



BIG IDEA: Middle school can feel messy, but Jesus is with you in it.

SCRIPTURE: *Colossians 3:17, Matthew 5:14-16*

[Teacher's Note: Share a lighthearted story from your own middle school or junior high experience about something you would have changed about your school. This could be a rule you thought was ridiculous, a trend you didn't understand, a class you dreaded, a cafeteria disaster, or a funny "Why is this even a thing?" moment. Keep it playful and relatable. The goal is to help students laugh, connect, and start thinking about what they would change about their own school.]

What about you? If you could change one thing about your school—anything at all—what would it be?

Take a minute to share with the people around you. (PAUSE)

Now I'm looking for two or three people to share their ideas to change their schools... who's got something? (PAUSE)

Right now, school is a huge part of your life. You spend around seven hours a day there, five days a week, for about nine months a year. If you add all that up, it's more than 10,000 hours before you even graduate high school. That's a lot of classrooms, bus rides, teachers, and school lunches. So, if school right now consumes so much of your time, what does it look like to live out your faith there in those hallways?

Our faith isn't just for Fridays or Sundays. Jesus doesn't just show up in your home church or at youth group. He's with you in every hallway, every class, and every moment in between. That's what this series—This is Real Life—is all about: seeing how Jesus meets us in our everyday, ordinary, sometimes messy, real lives.

And this week, we're starting where you probably feel like you spend too much time: your school. What does it look like to follow Jesus there Monday through Friday?

It feels easier here. Church feels like the place where our faith fits. We talk about God, pray together, and sing worship songs together on Sunday

mornings. It feels natural here. But at our schools? It doesn't seem comfortable.

Everyone knows how weird it is to see their teachers in the grocery store or at Target; that moment when your brain can't process it because they're "not where they belong." It's weird, right? What's the weirdest place you've ever run into a teacher of yours? (PAUSE)

Would the reverse of it be running into Jesus at your school? Like "what are you doing here, Jesus? I don't think you're allowed to be here."

It's easy to start thinking that our faith belongs only at church or youth group, but not in the hallways, classrooms, or lunch tables of our everyday lives. For a lot of people, it's not that you don't believe in Jesus, it's just that middle school feels like a place where faith doesn't fit.

Maybe there's no room for it. Homework, sports practices, group projects, performances, friends; your schedule is already packed. It's easy for your faith to get pushed to the background.

Or maybe you're worried about standing out. It seems like no one else around you are talking about God or takes their faith seriously, and you don't want to look weird or get labeled the "church kid".

And maybe sometimes it's hard to believe that God even cares about what happens in your everyday life. Why would the Creator of the universe care about who you sit with at lunch, or how you're going to do on your science quiz, or what your locker combination is?

When you add it all up, faith can start to feel like it only fits here on Sundays, but not in the middle of your week. But what if Jesus truly cares about your real, everyday life; your classes, your friends, the drama, and all the messy parts? What if He's not just here with you at youth group, but he's in every classroom, cafeteria, and hallway in between?

In our Bibles, there's a letter to this church in the town of Colossae from a Jesus-follower named Paul. It's known as the New Testament book of Colossians, and in chapter 3, verse 17, Paul wrote:

Read Colossians 3:17 NIV

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Let every detail in your lives—word, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

He wrote, “Whatever you do.” Whatever. That means math tests. That means gym class. That means walking the dog, hanging out with friends, even scrolling your phone.

Paul said: If God is *your* God... if you are seeking to follow Jesus, to *become* like Jesus, then everything you do can reflect Him.

Faith isn’t something you turn on here but turn off on Monday morning. It’s something you carry with you, into every hallway, every conversation, every interaction.

Think about some of your favorite superheroes—Superman, Spider-man, Wonder Woman. When they’re not saving the world, they have these normal, everyday lives: Clark Kent is a reporter, Peter Parker is a student, Diana Prince works at a museum. But no matter where they are, the *hero* part of who they are doesn’t disappear. It’s who they are all the time. That’s what Paul was saying. Following Jesus isn’t something you switch off when you walk into school. It’s part of who you are, and it shapes how you live.

Jesus spoke about this too. In Matthew, chapter 5, He said:

Read Matthew 5:14-16 NIV

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Read Matthew 5:14-16 MESSAGE

Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

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