

MIDDLE SCHOOL IDENTITY IN CHRIST

3

UNITE
I AM CALLED

JESUS FOLLOWERS LIVE FOR THE ONE KING

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 LIVE FOR THE ONE KING**BIBLE VERSE: DANIEL 3:16-18**

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.’”

BIG IDEAS

- Living for the one true King means rejecting false saviors.
- When we reject false saviors, people will reject us.
- Jesus is our King when following Him is better to us than life itself.

BIBLE PASSAGE: DANIEL 3**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 reject false saviors to worship the true King. This week we will ponder what it means to worship the one true King. We will pray for hearts that practice allegiance to the true Savior and we will practice living for the one true King.

FAMILY WORKOUT OVERVIEW:

Jesus followers worship the true King only. This week we will ponder how to discuss with our son or daughter our worship of the true King. We will pray for them to reject false saviors. We will lead them to practice worshipping the one true King.

BIBLE VERSE: DANIEL 3:16-18

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.’”

Believers only worship the one true King.

“Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.’”

- The three friends did not even consider worshiping the false god Nebuchadnezzar commanded them to bow down to. They only worshiped God and nothing could change that. They didn’t even need to consider their response. They were so dedicated to the one true King.
- As believers, we must practice the same type of dedication. We must trust God and choose to only worship Him. We must align our hearts and minds with His Word and walk in obedience to Him.

Believers trust in the one true king.

“...If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.”

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced a fiery death when they refused to bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar’s statue. Their response revealed their trust of God. They served the one true King and refused to give allegiance to a false king.
- As followers of Jesus, we must only show allegiance to the true King. We cannot follow the false kings of this world. Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were willing to die to show their faithfulness to God, we must be willing to stand apart and even give up our lives to remain faithful to God.

Believers are willing to die in order to only worship the true King

“But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

- The three friends’ response to King Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t a confidence that they would not lose their lives. It was a confidence that no matter what, God would deliver them. They trusted that even if they died in the fiery furnace, they would be delivered to their eternal home.
- Believers live willing to lose their life in order to make Jesus known in all the world. This means they are willing to die physically rather than worship a false god. Believers live radical lives that prove Jesus is the one true King and Savior.

BIG IDEA #1: LIVING FOR THE ONE TRUE KING MEANS REJECTING FALSE SAVIORS.¹**[THIS]**

In Daniel 3, Daniel's three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were faced with a life or death choice. King Nebuchadnezzar built a golden statue in honor of himself. He commanded all people to bow down and worship the statue when they heard music. Anyone who failed to worship as Nebuchadnezzar commanded would be thrown into a fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were followers of God. They did not bow down to worship the golden statue, choosing instead to reject idol worship and to remain faithful to the one true God. They were living for the one true King and would not compromise their faith to save their lives. They are an example to all believers of what it means to reject the false saviors of this world.

[THEREFORE]

Read Daniel 3:13-17. How does the faith of these three friends encourage you to reject the world's idols?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had each other and they stood together against idol worship. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 and Acts 15:32 remind us of the way the faithfulness of other believers can encourage us to remain steadfast.

What does rejection of idols in our lives look like?

Often our rejection of idols will look like a rejection of what the world loves by resisting the temptation to sin. James 1:14 reminds us that we must resist temptation. 1 Corinthians 15:33 shows us that we rejecting idols may also look like resisting following our friends when they want us to do something that is sinful. It may mean confronting them in a loving way.

[THIS]

As followers of Christ we have one true King, Jesus. There is no other real king and no other person we should worship or follow. If we want to live for the one true King, we must reject all others. We must remove idols from our hearts and give our allegiance to Jesus before any other ruler or leader. Our hearts have to align with God's Word, and we must daily pursue our relationship with Jesus. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego worshiped the one true God and together they refused to worship any other thing. Daily we must reject false gods and idols; we must look closely at our lives to make sure we have not fallen prey to worshipping the things the world worships. As we grow in our spiritual maturity, we will put off the characteristics of the world and we will put on the characteristics of Christ.

[THEREFORE]

What are things that the world worships?

2 Kings 17:33 serves as a warning to us that we can seemingly follow God, yet worship idols in our hearts. Matthew 6:21 and 15:8-9 show us that it matters what our hearts treasure or love. It's not enough to say we love Jesus and He is our King. Our actions must back up what we say. The world worships self and material things that are all passing away.

What disciplines can you establish to help you reject false saviors and worship Jesus alone?

The more we know Jesus, the more we will recognize false saviors and reject them. We know Jesus by knowing God's Word. Psalm 119:11 teaches us that when we hide God's Word in our hearts, we are less likely to sin against Him. 2 Timothy 2:15 and 3:14-17 also show us the importance of knowing God's Word in order to remain faithful to Him.

1. Daniel 3:16-17: *Worshipping God means rejecting the worship of false gods.*

BIG IDEA #2: WHEN WE REJECT FALSE SAVIORS, PEOPLE WILL REJECT US.²**[THIS]**

Following Jesus means facing the rejection of the world. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego lived for God, they faced the anger and rejection of the Babylonians. When the three friends refused to bow to the golden statue, some of the Babylonians brought it to the attention of King Nebuchadnezzar. Because of this, they were subjected to Nebuchadnezzar's anger and fury. In Daniel 3:19 it says that even Nebuchadnezzar's face was changed because of how great his anger was towards Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The three friends rejected Nebuchadnezzar's statue and in doing so, they subjected themselves to his great anger and the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was so angry at them he ordered the furnace to be heated to seven times more than usual. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew this, but they did not bow down. Because the three friends were faithful to God every day, they could be faithful when faced with a trial.

[THEREFORE]

How have you experienced the world's anger or rejection because you rejected false saviors?

1 John 3:13 reminds us that if we choose to follow Jesus, the world will hate us. We can expect to be rejected because the world rejected Jesus. Matthew 5:10-12 and John 15:18-19 remind us that we will face the hatred of the world because the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing. Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced the anger of Nebuchadnezzar, we will face the anger of unbelievers when we choose Jesus over the world.

[THIS]

As we follow Jesus, we must examine our hearts daily to see if we are worshiping false saviors. We must daily reject idol worship and choose to worship God alone. As we grow in Christ, we will look less and less like the world. Our spiritual growth means that we are putting off our flesh nature and putting on the character of Christ. When we reject the things the world worships, the world will reject us and we will face its condemnation. We will not be accepted and some of us will even be persecuted for our faith. Just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood apart and rejected worshiping the golden statue, we must stand apart and reject the world's worship. Just like they experienced persecution and the threat of death, we must be willing to experience rejection in order to live for the one true King.

[THEREFORE]

What false saviors do you love too much to reject?

Often, we choose not to reject the false saviors of the world because we love the things of the world too much. James 4:4 and 1 John 2:15 remind us that we cannot truly follow God and love the world. Also, when we value the approval of other people more than we value the approval of God, we can fail to reject false saviors. We do not set ourselves apart and instead seek to fit in.

How can you overcome a fear of rejection or even persecution so that you daily reject false saviors?

Knowing God's Word is the way we gain wisdom. We can overcome fear and stand firmly for Jesus when we hide His Word in our hearts. When we grow in our wisdom and knowledge, we will not fear the future. John 15:18-19 and Matthew 5:10-12 teach us to seek God's Word and to grow in wisdom that we might stand firm.

2. Matthew 10:22: *The world hated Jesus and it will hate those who follow Jesus.*

BIG IDEA #3: JESUS IS OUR KING WHEN FOLLOWING HIM IS BETTER TO US THAN LIFE ITSELF.³

[THIS]

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego rejected worshiping the statue and because of their choice faced a fiery furnace. The three men knew the consequence of their choice, yet they would not turn their hearts to anyone other than God. They were thrown into the fiery furnace knowing that God would save them, or He would take them into eternity. Either way, they knew that God was faithful, and they trusted God's purposes and plans. Their faith in this situation is an example to every believer who has ever lived after them. As they were tossed into a fiery furnace where they could have endured a terrible death, they worshiped God alone. God did choose to preserve their lives on this earth and when Nebuchadnezzar's men looked inside of the furnace, they saw four men standing unburned instead of three. Many scholars believe the fourth man was either Christ Himself or an angel. Regardless, God had proven His faithfulness to the three faithful friends. Obviously, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego valued God above even their own lives. They could have easily given in and bowed before the statue, yet they refused and were willing to die faithful to the one true God.

[THEREFORE]

What would be your response if you faced a fiery furnace? What would help you stand firm like the three faithful friends?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego valued faithfulness to God over their own lives. We can value and treasure obedience to Jesus over anything else when we grow in our knowledge of Him. We do this by reminding ourselves of His beautiful glory. Exodus 24:17 and Revelation 21:11 help us see that the glory of the Lord is a radiant and beautiful thing that eclipses all else. As we live in this truth daily, we can face whatever comes our way, even death.

[THIS]

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego showed that God was their treasure. They revealed that their king was God and nothing else. They lived for the one true King and no one else. Even as they lived in the king's palace and served him, their true allegiance was to God. When we live with Jesus as our King, we are faithful to Him above anyone else. We reject anyone else or anything else that might take us away from Him. Living for Him means submitting our will and plans to Him. We defer to Him and choose to follow Him over anything or anyone. As we grow in our love for Him, we grow in our willingness to sacrifice for Him. We can live for Him daily when He is our greatest treasure. We have to value faithfulness to Him over our very lives before He is truly our King.

[THEREFORE]

Can you say you value Jesus above all else? What in your life supports your answer?

Matthew 22:37 tells us that we must love God with our mind, body, soul, and heart. Basically, we must love God with everything we have and are and above all else. When we do this, our lives will reveal it. We will spend our money and time in ways that honor God. We will submit our wills to His and we will seek to bring Him glory. We will not worship false gods and we will daily seek to know Him.

3. Hebrews 1:3: Jesus is the glory of the Lord and He is our treasure always.