

ACT SATURDAY!!

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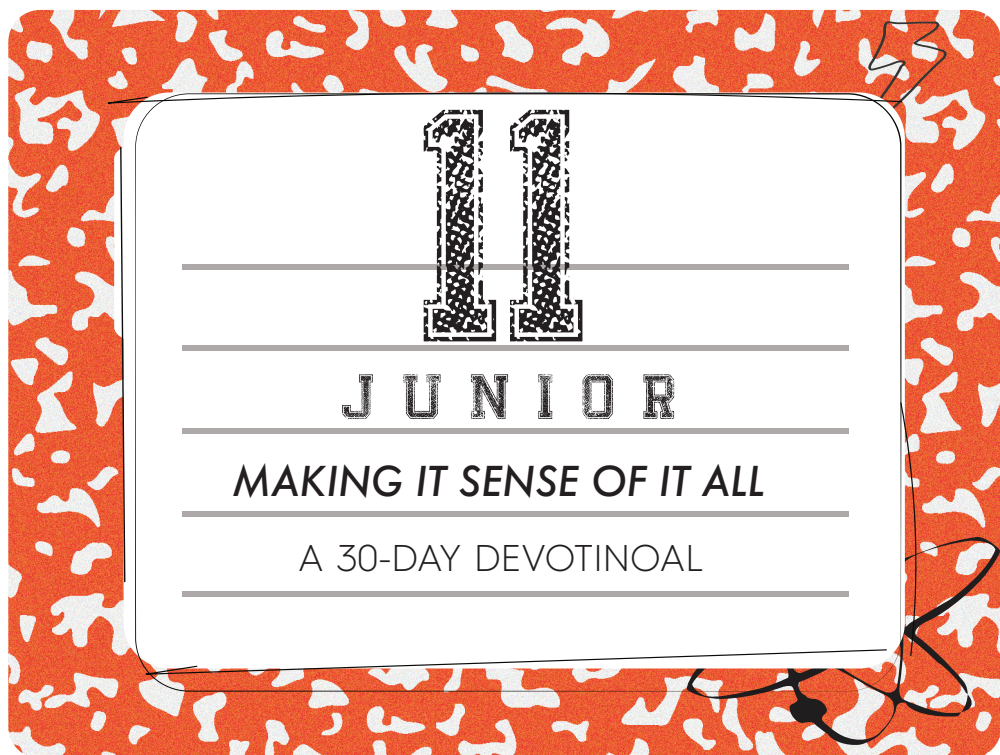
JUNIOR

*MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL*

30-DAY DEVOTIONAL



YM360



A 30-DAY DEVOTINOAL  
**JUNIOR**  
**MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL**  
BY YM360

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Making Sense of It All

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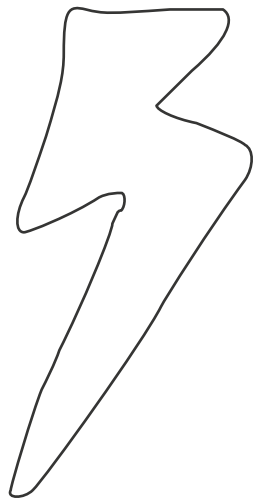
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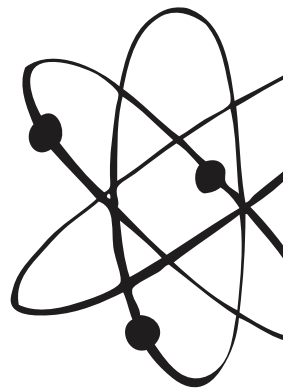
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# INTRODUCTION

If you've read the previous books in this series, you know that we've focused on growing in your faith and figuring out what maturity looks like. It's now time to start piecing it all together and seeing who you are and what that means for you. All of life is a process, and you don't have to have it all figured out right now. But this is the year when you have to start figuring out a lot of things.

Figuring out who you are doesn't mean who you are going to be, but simply who you are right now. This is a starting point as you begin doing a lot of self-evaluation. We're more focused on the past than on the future. Who are you right now? What do you believe? What do you care about? How do you look at the world? This is the year that a lot of those questions need to get answered.

Are today's answers the final ones you'll give in your life? Not likely. Your answers and your beliefs about things may change in the coming years, but you do need to figure out some of what you believe right now because you are on the cusp of making some major decisions about the future and charting your life's direction. You will need to base a lot of those decisions upon how you are experiencing and living life right now.

# HOW IT WORKS

This devotional includes 30 short things for you to think about. For each reading you'll find some sort of story and some follow-up questions to consider. You can do these by yourself, but you also can benefit from discussing them with a small group of people. This book might become 30 weeks of curriculum or simply provide 30 days of focus before the school year starts.

You'll find an action step for each devotion that is exactly what it sounds like: an opportunity to actually do something to discover and apply key truths. Often these are things that take some effort to accomplish and can help you grow. I want to encourage you to really put effort into doing them. There is also a notes section at the bottom of each page for you to write your thoughts and experiences! Did you try out the "Now What" section? Write about what happened in the Notes. Have a deep thought? Write it down!

Finally, I've included some Bible passages for you to look up—sometimes several, but usually just one or two. I want you to go deeper and explore other places in the Bible with more thoughts, stories, truths, and ideas that will help you.



# SECTION 1

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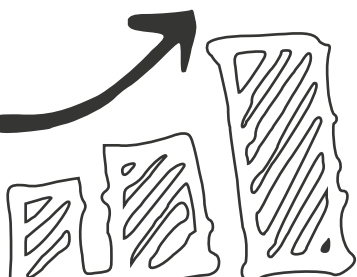
DO YOU KNOW  
WHO YOU ARE?

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My junior year of high school was the year I finally felt like I knew who I was. I hadn't reached my full potential, but it was the year I figured out a lot of what I liked, what I was good at, and some of what I thought I wanted to spend more time focusing on. Maybe you haven't had a lot of conversations about who you are, but this is the year to do that. You have the potential to offer a lot to those around you, so it's time to step it up.

It may not feel like the world really cares right now, but I want you to know how valuable you are. If you asked a lot of adults if they knew who they were as high school juniors, they might give you some answers about things they were involved in or things they liked. But as far as defining who they were, that question would be a lot harder. I don't remember my youth pastor asking hard questions like this, but I wish he had. I would have appreciated the opportunity to explore these real issues more because I needed to be pushed to figure that out as I was dealing with some tough relational, social, and spiritual situations where knowing myself better would have helped me with some answers.



## №. 1 HOW COMFORTABLE ARE YOU WITH YOU?

---

I bought a lunchbox my junior year of high school. Sounds geeky, right? Well, it was—but I was OK with that. I finally decided that year that I was just going to start doing the things I liked and not worry about what everyone else thought about me. So every day I went to school with a backpack on my shoulder, a saxophone case in one hand, and a He-Man® lunchbox in the other. That's who I was—and I was comfortable with it.

Curiously, no one ever made fun of me for that choice. I sort of expected it to happen, but it didn't. It seemed that as I learned to be comfortable with myself, others became comfortable with who I was, too. I'm not telling you to go buy a superhero lunchbox, but I do encourage you to start thinking more about the things that you like and the things that define you, and to start becoming more comfortable with yourself. God has made you exactly the way He planned, and your job is to figure out how to thrive with that reality.

## *Think About:*

1. How comfortable are you with what you know you really like and with who you are?
2. How well do you believe other people know you? Do they perceive you to be something or someone different from who you really are?
3. If you could do or try something that you really like, knowing that no one would make fun of you or judge you, what would you do?
4. Why do you think God made you the way He did?

## *Now What?*

Without judging people, take a few days to simply observe your friends' differences and unique characteristics. What things do your friends do that stand out to you as different? What things do your friends love that define them? See if you can encourage your friends in those differences this week. How might they feel if you both comment on and praise them for those things?

## *Read:*

Psalm 37:4, Matthew 6:19, and Ephesians 2:10

## *Notes:*

## No. 2 WHO ARE YOU AT SCHOOL?

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At some point, most people have considered this question. It's somewhat foundational to how you manage to figure out the best way to navigate your high school years. At some point we all self-identify as something in school. Maybe you are an athlete and that's what defines you. Or maybe you participate in band, drama, or other artistic groups. Maybe academics are more your bent and define who you are. The reality, though, is that most of who we are at school ends up being defined by what we do. This makes sense, I guess, but it's also a little bit of a daunting thing because being "labeled" can have some negativity associated with it. Even though most things have positive traits, some opposite things often are associated with them, too.

Sometimes we are defined by others and not by our own choices. This can feel incredibly unfair—especially if the label is negative. The truth, too, is that in general who we are at school is probably only a small piece of who we actually are.

You will probably feel best, though, the more you are able to truly be yourself and not be defined by what you do or how others think of you. How do you do that? Well, I hope that during your junior year this starts happening more naturally as you spend more time doing the things that give you the most meaning, and discover and develop the gifts and talents God has given you.

## *Think About:*

1. What gifts and talents has God given you? How do you know, and how are you using those gifts and talents?
2. How much of what people see of you at school is really who you are?
3. If you could choose a few parts of your personality that you really like and show those to people, what would you want them to see? Why?

## *Now What?*

Is there something you wish you could do at school that you just are too scared to attempt or haven't felt like it's the right time to try? Step outside your comfort zone and do it. Tell three people about it, and ask them to keep you accountable and encourage you.

## *Read:*

Psalms 139:1-6 and 1 Peter 2:9

## *Notes:*



## No. 3 WHO ARE YOU AT HOME?

---

Growing up, I was pretty much a hermit when I was home. I spent a lot of time in my room reading—and by “a lot of time” I mean like all the time. When I wasn’t eating or doing jobs around the house, I was in my room. Because of that I would say I wasn’t very present in my home, and my family jokingly called my room “The Cave.” And my other role besides “cave dweller” was that of being the only boy in my family. So I did a lot of traditional guy jobs such as splitting wood, cutting the grass, washing cars, and things like that.

Now that I look back, what I regret about my high school years at home is that I wasn’t really very present with my family. I don’t remember having a lot of deep conversations with either of my parents or my sisters. I think I missed out on a lot of wisdom and growth that would have come from those times. Whatever your home situation may be, take time to value and invest in your relationships with your family. Down the road, you’ll be happy that you did.

## *Think About:*

1. If you had to label your “at-home persona” in just a few words, how would you describe it?
2. How engaged are you with your family, and what things do you all like to do together?
3. What are some of the unique, specific things that you bring to your family?
4. Because God has put you in this family, what do you think your specific role is? Why?

## *Now What?*

Do something different this week with your family. If you are like me and enjoy hibernating, see what would happen if you took the time to actively engage one of your parents or another family member in a conversation. Take the time to really be present and “with” others.

## *Read:*

Genesis 18:19, Joshua 24:15, and Zephaniah 3:17

## *Notes:*

## No. 4 WHO ARE YOU AT CHURCH?

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I don't remember ever missing youth group in middle school or high school. (You know this already if you've read the previous books in this series.) I was at every event, camp, retreat, and all Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. I loved my youth group and church. But I had a really different personality and role at church than I did anywhere else in my life. It was at my church that I first learned that I had some leadership skills. It was there that people began to encourage me to share what I thought. It was on retreats and at camps where I found out that I was really good at hiking and biking and that I could push myself pretty hard.

You may have a similar story—you're really involved in a youth group. I wonder who you are in that group. Depending on your personality and the size of the group, it can be easy to fade into the background and not really be known. Even though I was very involved in youth group, I wasn't fully known at my home church by other adults. I'm pretty convinced God put me in that church for a reason, though— and every time I'm home and drive past that building, I have special memories of connecting with God there.

## *Think About:*

1. Who are you at church? Do you have a different persona than at school?
2. How does your youth group or church impact you?
3. How many people at your youth group or church truly know who you are?
4. Why do you go to church? What do you hope to find there?

## *Now What?*

See if you can make an appointment with your church's youth pastor or senior pastor. Go in and ask them a few questions about how well they know you. Assure them that you are not trying to make them feel bad; you just want to know if you really are "known" at your church or youth group. After those potentially awkward moments, ask them to give you some advice about how to be more involved and engaged and known.

## *Read:*

Acts 2:38, Hebrews 10:24-25, and 1 John 1:7

## *Notes:*

## №. 5 WHO ARE YOU WHEN YOU FEEL PAIN?

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Nobody likes to feel pain. I've never really been hurt, broken anything, or seen the inside of a hospital from a patient's point of view. On one hand that is a good thing because I've lived a relatively healthy life. But there is one downside to this: Because I haven't experienced much physical pain, I don't really know how to handle it. On the emotional level, too, I haven't had anyone close to me die, nor have I had a lot of things that might cause serious emotions to happen. Again there is a downside: If and when these emotionally painful events occur, I won't have experience to help me handle them.

You may have dealt with a lot of physical or emotional pain. It's no fun. But who are you when you feel pain? Does it cause you to give up, give in, or be incapacitated? Or does it spark an inner desire to endure and grow? How do you relate to a God who allows pain to happen sometimes, and how does that experience affect your attitude toward God?





## *Think About:*

1. What's the worst physical pain you've experienced? How did you respond?
2. What's the worst emotional pain you've experienced? How did you respond?
3. Where did you learn how to respond to pain you feel?
4. Why do you think God allows pain to happen?

## *Now What?*

Step outside yourself for a bit, and see if you can help someone else who might be going through a painful situation. How can you best comfort and care for someone? Focusing on the needs of others can give us extra strength to endure the physical or emotional pain we're experiencing.

## *Read:*

Psalms 18:2, Romans 8:18, and 1 Corinthians 10:13

## *Notes:*