

MIDDLE SCHOOL GUIDE 2

ABIDING IS PURSUING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS IS

YEAR: TRANSFORM / FOCUS: I AM GROWING
SERIES: GOD IS THE VINE - I AM A BRANCH

BIG TRUTH: ABIDING IS PURSUING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS IS

1 John 2:26-27; 2 John 1:9; Ephesians 4:13-14

BIBLE VERSE: PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

BIG IDEAS

- Following Jesus is wanting to know Him more.
- Everything is meaningless compared to knowing Jesus.

BIBLE PASSAGE: PHILIPPIANS 3:7-15

TRANSFORM - I AM GROWING

The Transform Year is an exploration of what it means to become a "new creation" in Jesus. (2 Corinthians 5:17) In order for this to happen, we must first find our identity in Him. Many of us live in a consistent state of identity crises. We wrestle with questions like who am I, where do I belong, why do I exist? The answer to these questions is found in Jesus. Our prayer for this semester is that like the Apostle Paul we would be able to say, "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20).

SERIES AIMS



Every student should know that...

- God is the vine and they are a branch
- We can do nothing apart from Jesus
- Abiding is both position and pursuit



Every student should feel...

- Insufficient and inadequate in their own power and might
- Thankful for the Savior who abides in us
- Overwhelmed by Christ's sacrifice for us



Every student should strive to...

- Read and meditate on John 15:1-5 each week
- Memorize Galatians 2:20
- Pursue an abiding relationship with Jesus in community with their local church



Every student should want to...

- Abide in Jesus
- Pursue spiritual disciplines
- Continually aim higher in their pursuit of Him

GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week's Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.



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ABIDING IS PURSUING A DEEPER
UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS IS**BIBLE VERSE: PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14**

“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Believers desire to know Jesus.

“Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own...”

- When a person encounters Jesus, they are changed forever. Just as Paul’s life was changed when he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, every believer’s life is radically changed. A person who knows Christ desires to know Him even more. The more a person learns about Christ, the greater their desire to know more.

Believers can seek Christ because He made them His own.

“...but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own.”

- Believers gain access to Jesus not because of anything they do, but because of what Christ did on the cross. Paul expresses this truth in verse 12 when he says that Jesus has made him His own. Jesus makes every believer His own through His death on the cross. Believers seek Jesus because He first sought them through the work of His Spirit.
- Because of Jesus, believers are made new. With their new hearts and renewed minds, their desire is changed from rejecting Jesus to wanting to know Him in a personal and intimate way. Believers also have a freedom to seek Christ boldly because their sin, which once formed a barrier between them and Christ, is removed by the blood of Jesus.¹

Believers pursue the prize of knowing Christ fully.

“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

- A believer will never arrive at a complete knowledge of Jesus on this earth. Only when a believer enters eternity and sees Christ face to face will their knowledge be complete. This is the prize that Paul presses on toward and the prize that every believer seeks—to know Christ on this earth until their faith receives sight and their knowledge is made complete.

ABIDING IS PURSUING A DEEPER
UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS IS**BIG IDEA #1: FOLLOWING JESUS IS WANTING TO KNOW HIM MORE.²****[THIS]**

Paul was a well-educated man. He knew the Law, and yet, in his letter to the Philippians, he expresses his goal of really and truly knowing Christ. Paul desired to truly know Jesus in a personal way, not to just know about Him. Every believer has a longing for the things of God. This longing is not natural to a person, but only comes to them after they have had the eyes of their hearts opened to their need of a Savior. When they have saving faith in Jesus, the desires of their heart change and grow to be more in line with God's Word over time. The more a believer learns about Jesus the more he or she wants to know. Though Paul was very educated and was a person of significance in the Jewish community, he wasn't satisfied. He desired to know Jesus more and more. Believers desire to know Jesus because of their personal relationship with Him that they have through saving faith.

[THEREFORE]

How has your pursuit of Jesus or lack thereof increased or decreased your desire to know Him more?

In the Psalms, we see pursuit leading to a greater desire to know Him more. Psalm 27:4 speaks of desiring to dwell in God's house to be near Him and to experience His beauty. In Psalm 42:1-2, we see the desire to know God and be in His presence expressed as a great thirst or longing. Psalms 63:1 and 84:2 talk of a great longing to know God and be near Him. A lack of pursuing Jesus leads to apathy and a lack of growth. Revelation 2:4 is a warning to those who move away from a daily pursuit of Christ.

[THIS]

As a believer grows in knowledge of Jesus, he or she grows spiritually. Knowing Jesus personally produces life change; therefore, when a believer grows in his or her personal relationship with Jesus, they will grow up spiritually. Colossians 2:6-7 and 3:16 teach us that spiritual growth happens when we pursue Christ and dwell in Him. Any encounter with Jesus changes a person. As we grow closer to Him and grow up spiritually, we will look more and more like Him and our pursuit of Him will increase.

[THEREFORE]

What are practical examples of spiritual growth that should be developing in the life of an abiding Jesus follower?

Spiritual growth means bearing the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 shows us the fruit that the Spirit bears inside of believers. 1 John 4:13-17 we learn that spiritual growth involves growing in our confession of Christ and our love for God and others. Colossians 1:9-10 shows us that as we grow in our knowledge of Christ, we bear fruit and live a life pleasing to Him.

How have you grown spiritually as you've sought a deeper relationship with Jesus?

Paul's letter to the Colossians is full of instruction about spiritual growth. In Colossians 2:6-7 and 3:16, Paul encourages the Colossians believers to grow up spiritually. As we seek Christ, we will grow spiritually. Hebrews 6:1-2 also gives an encouragement to grow spiritually by leaving behind elementary things and pursuing mature things like Christ. John 15:5 tells us that anyone who abides in Christ bears much fruit. As we seek Christ, we abide in Him, and as we abide, we bear fruit.

2. Philippians 3:10-15: Knowing Jesus is more valuable than anything else. A believer desires to know Him more and more.

ABIDING IS PURSUING A DEEPER
UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS IS**BIG IDEA #2: EVERYTHING IS MEANINGLESS COMPARED TO KNOWING JESUS.³****[THIS]**

The greatest thing for a believer is to gain a personal knowledge of Jesus. In Philippians 3:7-8, Paul expresses the greatness of knowing Christ over any other thing. Paul counted an intimate knowledge of Jesus as more valuable than anything else he had obtained or accomplished. Believers find as they grow in knowledge of Jesus that everything else pales in comparison. Paul counted all of his accomplishments and his pedigree as rubbish, or meaningless, compared to knowing Jesus personally. What matters most in the life of a believer is his or her personal relationship with Jesus.

[THEREFORE]

What are some current meaningful things in your life that need to become “meaningless” in proportion to your devotion to Jesus?

Matthew 6:19-21 teaches us that whatever our hearts love is what we will treasure. As a believer, when we know Christ more and more, we treasure Him even more. Psalm 37:4 teaches us to delight in the Lord and He will give us the desires of our hearts. As we grow in Him and delight in knowing Him, the desires of our hearts will match His desires.

[THIS]

Paul was not content to have a little knowledge of Jesus. He was not content to have a good heritage. In verses 13-15, he reveals his great desire to continue seeking Jesus daily. The truth revealed in these verses is that we don't fully arrive at a complete knowledge of Jesus until we see Him face to face, but as we seek Him daily, we will always grow in our understanding of Him. Just as Paul was not content with how much he knew Jesus, believers who have tasted and seen the goodness of Christ, are not content with a little knowledge. The things of this world, things that are temporary and offer only momentary pleasure, will no longer be the greatest desire of the person who pursues Christ wholeheartedly.

[THEREFORE]

What daily behaviors or actions help you pursue Jesus in everyday life?

In Hebrews 11:6, we see that in order to know Christ, we must have faith. When we have faith in Christ, we can seek Him and know Him. Psalm 119:10 tells us that diligently and whole-heartedly seeking Christ results in a knowledge of Him and His commands. Psalm 9:10 also reveals that our pursuit of Jesus requires our trust of Him. When we trust Him, we will wholeheartedly pursue Him.

What have you learned about Jesus that has caused you to value earthly things less?

2 Corinthians 3:18 gives us a glimpse at the greatness of God's glory and how we, as we grow in Christ, are being transformed to resemble Him. Psalm 147:4-5 speaks of God's immeasurable power and might. When we grow in Christ, we grow in our knowledge of God's power and might. Jeremiah 33:3 speaks of the intimate knowledge that a believer can have with God. God allows Himself to be known by His people. He reveals Himself to those who seek after Him. Knowing Him causes other things, temporal things, to pale in comparison.

3. Philippians 3:7-8: Paul counts everything as a loss except for knowing Christ.