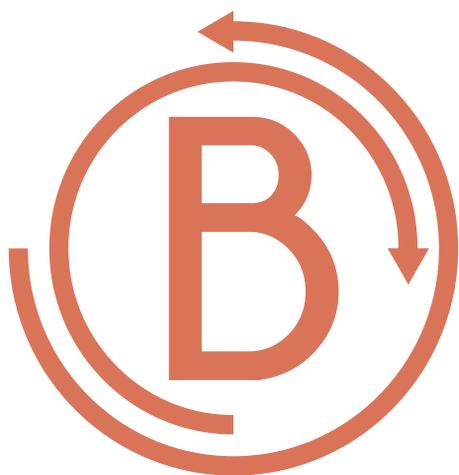


# THIS IS ME

A STUDY ON IDENTITY





Dear Middle Schooler,

I'm so glad you picked this up. I want you to know it's not an accident that you did. I truly believe that you grabbed it because you want to know who you are. Because you want to be able to stand confidently and courageously in your identity, that the lies of the enemy and the words of other people won't stand a chance.

This study was written with you in mind. I thought back to what life was like for me as a Middle Schooler, in my floral shorts, mermaid shirt, and Skittles. I so badly wanted to know who I was and I so badly wanted someone to tell me who I was, and that I was going to be okay. I wanted people to like me, too. I wanted it so badly that I handed out Skittles.

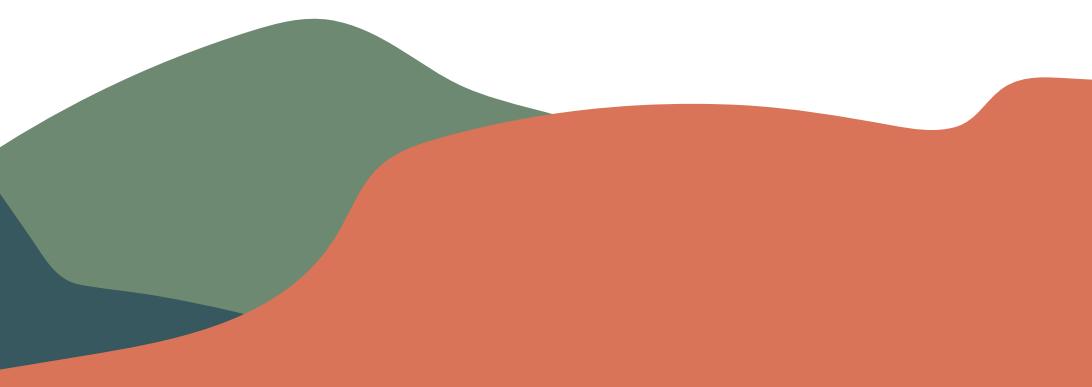
I wrote this with you in mind because I want your years in Middle School to be different than mine. I want you to be able to make decisions not based on "will people like me?" but "this is who I am and what Jesus says about me matters the most." Myself along with your other Middle School leaders and our church believe the only way to know your true identity is to find it in Jesus alone. I'm grateful for people that want this for you, like the friends who helped make this study possible, because they believe in you. Because they want you to know you are loved, you matter, and you belong.

What you hold in your hands has been prayed over. You-yes, you!-have been prayed over as you begin this journey. I pray that you're a sponge, and that you soak up all the treasure from the Bible about knowing who Jesus is and who you are. I can't wait to see how that treasure oozes out of you.

Love,

*April J. Wahl*

*Middle School Director*



There are so many voices in this world telling us who we should be and what we should be doing.

**“If you wear these clothes, you definitely have status.”**

**“If your TikTok was viewed at least 1000 times,  
you definitely have a following.”**

**“If you make the basketball A team,  
you definitely will be known as one of the best.”**

**“If you send this picture to your crush,  
you will definitely get him/her to like you.”**

Or maybe it's the opposite...

**“If you don't wear these clothes, no one is going to talk to you.”**

**“If you don't have social media, you won't  
have any idea what's going on or what you're missing out on,  
and you'll get left behind and left out.”**

**“If you don't at least make the  
basketball B team, you definitely won't have  
people showing up to watch you.”**

**“If you don't send this picture to your crush, you're just going to be  
known as a 'goody-two shoes/scaredy cat.'”**

That's a LOT of voices trying to tell you who you are and who you're supposed to be.

And we didn't even mention the voice in your own head trying to tell you you're not good enough or worth it because you didn't do this or that.

The good news is this: if we have a relationship with Jesus, our identity, our worth, our value, isn't found in who people say we are, who we should be, or even our own voices inside our heads say we are or should be. Our identity is found in who Jesus says we are. A disciple of Jesus, someone who actively follows him and loves people, values the words of Jesus above anyone else's. We can find out what Jesus says about us by reading the Bible and applying it to our lives. The more we learn about Jesus, the more we discover the identity he's given us.

As you begin this adventure in understanding more about who you are, would you pray that Jesus would do immeasurably more in you than you could ever expect, anticipate, or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)? This could change everything. Are you ready to understand who the Creator of the Universe says you are? That what he says about you matters the most? Let's dive in. Adventure is about to begin.



# CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE:

When some people start out on an adventure, they're excited. Some people are scared. Some people want other people to join them on the adventure. Some people maybe just want one other person to join them. Think of this Bible study like an adventure. But there are a few things that you need on an adventure: you need at least one other person to join you, kind of like Carl needs Russell and Russell needs Carl in the movie "Up." We ask that you have at least one person join you. Maybe it's a parent or an older sibling. Maybe it's your Small Group Leader. Then think about who else could you invite on this adventure? Maybe there are people from your Small Group that can join you. Maybe there are friends you have that have never been to The Basement before that you can do this adventure with. What we ask is this: **don't do it alone**. You can definitely study some of this alone, but did you know that studying and talking about what you studied with something else actually helps you grow as a disciple of Jesus? In fact, that's kind of how the math of discipleship works: you grow when you're connected to other disciples of Jesus. Choose your own adventure, but don't do it alone.



# HOW TO ADVENTURE:

1. Set aside time each day for you to study each Bible passage. It doesn't have to be early in the morning or late at night. Just like you would have a class schedule at school or an activities schedule, schedule your time to study every day. More than likely when it's scheduled, you'll have a better chance of sticking to that commitment.
2. Before you dig in, pray. Ask Jesus to make his presence known to you as you study. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead, guide you, and illuminate God's Word to you.
3. Pull out a notebook/journal or a Note app on your device if that's how you roll. Use this as a space to write down thoughts or notes you have while you study.
4. While you're studying, you're going to ask yourself some questions like this. These are the same kind of questions you're going to talk about with the people you've invited on this adventure.

**Observation:** Who is in this text? Who is the writer of this text speaking to? What's going on? What details do you notice? What words do you see repeated?

**Interpret:** This is where you ask the Holy Spirit to show you what this passage means and lean into things called study Bibles or commentaries. We've provided some of that here for you. Good interpretation is SUPER important when it comes to studying the Bible.

**Application:** Ask the questions, what is this passage telling me to do? How am I going to apply this passage to my life?

5. Do you want to connect online with others on the adventure? With your parent/guardian's permission, go to RightNowMedia and type in "This Is Me" ([rightnowmedia.org/Content/VideoElement/500520](http://rightnowmedia.org/Content/VideoElement/500520)). There's a video to go with each Bible passage and questions to answer.

In the pages that follow, you're going to find a passage of Scripture that talks about Identity. Each passage of Scripture has statements declaring the truth of what this Scripture says. To help you grow in understanding your identity in Jesus, take the opportunity to memorize these verses and the statements. When you're faced with people who try to tell you who you are or aren't, the Holy Spirit will remind you of what Scripture says about **who** you are and **Whose** you are.

# GENESIS 1:26-27

I AM...

**CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE.**

**CREATED TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.**

**CREATED ON PURPOSE FOR GOD'S PURPOSE.**

Read Genesis 1:26-31

## **What's Going On:**

Creation is an expression of love. God created this world and all that is in it. And he said it was good. This passage tells us that God created man and woman in His own image. Human beings are the special creation of God placed in his kingdom as his representatives. Our special creation gives each human being individual worth and value. Human beings are different from any other thing that God created because God made us, and made us to bring his likeness to the earth, making him known here. That's what it means when we read that we are the image-bearers of God. Every human that has existed and every human that will exist is given worth and value because of being made in God's image.

When we start to see ourselves this way, that we were made on purpose for God's purposes, we start to view ourselves differently. We start to see that we have been given value and worth. We start to see that as an image-bearer of God, we are worth the price of redemption. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." The rest of the Bible demonstrates how important human beings truly are to God. Despite man's fall into sin, God continues to love. The Bible is the history of redemption, of God reaching out to humankind to rescue and to save. Even when we were sinners, you and I were still so important to God that He sent His Son. You and I are still so important that Jesus died to free us from sin.

If human beings are special to God, we must learn to love others, and can love ourselves as well.

As a reflection of the Creator, each person is precious to God. As a bearer of God's image, each person is worth even the price of redemption through Jesus. You and I can never again look at others or ourselves as valueless. We bear the image of God.

You and I can find no meaning in a life which has roots in the chance interplay of mindless atoms. But we can find meaning when we realize that our lives were given us by another living personality. If God exists, and God is the cause of the material world, then we can look for meaning in His purposes in creating. (Check out Psalm 8:3-6).

If we realize we were made in God's image for a relationship with Him, then we can accept that we find our identity in that relationship.

**Things to Chat About:**

Did you notice any words that were repeated in Genesis 1:26-31? Write those words here. Why do you think they were repeated?

How does your perspective of yourself and others change when you realize that all humans were made in God's image?

"You were made on purpose for God's purposes." What does that truth mean for you?

What kind of situation could you be put in where it would be helpful to know this truth about your identity?



# EPHESIANS 2:1-10

BECAUSE OF JESUS, I AM...

**FORGIVEN.**

**ACCEPTED.**

**GOD'S MASTERPIECE.**

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

## **What's Going On:**

The Mona Lisa is a painting that is known as a masterpiece. Painted by Leonardo da Vinci in the 1500s, it is probably the world's most famous painting or at least one of the world's most famous paintings. It now hangs in the Louvre Museum, Paris.

If you're in Paris wanting to go take a peek at the Mona Lisa, grab a selfie, or just stare at her for awhile wondering if she's really smiling or not, you can totally do that. But if you want to reach out and touch the painting, that's a hard no.

After several attacks against the Mona Lisa, a bulletproof glass case was put around the painting. Mona is protected by a glass that is 1.52-inches thick. This glass case helped protect her from one museumgoer who threw a ceramic mug at her in 2009.

That's some massive protection for this masterpiece.

In Ephesians 2, followers of Jesus are given an incredible perspective of who we are when we say 'yes' to a relationship with him. We move from being separated from God to a relationship with him. We are saved by him, and it has nothing to do with us 'working' or earning that saving. It's all a gift from God out of his mercy and love for us. Verse 10 of Ephesians 2 shows us who we really are: we are God's masterpiece. Just as intently as da Vinci created the Mona Lisa, we were created by God in Jesus. God raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus (verse 6). That's a big deal.

Think about how protected the Mona Lisa is from outsiders trying to destroy her or alter her appearance. If that's the amount of effort put into protecting a painting's identity from being destroyed or altered, how much more protection is placed on you by God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the work of Jesus to protect your identity from being

destroyed or altered? You are protected by the authority and power of Jesus. Right now, Jesus sits in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. He watches over you, he sees you, he notices you, and he protects you from anything that anyone could say or do that could take away from who God says you are. Someone can say to you “you’re worthless; you don’t matter.” Those words won’t and can’t change ANYTHING about who you are. Nothing can change the truth of who God says you are. You are his masterpiece. Created by him on purpose for his purpose.

**Things to Chat About:**

What is our condition before we begin a relationship with Jesus, according to Ephesians 2:1?

What does Ephesians 2:4-5 tell us about God and his compassion for us, for anyone?

Do you ever think that you have to do things to earn your worth or value? What does Ephesians 2:8-9 tell us about feeling or thinking that way?

What is the biggest roadblock you face in understanding that as a follower of Jesus, you are God’s masterpiece? Or if you don’t have this kind of roadblock, what roadblock do you face viewing other followers of Jesus as God’s masterpiece?

As disciples of Jesus, we can share this good news with other people. We can tell others about what God has done for them. How could you have a conversation with a friend, classmate, or teammate about Ephesians 2:1-10?



# JOHN 1:12-13

BECAUSE OF JESUS, I AM...

**A CHILD A GOD.**

**A PART OF A FAMILY.**

**LOVED BY THE BEST DAD EVER.**

Read John 1:1-18

## **What's Going On:**

When people see or hear the word 'family,' there is a possibility of a million different perspectives and feelings.

Some immediately are turned off by that word because they only think of the pain they've experienced due to their family. Maybe their family has never gotten along. Maybe the 'picture' of a 'perfect family' (spoiler: there is no such thing as a perfect family) has never been their reality, but it seems like everyone else has a perfect family. Maybe some people think of the family they always wanted but never had.

There's a lot of 'baggage' around the idea of family. What that means is that a lot of people haven't had a great family experience and so when they read in Scripture that it says we are brought into God's family through Jesus, or the idea of God being their Father in Heaven, it's not the warm fuzzy feeling other people are used to.

Whatever kind of family experience we've had, here's the really good news: God made it possible for us to become his kids, his sons and daughters through Jesus. That means he is the best dad ever. If we have a great dad here on earth that reminds us of God and who he is, great. If we have had a complicated dad relationship here on earth, we're reminded that God is our heavenly Father and he is good and perfect. You might think, "but how can that even be possible?" John 1:13 explains that through Jesus, we are 'reborn with a birth that comes from God.' We are 'born again' into God's family. And this birth isn't as messy.

But families can be complicated and messy. Anyone who has a relationship with Jesus is a part of God's family, which means we have a LOT of brothers and sisters. If you're an only child, congratulations! You just gained a ton of siblings! For those of you that have siblings, you know that there are moments when you don't always get along. You disagree. You call each other names. With a lot of siblings all over the world and from

different backgrounds, these kinds of things will happen. We will mess up and hurt each other. We ask for forgiveness and forgive. No family is perfect, but families can also be spaces where we are reminded that we are loved, we matter, and we belong. That's what we get to remind each other of all day, every day. This is the truth about being a child of God and being a part of God's family: we are loved, we matter, and we belong.

**Things to Chat About:**

Who is the author, John, talking about in verses 1-5 when he uses "Word" and "light?" (If you're not sure, think about who it was that God sent to be a living example of who He is and what he represents here on earth?)

When you think of the word 'family,' what comes to your mind? Write or draw what you think.

What does it mean to you, regardless of having a positive family experience or negative family experience, that because of Jesus, you are loved, you matter, and you belong in God's family?

If you are a part of God's family, how do you think you should view or treat your 'siblings'- other followers of Jesus?

God is a great Dad who takes great care of his kids. Knowing that, how does it change how you view situations that are a struggle in your life?



# 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21

BECAUSE OF JESUS, I AM...

**A NEW CREATION.**

**JESUS' AMBASSADOR.**

**RECONCILED TO GOD**-aka God isn't mad at you!

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

## **What's Going On:**

Brand ambassadors know a lot about a product or a brand and that's why companies will ask them to do things on social media with their product or their brand. If a company sees that someone has a large following on social media, they'll pick that person as a brand ambassador because the company knows more and more people get to know the brand and buy it just by that person sharing it on social media.

Paul, who wrote a number of letters to churches that are included in the NT, is writing to a group of followers of Jesus in a church in the city of Corinth. He's writing this letter after he hears stories of these followers getting off track on following Jesus and living out his mission to love people. The attitude of the Corinthians was one that was self-centered. The people that were a part of the church were being more influenced by voices other than Jesus and actually living those things out.

Paul was concerned with people teaching in the church that were promoting their own ideas. The Corinthians were allowing the popular crowd to determine how they lived and what they believed. Paul is writing to them to remind them of who Jesus is, of what he had taught them, who they were and how they were to live. Followers of Jesus were to live differently than the popular crowd. They were supposed to have values and ways of living that would be so different that they would turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

Paul continues to teach and show the followers of Jesus in Corinth and us today that if we have a relationship with Jesus, are actively following him, and loving people, then we should no longer live for our own agendas and motivations. We no longer want people to notice us because of who we are but of who Christ is within us.

We are brand ambassadors for Jesus. We are representatives of Jesus here on earth. An ambassador is someone that is sent on behalf of one country to another country to

represent the home country. Our home country, as a disciple of Jesus, is heaven. That's what we represent here.

It should be so freeing to us to hear that we don't have to build a platform or gain a following, because honestly, Jesus has done that already. We get to reflect him and point people to him. He's done the most work. He gave us the assignment. Now we get to continue the group project and turn the world upside down.

**Things to Chat About:**

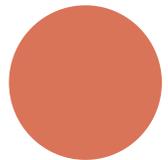
In verse 17, Paul says that we are 'new creations in Jesus Christ.' What do you think this means? (Hint: does God determine our worth and value by what we've done or who we've been? Nope!)

Do you ever struggle to see beyond your past mistakes? How could believing and trusting what God says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 help you see you're forgiven?

Because of Jesus, we are reconciled to God, meaning that he's not some angry Dad looking down at us, disappointed in us. Have you ever looked at God that way before? If so, why do you think you have? How does this truth change that for you?

A brand ambassador knows the brand they're promoting. If we're ambassadors of Jesus, what should we know about him?

Why is it tempting to 'promote' ourselves or our own agendas?



# GALATIANS 3:26-28

BECAUSE OF JESUS, I AM...

**NOT DEFINED BY MY BACKGROUND.**

**NOT DEFINED BY POPULARITY.**

**NOT BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE.**

Read Galatians 3:26-29

## **What's Going On:**

If you meet someone new, one of the first questions you might ask them is “what school do you go to?” Or you might ask them what town or city they’re from. Then based on how they answer, you might respond “ew, you’re from there?” or “oh...you go there?”

Well, hopefully that’s not how you’d respond.

But maybe that’s how someone has responded to YOU when you’ve told them what school you go to or where you’re from. Some people determine a person’s worth based on where they grew up, where they live, or where they go to school. Not only is it rude and hurtful, it’s just wrong.

When we read in the Bible that our identity is found in being God’s child through Jesus Christ, we’re able to have confidence when we answer the question of where we’re from or what school we go to because it really doesn’t matter! Even if the person asking us the question is judging us and basing our worth on our answer, it doesn’t matter: what God has said about us matters the most. His word is 100% clear on who we are as his kids: we’re not defined by where we came from, our background, or even our popularity.

If we start to see ourselves in the way that God sees us, we’re able to see the way God looks at others, too. If we don’t want people to respond to our answers with “ew, you’re from there?” or “oh...you go there?,” then why would we respond to someone with those kinds of answers? That’s not who we are as disciples of Jesus, as children of God. We don’t see ourselves as better than anyone else. We don’t determine someone’s worth or value by where they come from, what school they go to, what they look like, or their background. We see all people made in the image of God, people from every background, every race, made on purpose for his purpose beautifully and uniquely.

### **Things to Chat About:**

Do you think people your age determine their worth and value based on how popular they are or aren't? Why do you think that happens?

Reflect back on a time where you determined someone's worth or value based on where they came from, what school they went to, or what they looked like. Why do you think you were quick to do that? Know that there's forgiveness and that God's given us the Holy Spirit to choose a different response next time.

Would you want someone to determine your worth or value based on your popularity? Where you're from? Your athletic ability? Why or why not?

Take a moment to look up and read Philippians 2:3-5. How can these verses encourage you not to determine someone else's worth and value based on external things?

We know that having friends and being liked is a big deal. We want to be liked and that's okay. But when do you think that wanting to be liked goes too far?

How can knowing that your identity isn't found in your popularity help you check yourself before you wreck yourself?



# COLOSSIANS 2:9-10

BECAUSE OF JESUS, I AM...

**COMPLETE.**

Read Colossians 2:1-10

## **What's Going On?**

Have you ever done a puzzle? We're not talking about the ones that you did when you were 4 years old; we're talking about the 1000 or 2000 piece puzzles. The massive ones that stretch across a table that could take up a whole entire wall if you decided to hang it up.

If that puzzle was a complicated one (more than likely it was because it's 1000 pieces), that feeling of putting that last piece in the puzzle is so satisfying. Because you've just completed a massive task. You just put all the pieces together that, in the beginning, you had no idea how it was going to happen or if you would ever finish. Then boom. Last piece. It is complete.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, 'Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.' Because of Jesus, we are complete. We have found that missing piece in our lives that we looked for to complete us. As a follower of Jesus, we have been given everything that we need to live the life that Jesus has invited us to live (check out 2 Peter 1:3). No material item or relationship could or can give us the completion that Jesus can give us.

Verses 6 and 7 in our text today tell us to continue to follow Jesus, and to let our roots grow down into him so that our lives can be built on him. If we were looking at some physical item or a relationship to complete us, and we put our "roots" down into those things, what would happen if that item or relationship disappeared? We'd feel as though our entire identity would fall apart. That our lives didn't even matter anymore because we were so rooted in that physical item or relationship that no longer exists.

Whatever we plant our roots in, that's where we'll grow. This is why Paul, the author of Colossians, encourages us to put our roots down into Jesus, because Jesus isn't going anywhere. He isn't going to flake out and move on to something better. He isn't going

away. He's here to stay. He won't turn his back on us. He will always be with us (check out Matthew 28:20).

We don't need to go looking anywhere other than Jesus to feel complete or be complete. Jesus is enough. What he says about us is enough. It matters more than the words of anyone else. Let's keep building up our identity in the words of Jesus. At the end of the day, even when someone tries to tell us we don't matter or we don't belong, we can hold tight to our roots. We can stay grounded to the truth and hold tight to these things: we are loved, we matter, and we belong because Jesus is enough.

### **Things to Chat About:**

What are some things that you notice people your age are hoping to find their identity in?

What are the dangers of looking to something or someone else other than Jesus to 'complete' you?

People are going to continue to say things that will hurt us and cause us to question our identity. How does knowing that Jesus has given you everything you need face people who purposefully use words to tear you down?

What is something or someone that you've hoped to find your identity in? What made you realize that it wasn't going to work?

How can you stay rooted in knowing who Jesus is and what he says about you?



# THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING

YAY! You did it! We're so proud of you for saying 'yes' to this adventure. Have you grown? Do you know a little bit more about your identity as a disciple of Jesus?

The reality is that as long as we're humans, we're going to be dealing with people (or ourselves) saying things that can cause us to question our worth and our value. That's why it's so important for us to keep coming back to the truth, to come back to what the Bible says about who we are as followers of Jesus.

We can't stop the hurtful words of other people or even the negative voice in our own head, but we can come after those words with truths that are more powerful than any negative word. We encourage you to keep reading these verses and memorizing the verses and statements with each one. When you're standing in a lunch room or in a locker room facing hurtful, painful words, the Holy Spirit will remind you of who you are and Whose you are.

You are loved.

You matter.

**You belong.**

**This is the truth about who you are.**

# REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What are some of the biggest things you learned through this study?

What is something you're still having a hard time understanding?

Who is someone else you could share this Bible study with?

What is at least one thing you want to start applying to your life right now?





### **IDENTITY:**

A disciple of Jesus Christ finds their identity in Christ alone.



### **IMITATION:**

A disciple of Jesus Christ focuses their life on becoming more and more like Jesus every day.



### **WORD:**

A disciple of Jesus Christ holds high and applies the Word of God.



### **WORSHIP:**

A disciple of Jesus Christ worships God above everything else.



### **GIFTS:**

A disciple of Jesus Christ realizes their spiritual gifts are for giving spiritual gifts.



### **GOSPEL:**

A disciple of Jesus Christ knows, applies, and speaks the Gospel at all times.



### **COMMUNITY:**

A disciple of Jesus Christ lives IN community.



### **CITY:**

A disciple of Jesus Christ seeks the best for their city.