

MIDDLE SCHOOL IDENTITY IN CHRIST

5

UNITE
I AM CALLED

JESUS FOLLOWERS ENDURE

SERIES:
GOD IS KING —
I AM A DISCIPLE



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Chief Contributor and Editor:
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SERIES: GOD IS KING - I AM A DISCIPLE
JESUS FOLLOWERS ENDURE**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 ENDURE**BIBLE VERSE: JEREMIAH 20:9**

"If I say, 'I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,' there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot."

BIG IDEAS

- Following Jesus is costly.
- Discouragement is a normal part of the Christian life.
- God's Spirit helps His children endure to the end.

BIBLE PASSAGE: JEREMIAH 20**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:

God's people must endure to the end. This week we will ponder what it means to endure for the glory of God. We will pray for hearts that overcome discouragement and we will practice relying upon the Spirit as our Helper.

FAMILY WORKOUT OVERVIEW:

Jesus followers endure this life for His glory. This week we will consider how to discuss with our son or daughter what it means to endure. We will pray for them to overcome discouragement and we will lead them to practice relying upon the Spirit to help them endure this life.

BIBLE VERSE: JEREMIAH 20:9

“If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.”

Endurance is a determination to keep going no matter our internal or external circumstances.

“If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.”

- Endurance is more than waiting for our circumstances to change or a trial to end. It requires a determination to keep going no matter what our circumstances. It requires us to resolve to carry on even when we do not feel like carrying on.
- Jeremiah faced difficult situations. He felt weary and wanted to quit, but he determined to endure. He endured to the end.

Believers overcome internal discouragement.

“...and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot,”

- Jeremiah experienced internal discouragement. He was ridiculed and mistreated for his faith in God. He faced all of these things and even expressed his discouragement to God, yet he overcame it and continued to tell others about God.
- Believers will face internal discouragement and they must overcome it with God’s Word and faith. Our discouragement won’t always be from outside circumstances, but from our own emotions. Our sin will lead us to rest in our discouragement and we’ll stop pursuing Christ because we are weary. Jeremiah didn’t do this.

Believers remain faithful during external hardship.

“If I say, ‘I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.”

- Jeremiah faced great hardship, yet he remained faithful to God. He was being beaten and ridiculed for speaking truth about God, yet He didn’t stop. He still chose to tell others the truth about God and to call them to repentance and faith in God.
- Believers will face persecution and ridicule for their faith. We will be ridiculed for believing in Jesus, yet we must persevere and overcome this hardship. We must endure it and tell others about Jesus.

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JESUS FOLLOWERS ENDURE

BIG IDEA #1: FOLLOWING JESUS IS COSTLY.¹

[THIS]

In Jeremiah 20, the prophet Jeremiah is persecuted for preaching God's truth. He is called to foretell impending judgement and is beaten and placed in stocks as a result. He suffers public humiliation and mistreatment because he is obedient to God. The Christian life comes with the promise of difficult times. Throughout the New Testament a common theme is the suffering of believers. Jeremiah experienced this suffering because he followed God. He was faithful and obedient to God and was persecuted for it. It cost Jeremiah to follow God and to be used by Him. Our salvation is a free gift from God, but our life-long commitment to Jesus will cost us greatly. The cost is our very lives. We must follow Jeremiah's example in obeying God no matter the potential consequence.

[THEREFORE]

Read Jeremiah 19:14-20:1-3. How does Jeremiah's persecution challenge you to endure?

Jeremiah endured public shaming in order to make much of God. He was beaten and publicly humiliated all because he was telling them that God's judgment was coming to them because of their disobedience. From Jeremiah's example, we can draw encouragement to endure through our challenging times. When we are made fun of or even just feel anxious about someone's response to the Gospel, we should be challenged to press forward and to remember that following Jesus is costly.

[THIS]

Following Jesus is costly to us. When Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, He challenged them to count the cost of giving their lives to Him. To follow Jesus we must die to ourselves in many ways. We cannot serve this world or follow our sinful hearts, and really follow Jesus. Choosing Jesus over the world will set us apart and lead us to tell others the truth about sinful man. People do not like to hear about their sinfulness. It often angers them and causes them to retaliate against the one speaking truth. We may never be beaten and thrown into stocks for our faith, but if we really follow Jesus, we will find ourselves losing friends, feeling alienated, and even being publicly shamed for our faith. Some Jesus followers will lose their lives and livelihoods to make Him known in the world. Regardless of the degree to which we suffer, following Jesus will cost us something. Believers gladly endure the loss of all worldly things that they might know Christ and make Him known in the world.

[THEREFORE]

How can enduring in the faith be challenging? What helps you endure?

Following Jesus requires a person to count the cost of being His disciple. As 1 Peter 3:14 shows us, we will suffer for Christ's sake and we must endure it. We will also endure the life of the disciple. This will require patience and longevity. Luke 14:25-33 shows us just what being a disciple of Jesus involves. Enduring life in this world set apart for Christ can be hard, but it is most definitely not impossible and it is for sure worth it!

What helps you endure during times of persecution for your faith?

Hope gives strength to our faith. Our hope is in Christ who is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. We grow in hope when we grow in our knowledge of Christ. God's Word can serve as a help in our times of persecution as Romans 15:4 reminds us. Romans 15:13 and Psalm 39:7 teach us that when we place our hope in God, we can endure anything. Nothing can dissuade us or lead us away from Him.

1. Luke 9:62: Everyone who wants to follow Jesus must count the cost and understand that it will be costly.

BIG IDEA #2: DISCOURAGEMENT IS A NORMAL PART OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.²

[THIS]

Jeremiah was a prophet used by God to speak God's truth. The people Jeremiah spoke God's truth to didn't want to hear it. Their hard hearts caused them to revile and reject Jeremiah. Jeremiah felt discouragement even though he was doing what God had called him to do. Following Jesus doesn't mean we will never feel discouragement. In Jeremiah 20:7-18, we read the persecuted prophet's words of lament. Jeremiah served the Lord; he spoke the words God told him to speak. He walked in obedience to God, yet he was persecuted for his faithfulness. This naturally causes our human hearts to be discouraged. Jeremiah's discouragement wasn't wrong because he kept his faith in God. He did not murmur against God or doubt God. He felt his feelings and turned his eyes upon God and His truth. Jeremiah faced discouragement, yet he overcame it with faith in the never-changing, always faithful God.

[THEREFORE]

What are some things that have caused you discouragement as you seek to follow Jesus?

Our circumstances and the actions of other people can produce discouragement in us. When we keep our eyes on these things, our discouragement can grow and fester. Scripture teaches us to keep our eyes on Jesus, to look to Him and His example as a way to overcome this world. Hebrews 12:2 and 1 Chronicles 16:11 remind us to turn our eyes to Jesus and we can overcome discouragement.

[THIS]

Following Jesus involves putting off the things of the world and putting on Christ. Becoming more like Christ means living a life that displays the fruit of the Spirit. If we are to be fully like Christ, we will suffer, too. Suffering can and will produce discouragement in us. We may not be beaten or placed in stocks like Jeremiah, but we will feel discouraged at the behavior and actions of others. Feeling discouraged in this world is a part of the Christian journey. Because the world is broken because of man's sin, we can expect to face difficulties and hardships. Living in this world will cause us to be discouraged, but we must persevere like Jeremiah did. We must put our hope in Christ and keep our eyes on Him. He is our example set before us.

[THEREFORE]

How do you naturally respond when you are discouraged? What is the biblical response to discouragement?

Often we try to navigate this world in our own power and our own wisdom. This leads us to constant discouragement and hopelessness. We may try the ways of the world in overcoming discouragement, such as thinking positive thoughts or doing something special for ourselves. The only true way to overcome discouragement is to live in the power of God. Ephesians 6:10 and 2 Timothy 1:7 remind us of this power and that nothing is impossible with God.

When can our discouragement lead to sin?

When we allow our discouragement to cause us to doubt God and complain against Him, we are sinning. We cannot allow our discouragement to lead us to believe untruths about God or to doubt His character. Philippians 2:14 and Ecclesiastes 7:10 remind us that grumbling and complaining are both sin and we must put those away. When we are discouraged, our only course of action is to turn to God and to praise Him.

2. Jeremiah 20:7: Jeremiah faced discouragement after he was beaten and placed in stocks. Discouragement is part of living for Christ.

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JESUS FOLLOWERS ENDURE

BIG IDEA #3: GOD'S SPIRIT HELPS HIS CHILDREN ENDURE TO THE END.³

[THIS]

In Jeremiah 20:11-13, Jeremiah finds help and comfort in the Lord. Though Jeremiah has faced a beating and public shame, the Lord is near to him. Jeremiah's public shame is very great. His friends turn away from him and he is left alone. Yet, he has the Lord to strengthen him and to comfort him. Jeremiah can endure and persevere through his difficult time because of the power of the Lord. God's Spirit helps His children endure this life. Jeremiah endured in the power of God's Spirit. Even when Jeremiah felt alone in this world, he was not alone. God's Spirit never left Jeremiah and He was always present to comfort him even when all others had abandoned him.

[THEREFORE]

Read Jeremiah 20:11-13. How do Jeremiah's words encourage you?

We can find encouragement from other believers. As we see other believers persevere and endure difficult times, we are encouraged to do the same. Jeremiah felt discouragement and wanted to give up, but God's Spirit encouraged him and helped him to continue living for God. We can find this same encouragement when we rely upon God's Spirit, too.

Why is it important to use God's Word to help us endure?

God's Word teaches us about Him and when we grow in our knowledge of Him, we grow in our faith. Romans 12:12 and 15:13 remind us that God fills us with hope and encouragement and He does this through His Word. His Word does not change with our circumstances, emotions, or opinions. It can always be trusted as a firm foundation.

[THIS]

God does not leave His children alone to suffer alone. He is near to those who suffer and are persecuted for His sake. He places His Spirit in every believer and helps His children live for Him in this world. His Spirit guides believers and helps them remember truth about God. As we remember what is true about God, we can endure the most difficult things. We can face hard things in this life because we have God's Spirit inside of us helping us and guiding us. When we live in the power of God by relying upon His Spirit, we can face our hardest times in victory. Just as Jeremiah endured with the Spirit's help, we can endure to the end of our time on this earth. We can finish our race well and remain steadfast through whatever we face in this life.

[THEREFORE]

What does it mean to endure to the end? How does the Holy Spirit help you endure?

Enduring until the end means remaining faithful to God. It means that from the moment you first believe that Jesus is your Savior to the moment you breathe your last breath, you are faithful to Him. Hebrews 12:1 gives us examples of people who endure life on this earth until the very end. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 helps us understand that it is our perspective that helps us endure with joy to the end. As we shift our focus from this earth to our eternity, we can endure with patience perseverance and do it with joy in our hearts.

3. John 14:26: The Holy Spirit is every believer's helper and guide. He is a comfort to those who follow Jesus.