

Dear God,

Welcome

Back

to

School



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ENCOURAGEMENT AND REVIVAL FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL WORKERS

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# Dedication



To my mom, Ida Mae Thomas, for bringing me forth to be about my Father's business.

To my daughter, Chelsea Janell, for never leaving me nor forsaking me. You're truly your Father's daughter and a servant to the King!



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# Introduction



Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

—1 Corinthians 6:19-20

DO YOU KNOW what God means when He says through His Word that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, teacher? Do you, as a Christian, know that the Holy Spirit is in you, administrator, and that you are not your own, staff support worker? Do you know that you have been bought with Jesus' blood, district office employee and bus driver?

Perhaps you answer with a confident yes. But if not, know that the Word of God (John 1:1), Jesus Himself, represents God's truth, and He asks us to glorify God with our bodies—even in and around public schools.

Imagine yourself as a serving pitcher for a beverage. Despite your outward appearance of stained glass or decorative clay, no one can really see what's inside you. Your exterior might be beautiful, sturdy, or strong but when you open your mouth your character begins to pour out. Hopefully what is pouring out is Christ Himself—the Hope of Glory (Colossians 1:27).

This is what you must remember as you enter into this upcoming school year. You have been sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit, who has taken residence inside of you. For the rest of your days, He wants to reign in your mortal body. As you grow in Christ, areas of frustration, annoyance, and aggravation will diminish as the fruit of the Spirit in your life takes shape on the True Vine (John 15:1)—Jesus Himself. Love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, self-control, faith, and meekness have been brewing for years—so much that others barely recognize your old “man.” Now you have surrendered to the new “man” and you’re convinced that it is God who is at work in you. You want God there. You need Him there. You have finally surrendered to His will and long to commit your life to God to create a good work of service in you at home and at your school.

God’s wisdom equips you to live out these fruit without any need for conflict with the law. After all, you now have confidence to approach His throne of grace to pray on behalf of the land. You now count on the Righteous Judge (2 Timothy 4:8) to apply mercy and grace to every battle because you know the battle is His.

Jesus is giving you direction by the Holy Spirit. Because you have earnestly *desired* to hear what the Spirit is saying, you now have an *ear* to hear what the Spirit is saying. Yes, the Lord's Spirit is living and active in and around you. The administration of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is victorious over you each day. Even when you fall you experience His love and protection. You even appreciate His convictions. God is abounding more and more through you so you rejoice at what God is doing in your life, classroom, or office.

By grace you have made it this far because you have come to understand the absolute necessity to mortify the deeds of your own flesh as the "Pharaoh" spirit at your school makes your task more and more rigorous. You remember the God of the Old Testament—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and you are convinced that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever and that He hears your cries, sees your afflictions, and knows your oppression. In light of this, you wait on Him to respond as God responded to the children of Israel:

So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

—Exodus 3:8

No more murmuring. No more complaining. You are a house of prayer for the issues that surround the school and its administration—even your state board

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of education. You are now able to look past the natural and see the spiritual battle that is affecting your local school: illiteracy, truancy, lack of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, depression, perversion, spirits of error, bondage, and captivity, to name a few. Work isn't just "work" anymore. It's a place where your spiritual workout brings glory to the living God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

You've read the Bible for years and now you get it. You're not just a hearer but now you are a doer. You have surrendered to the One who is able to do exceedingly abundantly more than you could ever ask or think because no program, magnet, or psychological profile alone can defeat the kingdom of darkness. It is Jesus, the Master Teacher and Lord of your life, who's giving you the victory as you walk by the Spirit. As it is written:

"...Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,"  
says the LORD Almighty.

—Zechariah 4:6

Now, will the real body of Christ please stand up in public schools? Refuse to quench God's Spirit around you. Walk by the Spirit. Be led by the Spirit, and you will win. Do what the Spirit is leading you to do, and watch the victory in Jesus' name. Be ready, under the Spirit's leadership, to pray, humble yourself, anoint, heal, encourage, speak life, bless the children, teach, bind, loose, decree and declare, cast out, and wither some fig trees in Jesus' name (Matthew 21:19).

You're assignment is simple with the Lord on your side:

Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

—Joshua 1:6-9



## CHAPTER 1

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# Dear Children



And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

—Mark 10:16

HOW DO YOU respond when someone asks you the question, “Are you ready to go back to school?” The first day is fast approaching, your teaching and room assignment has changed, and the all-familiar teacher, administrative, and district meetings are about to begin!

I encourage you to try a different approach to the first day of school. Think of your return to school through the perspective given in God’s Word:

...Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

—Mark 10:14

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Three of the gospels speak of this occasion in the life of Jesus. As I write this, I am examining these accounts in a Precious Moments edition of the Bible. The cute picture of a little child standing before Jesus takes my heart away. For one, Jesus' love for children is so clearly evident. The other reason is because of the same opportunity we have to allow the Jesus in us to stand before students each and every day. If only we could see them as Jesus does! We must remember that like us, they are children in desperate need of the Lord. We can certainly testify to the enemy's work in some of their lives because the devil used the same schemes on us. What would happen if Christians commit to a school year of giving children example after example of the character of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

Whatever encounters the people of the Bible had with Jesus, they had enough sense to bring their children to Him. Why did the disciples rebuke them for bringing these precious little ones to Jesus? Could it be that the disciples saw "children" versus the next generation of medical professionals, military leaders, business partners, school personnel, social service activist, social media giants, government leaders or church builders? The world has had such a negative effect on our children that some of us don't recognize them as precious unless they're in diapers. We certainly can criticize them for looking like the world but maybe we're just as much at fault because we visualize them according to the world's standards and not the Lord's.

Could it be that we have become so caught up in ourselves—even our walk with Jesus—that a child's approach to Him seems foolish? Some may think, *Jesus*



*couldn't possibly allow them to get that close to Him.* I know a number of children who are faithful to God's work in their lives yet they need a lot of guidance.

The Devil certainly tries to swallow them up early. That's one of his schemes:

Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him." "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me." Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed from that moment.

—Matthew 17:15-18

I have a friend who wondered if she should bring her son to church. I showed her this scripture and convinced her that if that child isn't seeing Jesus in some way, the prince of this world (John 14:30) will find a place within him.

In the public school you are going to encounter students with or without Christ. If you allow them to experience the God in you—His love, His patience, His mercy, His grace, His forgiveness and His discipline—you could be the first or last experience they find with the Sovereign Lord (Psalms 71:5).

I have a friend who is purchasing childcare centers for the kingdom of God. Every child that comes through those doors will experience God's love and Jesus' name in that place. My friend knows the benefits of giving

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a child Christ at an early age, and she knows what it's like for a child to find salvation in Christ in high school. The point is to keep our eyes open at every age, and give children Jesus—the way, the truth and the life (John 16:4). If we're all in place for God's glory, a child can meet Jesus through us in the lunchroom, the media center, the band room, or the front office.

If we begin to see these children with God's eyes, then maybe volunteerism will increase in the primary schools and even more so in the high schools. I know high school students appear grown. Some adults label them “grown,” and the law deals with them as if they're “grown.” But their maturity level says something else.

Despite the disciples protests, “they” brought children to Jesus to have Him lay hands on them. I believe God gave us a clear picture of what happens when someone, anyone, and everyone brings children to Jesus through love and prayer! Jesus took them in His arms. He blessed them and He prayed for them. Jesus continues to pray for them as their High Priest (Heb 4:14). If you want this for your own children and for your students, then bring them to Jesus through your prayers. Submit your attendance rooster to Him while praying and mention every student by name.

Do you know that when God speaks, things happen and they happen big? Remember what happened when God said, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3)? In that example God was showing us His ways! Practice speaking and “spraying” God's Word, in faith, over your room like an air freshener before the students walk into class. Speak His Word into the air before the first bell: “Class,

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ” (Philippians 2:5). “Class, the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). “Class, Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans. 12:2). “Class, it is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:1-2). “Class, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30).

If you speak life, you will receive life. If you speak discouragement, you’re going to receive discouragement. Get your tongue and mouth together for the glory of God.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

—Matthew 5:13

As a Christian in public schools, expect students to hang around you because they are being drawn to the light, the salt, and the Jesus in you! I know you can’t take all of your time with them, but be ready to wear many hats in their sight—especially a hat with love, kindness, and patience written all over it.

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I'll never forget two girls walking into my office one year. One of the girls I recognized while the other walked side-by-side with her friend. School hadn't started but the student wanted her friend to talk to me. My office was certainly a point of reference for laughter, food, and fun. If students struck up a conversation about God and asked a question, I, by law, was ready to answer.

With this particular girl, my "mother" hat surfaced for about three minutes. The student left smiling, but the next thing I knew I was scheduled to meet with the principal. Yikes! I don't know what happened before that student walked into my office or after she left, but for those three minutes she laughed and God brought her into the midst of His Light. I didn't even know her name. I did seek the Lord about the situation and it was revealed to me that not everyone has a loving and "mothering" spirit that can be professional at the same time.

My speaking with the student was seen as "counseling." Providing hope and encouragement in those minutes wasn't hope and encouragement, it was "counseling." I suppose I crossed one of the Devil's lines when the fruit of God's spirit began to rise up in me. The Devil wants to take children out. The girl in my office was marked for destruction as the enemy comes to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10). But this is why we keep the prayers coming and why we are called to walk by faith and not by sight. Prayers are stored up for such a time as this. Only God knew what was coming that child's way, and Jesus was there to intervene on her behalf through one of His servants. He brought her into His marvelous light and the light of His countenance. The Lord protected my

interest as well and once again commanded me to pray for those who spitefully mistreat me.

With the Father's heart, "counseling" is thrown right out the door when God's love takes over! Love is our most powerful gift. All glory to God!

## **Prayer**

Father God, in Jesus' name, thank You for Your example of love and kindness to little children. Forgive me for seeing these children through the world's eyes instead of Your eyes. Each day, Father, shape my heart to receive the children in Your love and enable me to see them through Your eyes. Teach me how to pray for them and increase my faith for their godly success in Christ Jesus. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

## **The Elementary School Teacher's Testimony**

Pray continually.

—1 Thessalonians 5:17

Praise the Lord! First of all, let me start by saying: Don't be discouraged. We know the Devil is a liar because he is the father of all lies. God is not absent in public schools.

The legal system took prayer out of school, but it did not take prayer out of you. How do I know prayer is still in the public school system? Because I'm there! And my heart is there every day, all day long, in school and out of school. Just in case you didn't know, prayer still works in the public school system!

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I want to share how I know prayer is still in the public school system. To tell you my story is much too long, but it started with prayer. I am a second-career teacher—I served and worked for the military for more than eighteen years prior to my new assignment. Then I answered the call—and I emphasize *the call*—to teach. I didn't know where or what but I said, "Yes, Lord!"

Being one who struggled in elementary, junior high, high school, and college, I told the Lord I didn't know how to teach kids. I found out that not only do you need strategies, techniques, and knowledge to teach students, you need to know God and how to pray.

On any given day a student could enter your classroom with little hope of achieving anything and even less hope of someone taking time to care. All the education in the world won't assist you in helping that child realize he is somebody. You can teach math, reading, and writing all day, but if you don't teach the soul, you're not teaching.

It's going to take prayer and prayer alone to reach and teach that soul.

During my first year and first week of school, a student walked in with his head down, wrinkled clothes, and low self esteem, and I heard, "I can't do it. I'm not smart. I'm too slow." These things are hard to hear. I went home that night and said, "God, You're going to have to help me with this student. I don't know what to do." And as easy as a whisper God said, "Show him love."

I have a small problem. I'm an educator and God's love is not on any standardized test.

I found out if I pray and show them that I truly care and truly love them with God's love, the students, despite how past teachers gave up on them, can achieve the impossible.

A classroom filled with an atmosphere of prayer can cause a student who has failed the same grade twice to pass and achieve goals he or she thought were impossible. Students who previously received failing grades can leave your class with passing grades and scores high enough to reach and exceed the district MAP goal.

It's going to take prayer to move a student from a BR-15 ("below range") to a score over 425 points.

It's going to take prayer to get that "home alone" student who does his own homework to achieve the A/B honor roll every semester.

It's going to take prayer to get the student whose mom or dad has left a family too large for the student to be noticed to go on to become the model student and leader in your class.

It's going to take prayer in the public school to take over 80 percent of your class from having MAP scores below the twentieth percentile to over 75 percent in nine months.

Teachers, saints, administrators, and colleagues, it's going to take prayer to help our students. Ask me how I know—because I pray for each and every student every day. I wake up every morning praying and anointing myself. I greet my students at the door every morning with a hug, high five, or handshake.

I set the atmosphere in my classroom. Every day starts off with God's presence in my classroom—the

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Father, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost. I ask Him to have His way in my room each day and anything that is not of God cannot come near my dwelling.

Hint: Don't you know you can stop Satan and rebuke the Devil before he shows up? Oh, yeah—especially on Monday mornings after your students have been home for two or three days around any and everybody. I make sure I get there early on Mondays to stop all foolishness and anything that is not of God.

Prayer does not start the day school starts. No. I start praying for my new students on the last day of school. I start with a conversation with the Father: “First of all, God, only put those students in my class that You want me to have. God, put only those students in my class that You want me to make a difference in their lives. They may be careless, underachieving, with low self-esteem, minimal motivation, and no one at home to help or even care, but God, give me the students who need Your help through me.”

In closing I would like to say that prayer is still going on in public schools with teachers like us, who reach out and touch and pray for them every day.

To pray in public school:

1. Anoint yourself.
2. Set the atmosphere.
3. Greet your students by the laying on of hands with a handshake, high five, or hug.

—Angela Jones