

MARK OESTREICHER & BROOKLYN LINDSEY

99 THOUGHTS FOR JUNIOR HIGHERS

BIBLICAL TRUTHS IN BITE-SIZED PIECES



99 Thoughts for Junior Highers

Biblical Truths in Bite-Sized Pieces

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Credits

Authors: Mark Oestreicher and Brooklyn Lindsey

Executive Developer: Jason Ostrander

Chief Creative Officer: Joani Schultz

Editor: Rob Cunningham

Cover Art and Production: Laura Wagner and Veronica Preston

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in the past, when you were
a child, you may have been
told that you were a "good
child" or a "bad child." But
now you are a young man
or woman, and you are
learning to think for
yourself. You are learning
to make your own
choices and to live your
own life. This is a great
thing, and it is a sign of
maturity. You are becoming
a person who can
stand up for your beliefs
and who can make
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READ THIS FIRST

Junior highers are amazing. Really. We think so, and we're completely confident that God thinks so.

But let's be honest: Being a junior higher can be super confusing, wildly uneven, and as frustrating as a pop quiz.

We want to help. That's why we wrote these 99 thoughts—a collection of short, honest, and right-to-the-point ideas and advice to help you out in every area of your life.

You can read all 99 of them in order. Or you can jump around and read whatever interests you. There's no right or wrong way to read this book. Well, actually, reading the book while you're wearing a bathing suit made of bacon, and underwater in a tank of sharks—that would be a wrong way to read this book. Besides, the pages aren't waterproof—duh.

You'll also notice, sooner or later, that in addition to the 99 thoughts, each chapter ends with a story from one of us (Marko or Brooklyn) as junior highers. These are completely real and true stories that happened to us and reflect what we remember thinking and feeling. But we wrote them as if we were still in junior high (even though, we're *not* in junior high anymore—that would be *really weird* if we were).

Allow us to introduce ourselves:

My name is Marko. Actually, it's Mark, and my last name starts with an O (it's that weird-looking name on the

book cover); but everyone, even my mom, calls me Marko. It's just easier. I'll be honest—I'm kind of old. In fact, I'm probably older than your parents. But I still completely love hanging out with junior highers. And I get to do that all the time, since my work involves doing just that and helping other people learn about you. I live in San Diego, California, which is every bit as wonderful as it might sound. My wife and I have two kids—one of 'em, the girl, is 19 and in college; and one of 'em, the guy, is 15 and a sophomore in high school. And I have a ridiculous beard. Really. It's massive. It even has its own Twitter® account.

Hello. I'm Brooklyn. If you're reading this, then you're one of my favorite people on Earth: a junior high-age person—winner! You have no idea how much I would like to meet you. If we could hang out tomorrow and chat about your life, I'd love it. But since we may not be able to do that right away, we can hang out together in this book. I live in Florida right now, with my ridiculously wonderful husband and adorable little girls. And we also have hundreds of adopted teenagers who we care for big-time—our youth group! Consider yourself an honorary member. I hope the words you find here are helpful and fun to read. You've got a lot of potential and we'd love to see you reach it!

As you read, if you have questions or need anything, let us know. We'd love to connect with you, pray for you, and be your biggest cheerleaders.

Are you ready to read and think and pray and be encouraged? We sure hope so. Let's do this thing.

Marko and Brooklyn

This is a good place to start, and not only because it's near the beginning of the book. You're in an awesome and semi-crazy time of life, when you're on the road to figuring out who you are, what you like, and who you want to become.

THOUGHT #1

YOU'RE ONE OF A KIND

You've probably heard this before. "You're special!"
"There's only one you!"

But as cheesy as those statements might sound to you, they express something both important and true: God didn't make thousands of you, or hundreds, or even two (even if you're a twin!). No other person in history has your exact genetic makeup, no other person has the physical stuff that makes you, you.

But at a deeper level, there never has been and never will be another person with the same combination of skills, interests, personality quirks, and experiences. Only you.

That's an amazing reality, and one that says something about how much God is into you. God *loves* your uniqueness.

Being unique also has a sense of potential and potency to it: *No one else* can leave a mark on the world like you

can; no one else can create the same beauty (or evil) that you can create. And when you grow to understand your uniqueness more, you can learn to embrace that. You can make the choice to be your own one-of-a-kind self.

THOUGHT #2

YOU'RE MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE

When God was inventing everything in the world, he did something wild and massively gorgeous: He chose to make humans “in his own image.”

Think of it like this: Imagine being an expert in robotics. One day you unveil a robot like no one has ever seen. In fact, the entire scientific world is blown away by your robot, because it can think for itself and is amazingly human-like in the ways it acts, feels, and responds. And as people start to interact with your robot, they realize something else: It's very much like *you*. It's not that the robot necessarily *looks like you*, but there's something about the robot's *character* that constantly makes people think of you—almost like they're interacting with you when they're actually interacting with your robot.

It would be fair to say that you made your robot “in your own image.”

But you're not a robot made by God. You're much more than a robot!



And because you're made in the image of God (not accidentally, by the way—this was God's plan), you have human-sized portions of God's abilities and character in you.

THOUGHT #3

YOU ARE KNOWN

Junior high can be a lonely time. You might even have a bunch of friends but still feel lonely from time to time.

And as you start to get to know yourself better, it's pretty normal to sometimes wonder if anyone else really knows you. Your friends might do things that make you wonder this. Even your parents might sometimes treat you in a way that makes you feel like they don't know you.

But have confidence in this: God knows you.

God isn't just a distant spiritual presence, off fighting cosmic battles or juggling planets on the other side of the universe. Jesus tells us, in the Bible, that God knows more about you than you even know about yourself. God even knows how many hairs are on your head. That doesn't mean that God has a big database of weird details about every human; it means that God knows your deepest joys and fears, your secrets that you don't even admit to yourself, your hopes and dreams. God knows *everything* about you.

LIFE FOR A TYPICAL JUNIOR HIGHER IS AWESOME.

And hard. And fun. And exciting. And boring. And crazy, right? Basically, it's a blur of all those things—and more!

Junior high truly is a season of ups and downs, of possibilities and confusion, of amazing memories and embarrassing moments. To survive it all, you sometimes just need a little help—or 99 bite-sized bits of help!

Mark Oestreicher and Brooklyn Lindsey—youth pastors who've worked with people your age for a long, long time—have teamed up to create this insider's guide for the wild ride.

They'll help as you examine the changes in your life, figure out what you believe, see where God and church fit into the picture, choose how to interact with family and friends, and decide what matters most in life. And you'll read some true stories about the authors' own junior high years!

99 Thoughts for Junior Highers will entertain, engage, and encourage you during this crazy season of life!



MARK OESTREICHER (Marko) is a veteran youth worker and founding partner in The Youth Cartel, providing resources, training, and coaching for church youth workers. The author of dozens of books, including *Youth Ministry 3.0*, Marko is a sought-after speaker, writer, and consultant. Marko lives in San Diego with his wife, Jeannie, and two teenage children, Liesl and Max. Marko's blog is whymarko.com.



BROOKLYN LINDSEY serves as the middle school pastor at Highland Park Church of the Nazarene in Lakeland, Florida. She loves to communicate and has written a few books (but this one is her favorite). Her husband, Coy, is also a pastor and an author. They have two little girls, Kirra and Mya, and without them Brooklyn might not have much of an Instagram account. Get to know her better at brooklynlindsey.com and on Twitter, [@brooklynlindsey](https://twitter.com/brooklynlindsey).



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