

BIG IDEA

Your middle schooler's identity is to be rooted in and defined by who he or she is in Jesus.



KEY SCRIPTURES

- *When we receive Christ, we become children of God (John 1:12).*
- *As children of God, we are becoming more like Christ (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18).*
- *Our acceptance of others isn't based on their actions. It's based on Christ's acceptance of us (Rom. 15:7).*



KEY QUESTIONS YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER IS ASKING

- Who am I?
- Why do I feel left out and like I don't fit in?
- Why am I so lonely and sad all the time?
- How do I interact with students who are struggling with sexual identity?



AT THIS AGE MOST MIDDLE SCHOOLERS WILL ...

- Feel pressure to acquire peer approval and affirmation.
- Struggle with issues of personal identity, especially in light of what they have done and what has been done to them.
- Begin to engage more on a personal level with the social controversies in our culture, such as issues related to gender, mental health, and so forth.



DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

- Middle schoolers learn best when they see the practical side and how it impacts them directly. Make a point to talk about how a proper understanding of their identity in Christ impacts every part of their life.
- Middle schoolers are physically growing at different rates. These are awkward years. He may be embarrassed easily and need to talk about his feelings, even when his face says otherwise.
- Middle schoolers are beginning to have capability to wrestle with deeper things of the faith. They are able to comprehend doctrines, beliefs, the full narrative of Scripture, and how these things apply to their lives.



COACHING TIPS

- Know that the middle school years can be a difficult time of life. It's very possible your middle schooler will come to you with serious questions like: *What is wrong with me? Why am I so lonely? Why don't other kids like me? What type of person will I turn out to be?* Be a good listener, be patient, and be willing to walk with her through this awkward time. Even if she struggles to ask these questions, work to create an environment where she feels freedom to ask them. Pour out much love and encouragement, continually assuring her of her worth and value to you and to God.
- In this time of your middle schooler's faith formation, share the ups and downs of your own faith story. Talk to him about what it means to find his identity in Christ.
- Your middle schooler is not ignorant of how the current culture is defining manhood and womanhood. Hopefully you've already started the discussion about what the Bible says about being a man and a woman, but if not, it's time to start now. And remember, your middle schooler is going to learn about biblical manhood and womanhood not only from what she hears, but also from what she sees.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- **WHEN DO YOU FEEL MOST PRESSURED BY YOUR FRIENDS TO THINK OR ACT A CERTAIN WAY?** This question will help you assess how much influence your middle schooler's peer group has on him. Since his peer group is becoming increasingly important to him, do your best to know who his friends are.
- **WHO IS THE BEST MAN/WOMAN YOU KNOW?** Find out who your middle schooler looks to as the best model for manhood and womanhood. Ask her why she chose that particular person and note what characteristics your middle schooler sees as valuable. Use the conversation to uphold and discuss biblical manhood and womanhood.
- **WHAT DO YOU REALLY LOVE TO DO?** Discuss what your middle schooler is becoming passionate about and how you can support him in this activity.



SAY OR PRAY

- Pray that your middle schooler finds her identity in Christ and not in how she performs or what others say about her.
- Pray God would surround your middle schooler with godly influences, including friends and other significant adults to speak into his life.
- Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and patience as you guide your middle schooler through this time in her life.