

**A 30-DAY DEVOTIONAL FOR JUNIORS**

# **JUNIOR**

**MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL**

**LARS ROOD**



**simply for students**



[YouthMinistry.com/TOGETHER](http://YouthMinistry.com/TOGETHER)

## Junior

Making Sense of It All

© 2013 Lars Rood

[group.com](http://group.com)

[simplyyouthministry.com](http://simplyyouthministry.com)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without prior written permission from the publisher, except where noted in the text and in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, visit [group.com/customer-support/permissions](http://group.com/customer-support/permissions).

## Credits

Author: Lars Rood

Executive Developer: Nadim Najm

Chief Creative Officer: Joani Schultz

Editor: Rob Cunningham

Cover Art and Production: Veronica Preston

ISBN 978-0-7644-9004-0

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13

Printed in the U.S.A.

## **TO KAIJE:**

One of these days you will be a junior. You're the kind of kid who is always wanting to figure things out and to learn more about things. You're a reader like me. Kaije, I love you, and this book makes me think of you.





# CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
-------------------	---

## **Section 1: Do You Know Who You Are?..... 1**

1. How comfortable are you with you? .....	3
2. Who are you at school?.....	5
3. Who are you at home? .....	7
4. Who are you at church?.....	9
5. Who are you when you feel pain? .....	11
6. Where do you find your self-worth? .....	13
7. Who are you with your friends?.....	15
8. Who are you when you are alone? .....	18
9. What gifts and talents did God give you?.....	20
10.If you could change things about yourself, what would you change? .....	22

## **Section 2: Who Do Others Say You Are? ..... 25**

11.Who do your friends say you are? .....	27
12.Who do your parents say you are?.....	30
13.Who do your teachers say you are? .....	32

14. Who do your coaches say you are? ..... 34

15. Who does your youth group say you are? ..... 36

16. Who do your online friends say you are? ..... 38

17. Who does your boss say you are? ..... 41

18. Who does your wallet say you are? ..... 43

19. Who does your past say you are? ..... 45

20. Who do your habits say you are? ..... 48

**Section 3: Who Does Jesus Say You Are?..... 51**

21. You are loved ..... 53

22. You are perfectly made ..... 55

23. You are beautiful (or handsome) ..... 57

24. You are wonderfully made ..... 59

25. You are gifted ..... 61

26. You are trusted ..... 63

27. You are redeemed ..... 65

28. You are holy ..... 67

29. You are forgiven..... 69

30. You have hope ..... 71

Follow-Up ..... 73

# 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 this book 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.

Each devotion includes a section called “The World Thinks.” Most often these are comments that I have heard from non-Christians about these particular topics or issues. I don’t hold back, so they may come across as a little negative. That’s OK. You’ll hear negative things all the time about your faith. The point is to encourage you to think through what people say and work out how you might respond to the thoughts and reactions people have about your faith in Christ.

You’ll also 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. Finally, I’ve included some Bible passages for you to look up—sometimes several, but often 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.

It’s my hope and prayer that these devotions will challenge you, encourage you, and put you in places where you will have the opportunity to make sense of it all.



# **SECTION 1**

**DO YOU KNOW  
WHO YOU ARE?**



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.

# **NO. 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?

## **THE WORLD THINKS:**

This is kind of a weird one, because on one hand the world tells you to be yourself and do what you want, but the world also sends the message that you shouldn't push it so far that you don't fit in anymore. You are caught in a contradiction of feeling like you are supposed to be different but that you could pay a price because of those differences.

## **ACT:**

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:**

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

## **NO. 2 WHO ARE YOU AT SCHOOL?**

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?

## **THE WORLD THINKS:**

*It's OK to be defined by what you do, and you should try to do as much as possible so you will have a better chance of figuring out what you really like. If you want to get into a good college, you have to be a well-rounded student, anyway. Do things even if you don't like them, because it will pay off in the end.*

## **ACT:**

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:**

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



## **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?

## **THE WORLD THINKS:**

*There is a high probability your family will disappoint you, so you should work to protect yourself from that happening.*

## **ACT:**

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