

MIDDLE SCHOOL IDENTITY IN CHRIST

4

UNITE
I AM CALLED

JESUS FOLLOWERS ARE LIVING PICTURES OF THE GOSPEL

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 ARE LIVING PICTURES OF THE GOSPEL

BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 20:24

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

BIG IDEAS

- Our confidence points others to a better Savior.
- Our obedience points others to a better King.
- Our suffering points others to a better treasure.

BIBLE PASSAGE: EZEKIEL 2:1-10; 4:1-17; 24:15-24

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:

Jesus' followers are a reflection of the gospel to the world. This week we will ponder what it means to point others to Jesus. We will pray for hearts that desire to reflect Jesus to the world and we will practice living in a way that points others to Jesus.

FAMILY WORKOUT OVERVIEW:

Jesus' people point others to Him. This week we will ponder how to discuss with our son or daughter what it looks like to point others to Jesus. We will pray with them to desire to point others to the Gospel and we will lead them to practice being a reflection of Jesus.

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BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 20:24

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

Jesus followers do not live for themselves.

“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself...”

- The world tempts us to think only of ourselves and what will make us most happy. We are told to seek our best life and to do whatever we need to in order to ensure our own happiness. This is not what the Bible teaches. This statement from the apostle Paul tells us that our lives are not valuable or precious to us unless we are living for something greater than ourselves.
- When God called the apostle Paul, everything in his life changed to be oriented around Christ. Likewise, when God calls us, we no longer live for ourselves.

Jesus followers live to reflect the faithfulness of God.

“...if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus...”

- Paul counted his life as meaningless if he was not living faithfully to the course and the ministry that God had set before him. God is faithful to us, and this is shown in the gospel. As Paul did, we are to be faithful because God is faithful.
- The course and ministry that we are given will look differently from that of Paul, but our goal is the same. We must seek to endure and to pursue living faithfully not for ourselves, but for God.

Jesus followers live to be a picture of the Gospel to unbelievers.

“...to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

- Paul understood that he did not exist for others to look at, respect, or admire him. His life served to point others to God by being a witness to the gospel of grace that had changed His life.
- Believers today reflect the Gospel to the world by living faithfully and loving people as God loves them. As our hearts grow in understanding our own salvation, we will also grow in telling others about the saving power of Jesus Christ. We will live in a way that points others to Jesus and to His grace.

JESUS FOLLOWERS ARE LIVING PICTURES OF THE GOSPEL

BIG IDEA #1: OUR CONFIDENCE POINTS OTHERS TO A BETTER SAVIOR.¹

[THIS]

Ezekiel lived during the exile of Jerusalem to Babylon. He was a prophet, or messenger of God during this time. He spoke God's words to God's people. Ezekiel was called by God to be used for His purposes to point His people to Himself. Ezekiel obeyed God with confidence because he trusted and believed in God fully. Ezekiel's life was lived for God. He did many things that were difficult and hard because of his confidence in God. Ezekiel's confidence was rooted in his love for and trust in the one true God. The Israelites had forgotten the one true God and turned their hearts to idol worship. God used Ezekiel to point them back to Himself and to show them that He is the better Savior. The world places its confidence in empty things that are temporal and can offer them no hope. Biblical confidence is in the Lord who is eternal and more powerful than anything else.

[THEREFORE]

What happens when we turn our hearts away from God towards other things?

Throughout Scripture, God's people are told to put away idols. Today, we can turn our hearts from God and look toward earthly things to save us. 1 Corinthians 10:14 reminds us to put these idols away. When we trust in idols, we will lose our confidence and even point others to hope in the wrong things.

[THIS]

As Jesus followers we have confidence in the one true God. We believe and trust that Jesus is our Savior. In order to be a follower of Jesus, we must believe He is the only Savior. Our lives should reflect this truth. We should live in a way that shows others that Jesus is the better Savior. When we live confidently in the salvation we have received because of the Spirit inside of us, we will show others who God really is. The world places its trust in false saviors. The world trusts in the power of man and doesn't trust in God. This leads to anxiety and insecurity because man is not all-knowing or all-powerful. We can only truly trust and have confidence in God.

[THEREFORE]

What does it mean to be confident in the Lord?

Prior to our salvation, we are enemies of God, but when we are redeemed, we are at peace with God as Romans 5:1 shows us. We can live confidently in God because we know that we are at peace with God and no longer under His wrath. We can also have the confidence that we have access to Him as Hebrews 4:16 reminds us. We are His and are no longer separated from Him because of Jesus. This confidence can help us point others to the hope that is Jesus.

How can you live in a way that shows others you know Jesus is the better Savior?

Because God is all-powerful, we can live without fear in this life. Proverbs 14:26 helps us understand that when we have a right view of God and serve Him, we have no reason to be fearful of disappointing others or losing friendships. We can live in confidence for Him. In doing this, we point others to Him. They see our lives and our confidence in the face of all things, and they know that our source of power is greater than ourselves. Romans 15:13 also tells us that people can know Jesus is the better Savior by the hope we have in all circumstances. When we hope in all things, we show others that Jesus is the better Savior.

1. 1 John 4:14: God's people testify that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

BIG IDEA #2: OUR OBEDIENCE POINTS OTHERS TO A BETTER KING.²**[THIS]**

In Ezekiel 2, the prophet is called into God's service. Ezekiel was given specific instructions from God about how he should live and how he should serve Him. Ezekiel believed God and trusted Him. He lived in obedience to God, obeying in every way no matter how hard or difficult. Ezekiel suffered for his obedience to God. His obedience revealed his faith in God and God's power at work in Him. Ezekiel's obedience pointed others to the one true King. His life showed others there is a better King who is worthy of all worship, honor, and praise. Ezekiel set aside his own life, his desires, and comforts in order to obey God completely. This obedience shone a light upon the people's worship of false kings and highlighted that God is the only true King.

[THEREFORE]

What are some commands in Scripture that you can obey every day? Where are these found in the Bible?

Psalm 112:1 speaks of a delight in the commands of God. If we want to obey God daily, we have to know Him and love Him. God's Word is our source of wisdom and instructs us on how to obey Him. We can find these truths in the Psalms, Epistles, Gospels to name a few. All of Scripture is profitable.

Why does it matter that you live obediently every day?

How we live each day affects not only our own spiritual walk, but it impacts those around us. Ephesians 5:8, 1 Peter 2:9, and Matthew 5:16 remind us that we are chosen and set apart to bring God glory. It's important that we do this every day that we might point others to Jesus as the better Savior.

[THIS]

Our obedience to God holds great consequences for us and those around us. We show our love for God when we obey Him. We reveal that He is at work inside of us when we walk obediently to His commands. Ezekiel's obedience impacted the people around him. God commanded Ezekiel to be obedient even if no one listened to him. He commanded Ezekiel to tell others about Him and to do all the things God had commanded him to do. Ezekiel's obedience wasn't just so others could hear about God. It was about his being faithful to the one true Savior. Though our obedience serves as a light that shines on the truth of Jesus, we should obey just because God is worthy of our obedience. We are each called to radical obedience to God. When we obey, we grow in our relationship with Jesus. God uses our obedience and allegiance to Him to show people He is the one King. He is reflected to the world as the rightful King when we obey Him unconditionally.

[THEREFORE]

What temptations lead you to disobey God?

Proverbs 14:12 teaches us that we often trust in our own intellect and knowledge instead of obeying God. Often, when God asks something of us, we may overthink it or choose the seemingly easier way of living rather than obeying God. We may think that fitting in with our peers or joining in the cultural ideas of the world may seem like the better way, but only obeying God is the better way.

2. Revelations 15:3: *Jesus is the true King and He alone is worthy of all honor and praise.*

JESUS FOLLOWERS ARE LIVING PICTURES OF THE GOSPEL

BIG IDEA #3: OUR SUFFERING POINTS OTHERS TO A BETTER TREASURE.³

[THIS]

Jesus is the greatest treasure we could ever have. In Ezekiel 24:15-24, Ezekiel is told that his wife is going to die, yet Ezekiel is not to mourn or weep for his wife. His wife is his greatest treasure on earth, yet God is taking her from him. This seemingly harsh and unfeeling command teaches us a greater truth about Jesus. This life is a vapor, or a fleeting moment compared with eternity. Anything or anyone we love here on earth is nothing compared with the treasure of knowing Jesus. Jesus is the better treasure and He is greater than anything or anyone we could ever know. This hard truth is difficult to understand if we do not know Christ and if we are not pursuing Him daily. God asked a very hard thing of Ezekiel and God took Ezekiel's greatest treasure. All the while, Ezekiel still obeyed and followed God. Ezekiel's suffering did not keep him from trusting God and living in the truth that Jesus is the better treasure.

[THEREFORE]

What does it mean for something to be our treasure?

Matthew 6:21 implies that our treasure is linked to our hearts. What we love greatly is what we treasure. To treasure something is for it to have great value to us. Whatever we treasure stands above other things and has a place in our hearts above other things.

How does Ezekiel's obedience in suffering help you see Jesus is the greater treasure?

In Luke 12:23 and 1 Timothy 6:19 we see that Jesus is the greatest treasure. True life is more than anything we find in life on this earth. Seeing Ezekiel's obedience should help us live similarly to him. Ezekiel understood that Jesus is the better thing even more so than his own wife. When we live in this truth, we will point others to Jesus. Our lives will show that there is a better treasure than anything this world has to offer.

[THIS]

As Jesus followers we must learn to suffer well. If we are going to reflect Jesus to the world, we must seek to obey God and remain faithful even in great times of suffering. Though suffering can feel and seem callous and unloving, one of the greatest ways we learn who God is and how we can trust Him is through our own suffering. When we remain faithful and hopeful in our time of greatest trial, we show the world around us that Jesus is the better treasure and that God's power is real. This life offers hardship and heartache for us because it is broken and sinful. At times, God allows suffering in our own lives for His greater purposes. As we walk faithfully to Him no matter our circumstances, we will point others to Him.

[THEREFORE]

How have you walked faithfully through suffering in your own life?

James 1:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:58 encourage believers to remain faithful and steadfast in trial. As we remain steadfast in suffering, we will show others that God is real and His love is true. We will point others to the truth that there is no better treasure than knowing God and being known by Him.

Why are false treasures so dangerous in our lives?

Often, we mistake worldly things for true treasure. We fall prey to loving the things of the world more than we love Jesus. When troubles come, we are tempted to fall away and lose hope and faith. Romans 12:12 and Colossians 4:2 remind us to remain faithful because Jesus is truly the better treasure.

3. Matthew 13:44: Jesus is the greatest treasure and living for His kingdom is the greatest thing we can do.