the truth.

[THIS]

It can be easier to acknowledge that following Jesus involves suffering, but much harder to actually suffer for Him. When we enter into actual suffering it becomes harder to do it. When we lose people and things we love, we can find it more difficult to accept our lot in life. Jesus tells His followers to count the cost of following Him because suffering is a part of pursuing Jesus. Accepting suffering is part of counting that cost. If we are to follow Jesus, then we will have to be willing to suffer. We will boldly share the gospel because we will not fear the consequence of sharing it. Our security will not be found in this world or anyone in it. Instead, our security will be in Jesus and this will help us suffer well like Him and for Him.

[THEREFORE]**What are some fears you have about suffering for or like Jesus?**

In Matthew 10:28, Jesus teaches that His followers should not fear other people, or the people who can kill us. Instead, we should fear God and God alone. When we fear man, it can paralyze us and keep us from living for Jesus. When we do not fear man, we can live fully surrendered to Jesus. We may even fear losing our pleasures and comforts, but we must remind ourselves that this world is not our home, eternity is.

How can you better accept suffering as part of following Jesus?

Hebrews 11:13-16 helps us understand what a life surrendered to God and accepting of suffering looks like. The people in Hebrews 11 did not consider this life their real home. Instead, they looked forward to their eternal home. When we place our focus and our hope in our eternity, we can accept the suffering that comes to us in this life because we know it is not forever and the glory we will experience in eternity far outweighs it.

2. Mark 8:31-33: Suffering is a part of following Jesus. If we are going to follow Him, then we will suffer for His sake.

BIG IDEA #3: FOLLOWING JESUS MEANS MAKING HIM OUR MODEL.³**[THIS]**

Mark 8:27-38 helps us understand what it really means to follow Jesus. We cannot live a life of quiet Christianity that refuses to stand boldly for Jesus and really follow Him. In Mark 8:38, Jesus warns that whoever is ashamed of Him in this life won't really know Him in eternity. When Jesus came to the earth, He lived boldly and sacrificially. He was not ashamed to die for sinners. He was not ashamed or afraid to suffer or obey God above man. He suffered much ridicule for our sakes. He chose obedience over all other things. He set aside His own comforts in order to fulfill His purpose on earth. He is our example and model of full surrender. He is the One we look to as we seek to glorify God in every way.

[THEREFORE]**What other models do you mistakenly look to instead of looking to Jesus?**

Romans 12:1-2 and Colossians 2:8 show us that we should not look to anything or anyone in this world as our example of how to live for Christ. We can often look toward other people whom we admire or like. We can get caught up in cultural trends or thoughts instead of keeping our eyes on Jesus as our example. Even when we imitate Christian leaders, we are really imitating Christ in them and not them personally as 1 Corinthians 11:1 shows us.

[THIS]

In order to fulfill our purpose of glorifying God, we must be like Jesus. Jesus lived the perfect life on earth that we could not and it is only by following His pattern of life that we can really please God. When faced with great temptations, He chose obedience. When faced with great trials, He chose perseverance and grace. He is our great example and it is only by putting Him before us as our model that we can grow each day more like Him. In every situation and circumstance, we can look to Jesus and learn how to navigate it for the glory of God. We can know how to respond to every person and in every situation by studying and learning how Jesus responded while on earth and His commands in Scripture. When we endeavor to follow Him, we can trust that He has gone before us and paved the way for us to obey in every situation. We need only keep our eyes on Him in full surrender.

[THEREFORE]**What distracts you from keeping your eyes on Jesus every day?**

Isaiah 40:31 helps us combat our emotion of fear that distract us from keeping our eyes on Jesus. Often, we keep our eyes on our circumstances and situations instead of looking to Jesus. No matter our situation, Jesus does not change and we can trust in Him.

How does the truth that Jesus is our model bring you comfort?

Hebrews 12:2 and 4:14-16 show us that we can live bold lives fully surrendered to God because of Jesus. Jesus came to the earth and lived the perfect life we could never live. He has experienced the trials and temptations that we all face and He did so without sin. We can find comfort in looking to Jesus who is the same and never changes. We can model our lives after His and know that we will please God if we do so.

3. 1 Peter 2:21: *Just as Jesus suffered, His people will suffer.*