

BACK TO SCHOOL

DEVOTIONS



- THE DAY BEFORE SCHOOL DEVO - DAY 1

"I say this because I know what I have planned for you," says the Lord.

"I have good plans for you. I don't plan to hurt you.

I plan to give you hope and a good future.

JEREMIAH 29:11 ICB

"Where God's love is, there is no fear,
because God's perfect love takes away fear."

1 JOHN 4:18 ICB

Guess what!? Did you know that you are about to embark upon an exciting new adventure? One that is filled with happy moments, new friends, and new experiences! The start of your new school year begins tomorrow and this is your adventure! The start of an adventure can bring up a lot of emotions. You may feel excited, nervous, or scared. In fact, there may be a lot of fear surrounding the start of this school year as there are a lot of unknowns. While it is normal to feel those emotions, they do not have the final say and do not define what your school year ahead will be.

The good news is, you are not alone! We know the one who holds the future! The Bible tells us that God has good plans for us! He has plans that are full of hope and goodness. He has a plan for your new school year and He wants it to be full of joy and peace! When you feel scared or worried of what is to come, bring it to God. Our verse in 1 John tells us that His love takes away all fear! Tell God what you are nervous or scared about. He cares about you and is able to give you the strength you need to face this school year ahead with courage and confidence! He's got your back!

Tomorrow is a new day! One that is going to be full of excitement, nerves, and fun! Fear must move aside, because you are ready to embark on an amazing new adventure and God is with you every step of the way and His love is removing all fear!

ACTIVITY

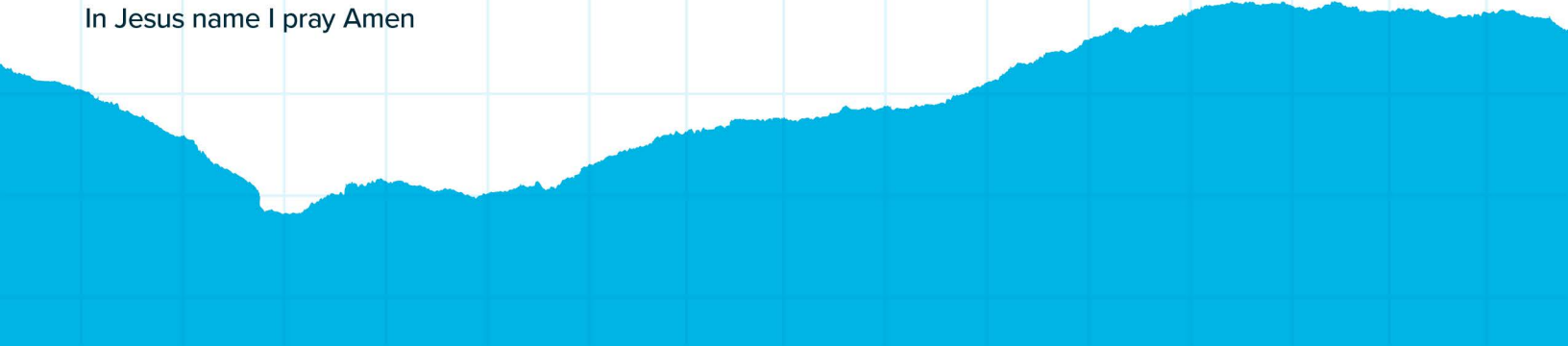
Write out all the emotions you are feeling about tomorrow. Write down even specific things you may be thinking like, "Where will I sit?" or "What if someone has the same backpack that I do?" Once you have everything you are feeling and thinking out on the paper, tell God all of those things! Spend time in prayer telling him how you are feeling and ask Him for strength, peace, courage, and confidence. Know that He is with you and He has a good plan for you!

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father,

I thank you that tomorrow I get to start a new adventure! Thank you that I do not have to walk into school tomorrow and face my day alone. Thank you that you are going to give me the confidence and courage I need to face the day with courage and confidence! Thank you that you are with me and thank you that you have plans for my life that are good!

In Jesus name I pray Amen



- KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS - DAY 2

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.”

HEBREWS 12:1-2 NLT

Friends! I need your help! I’ve got a bit of an um...embarrassing problem. I keep...seeing...SQUIRRELS! I know it sounds crazy but you have to believe me! Every time I try to focus...SQUIRREL! Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever worked super hard to stay focused only to find yourself thinking about Minions, fluffy unicorns, or Chick-Fil-A sauce?

Sometimes when I don’t eat my stomach gets reealllly chatty and distracts me. If I’m honest, there are also times when my big feelings distract me from being patient or my selfishness distracts me from being kind. Maybe the same is true for you! A new school year can be full of SQUIRRELS! I’m sorry, I mean distractions. Video games can distract us from homework. Wanting to be popular can distract us from doing what is right. Bullies can distract us from remembering the truth of who God says we are. Jealousy can distract us from being generous.

Hebrews 12:1-2 tells us that we should rid ourselves of everything that slows us down as we pursue Jesus. The solution to fighting these distractions isn’t closing our eyes really tight and yelling FOCUS FOX! Trust me, I’ve tried! Trying harder in our human power isn’t the solution we’re looking for. It’s actually through another power, the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us recognize when we are being distracted and through His power, turn our eyes to Jesus.

This passage of Scripture goes on to tell us that we accomplish this by fixing our eyes on Jesus.

Wait...we can’t actually see Jesus! This could get confusing quickly, let me explain! Fixing our eyes on Jesus isn’t something we do literally. What this scripture is saying is that we should fix our minds and our hearts on Jesus. Some ways to do this could be memorizing scripture, sharing what we learn in Access Kids each week, praying with and for our friends, playing worship music, or repeating the good, wonderful and true things that God says about us.

Each of these things help us turn away from distractions and toward Jesus. So, my friend, as you embark on a new school year, don’t forget to keep your eyes on...SQUIRRELS! Not squirrels! Jesus! Keep your eyes on Jesus! But hey, maybe every time you see a squirrel it can remind you to turn your eyes to Jesus.

FAMILY CHAT

- What are some ways you felt distracted last school year?
- What are 3 ways the Holy Spirit can help you fight those distractions?

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit and the power He provides to help me keep my eyes on Jesus.
As I go through each day, help me to fix my mind and heart on you. No matter what distractions come my way, lead my heart back to You.
In Jesus name I pray, amen.

- GOD SEES YOU - DAY 3

“Lord, you know everything there is to know about me. You perceive every movement of my heart and soul, and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind. You are so intimately aware of me, Lord. You read my heart like an open book and you know all the words I’m about to speak before I even start a sentence! You know every step I will take before my journey even begins. You’ve gone into my future to prepare the way, and in kindness you follow behind me to spare me from the harm of my past. You have laid your hand on me! This is just too wonderful, deep, and incomprehensible! Your understanding of me brings me wonder and strength.”

Psalms 139:1-6, TPT

Starting a new school year brings all kinds of emotions. Maybe you're excited to see your friends again. Maybe you're nervous about a new teacher, a new classroom, or making new friends. Maybe you're just wishing summer could last a little longer and that you could still sleep in just a little bit later!

No matter how you're feeling, here's something you can be sure of: God sees you. Before you walk into your classroom, He already knows exactly how you're feeling and what your day will hold. And the best part? He goes with you. You're never walking into school alone.

Not only does God see you, He knows you and loves you. You don't have to earn His love by making good grades, making the team, or being the most popular kid at school. He loves you on your best days and your hardest days simply because you belong to Him.

So as you begin this school year, remember this: when you feel excited, thank Him. When you feel nervous, trust Him. And when you feel like no one notices you, remember

You are SEEN. You are KNOWN. You are LOVED by God.

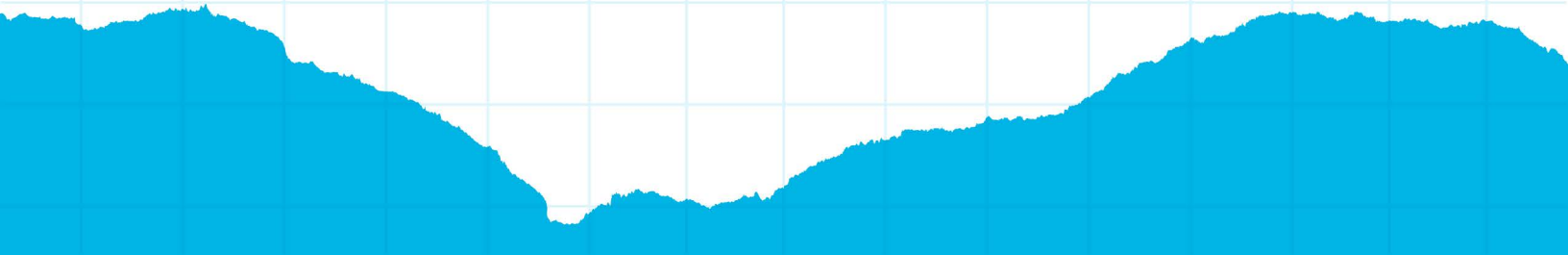
THINK ABOUT IT

- What are you most excited about this school year?
- What are you nervous about?
- How does it make you feel to know God is with you wherever you go?

PRAYER

Dear God,

Thank You for seeing me, knowing me, and loving me. Thank You for going with me into this new school year. Help me to trust You, to be kind to others, and to remember that I'm never alone because You are always with me. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



- BE AN ENCOURAGER -
DAY 4

**“ SO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER WITH THE HOPE YOU HAVE. BUILD EACH OTHER UP.
IN FACT, THAT’S WHAT YOU ARE DOING.”**
1 THESSALONIANS 5:11 NIRV

A friend is a true gift from God! A real friend is someone that you can trust, that brings encouragement, and will support you on good days and hard days. Just like you may have incredible friends, this school year you get the opportunity to also be an incredible friend and a champion of others!

Starting off the school year without knowing anyone can be scary. In fact, maybe that is what you are facing. However, whether you are walking into your school year with friends or without, Jesus has called us friends! Jesus is your friend forever and He speaks words of love and kindness over your life. Jesus is the greatest friend of all because His love for us will never cease.

As you begin a new school year, notice the people around you. Look out for those who sit alone, are shy, or are nervous. You have the love and light of Jesus living within you! Go up to those people and say hello! Like the verse in 1 Thessalonians says, find a way to bring encouragement! Maybe this looks like complimenting their shoes or backpack or finding a way to help them with something at school. Be known in your class as the person that is encouraging and kind to everyone!

CHALLENGE

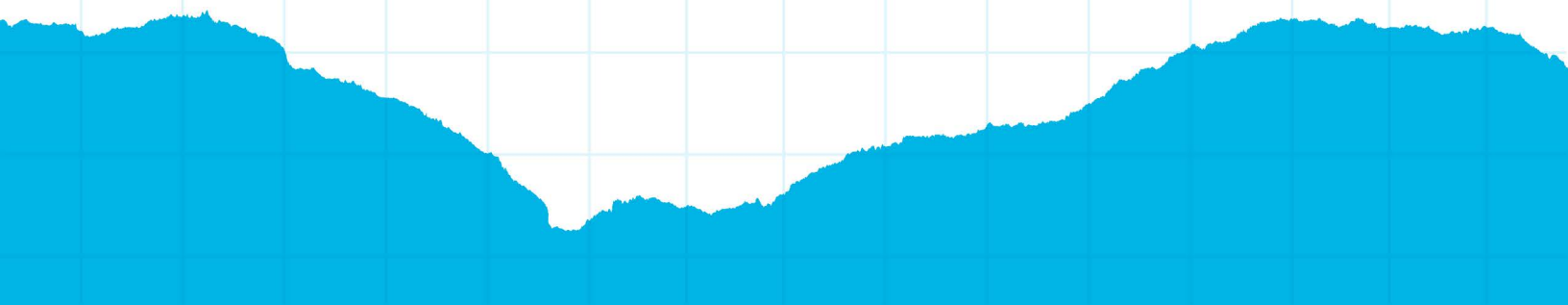
This week at school, find a way to encourage someone new each day!

PRAYER

Dear God,

Thank you so much that your love never ceases. Thank you that you are my friend forever. Because of that I can live with confidence and I can bring love and encouragement to others! Help me to find ways to be kind to new people this week.

In Jesus name I pray Amen



- BEING THE BEST KIND OF FRIEND - DAY 5

“Here is my command. Love one another just as I have loved you.”

JOHN 15:12 NIRV

Whew! After hundreds of minutes, I FINALLY got that squirrel situation figured out. I don't know what did the trick, but I'm not seeing random squirrels anymore. Honestly, I should be thanking you. I really was embarrassed about it, I mean, seeing random squirrels is a bit strange. When I shared that embarrassing secret I was worried you may tease me. Instead, you listened. You didn't judge me, you made it safe for me. You were such a good friend.

We all need good friends! Friendship makes the greatest moments sweeter, and the heaviest moments lighter.

Ya know, talking so much about friendship makes me wonder, what IS a good friend?

In the Bible, there is this man named Jesus (you may have heard of Him - spoiler alert, He dies) who time after time exemplifies what it means to be an incredible friend. Here are some of my favorite stories of Jesus as a friend!

In Luke 19:1-10, Jesus is passing through Jericho when He looks up and sees a man named Zaccheus in a sycamore-fig tree. Zaccheus was a short king, so he was easily overlooked...literally. Zaccheus was also a tax collector and tax collectors in that time weren't very popular, so he was also disliked. But Jesus didn't overlook or dislike Zaccheus, He saw him in that tree and invited him to dinner. Zaccheus was seen by Jesus.

In John 1:43-50, Jesus is in Galilee when a new friend named Philip joins Him on His adventures. Before leaving on their epic quest, Philip invites his brother Nathanael and when he meets Jesus something strange happens. Jesus speaks to Nathanael as if he already knows him even though they had never met! As the conversation continues, Nathanael realizes that Jesus is God and He does really know who he is. Nathanael was known by Jesus.

John 15:13 tells us, “There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.” And being the most amazing friend in history, Jesus died so we could have the opportunity to be His friend. Jesus loved His friends.

Jesus was the best kind of friend. His life, death, and resurrection show us what it means to be amazing friends. He shows us that a good friend sees, knows, and loves others.

So, this school year, instead of trying to have the most friends, how about we try to be the friend Jesus has shown us to be. Let's take the time to see the lonely classmate at lunch and sit with them. Let's learn about something important to a new student. And while we do not need to actually die for anyone to lay down our lives, what if we laid down our lives through serving our friends? We can give up our seat, help someone with a math problem that has them stumped, or hug someone who may be having a hard day.

The truth is we can be a good friend because we have the best friend in Jesus. We are seen, known, and loved by the greatest friend. So, we can be the best friend and see, know, and love others.

CHALLENGE

During your first full week of school find a way to make someone feel seen, known, and loved.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father,

thank you for seeing me, knowing me, and loving me. As I start this new school year, empower me to be the type of friend you have invited me to be. Help me to see others, love others, and know them as you do.

In Jesus name I pray, amen.

