

BACK TO SCHOOL GUIDE

 EmpoweredHomes

WHAT'S INSIDE THE GUIDE



A PARENT'S GREATEST JOY

A REMINDER TO FOCUS ON WHAT TRULY MATTERS



BEFORE I SAY YES

A GUIDE TO MAKING WISE DECISIONS



PACK YOUR HEART

A BACK-TO-SCHOOL FAMILY DEVOTIONAL



BACK TO SCHOOL BINGO

A CHALLENGE TO BLESS OTHERS

A PARENT'S GREATEST JOY

A REMINDER TO FOCUS ON WHAT TRULY MATTERS

John, the beloved disciple, lived a life that most of us can hardly imagine.

- He walked with Jesus.
- He heard the Sermon on the Mount firsthand.
- He watched water turn into wine.
- He saw the blind receive sight and the dead raised.
- He stood at the foot of the cross.
- He ran to the empty tomb.
- He witnessed the risen Christ.
- He saw the church grow.
- He witnessed lives changed.



by Pastor Bobby Cooley

John wasn't just a follower. He was in the inner circle, the one who leaned on Jesus' chest at the Last Supper and the one entrusted with caring for Mary, the mother of Jesus.

If anyone had reason to say, "My greatest joy was seeing miracles," it was John. If anyone could say, "My greatest joy was walking with Jesus in the flesh," it was John. If anyone could say, "My greatest joy was writing Scripture, receiving Revelation, or leading the early church," it was John. But he doesn't say any of that.

Instead, near the end of his life, after all he's seen and done, he writes:
"I have no greater joy than this: to hear that my children walk in the truth."
Not some joy. Not one of many joys. No greater joy.

A challenge for parents this school year:

Ask yourself: What in my child's life do I consider my greatest joy?

Is it tied to their school success, grades, college acceptance, what others think of them or is it to know that they are walking with God in truth?

Release the pressure of performance and perfection and inspire your kids to walk with God more closely this school year. Because one day, like John, you will look back and all the joys of the school accomplishments, experiences and highlights will fade in comparison to the joy of hearing that your child is **walking in the truth**.

"I HAVE NO GREATER JOY THAN TO HEAR MY CHILDREN WALK IN TRUTH." 3 JOHN 1:4

BEFORE I SAY YES

A GUIDE TO MAKING WISE DECISIONS

Just because you can say yes doesn't always mean you should. God gives wisdom to help us choose what is best, not just what sounds fun. Before saying yes to a new activity, club, team, sleepover, or commitment, talk through these questions with your family.

Have I prayed about this and asked God for guidance?

- Read Psalm 16
- Does saying yes help me love God and love others well?
- Do I have any hesitations or concerns about saying yes? Ask God to show you why.

Have I talked to my parents or guardian?

- Have I shared all the details and info with my parents?
- Does saying yes honor our family values?
- Remember: Your parents may see potential issues or concerns that you don't. Sometimes you just need to trust without always understanding.

Why am I saying yes?

- Because I really want to?
- Because I think God is leading me to?
- Because I am afraid of missing out? FOMO?
- Because I don't want to disappoint someone?

Do I have enough room in my schedule?

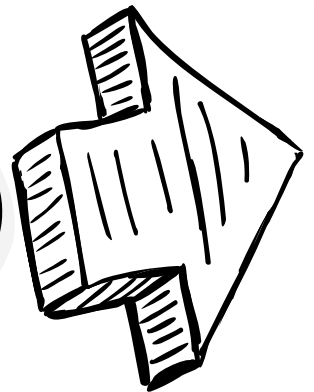
- Will I still have time for God?
- Will I still have time for my family?
- Will I be able to balance time for schoolwork, rest, and other commitments I have already made?

The YES TEST:

A GUIDE TO MAKING WISE DECISIONS

- ☐ This helps me become who God made me to be.
- ☐ I have enough time for this commitment.
- ☐ This opportunity helps me grow.
- ☐ I'm choosing it for the right reasons.
- ☐ It won't distract me from my priorities.
- ☐ I will be thankful I said yes in a week, month or when the opportunity is happening.

Can you answer yes to most of the questions above? If not, that is okay! It means it may be time to say no. Remember, a wise no should be kind, honest and confident. Check out the next page for wise ways to say no.



WISE WAYS TO SAY NO

A GUIDE TO MAKING WISE DECISIONS

Sometimes saying no to an opportunity can be difficult. The idea of disappointing someone may tempt you to say yes, when you know you should say no. Or the fear of missing out (FOMO) might cause you to over commit your schedule. Here are some ideas for saying no in a kind, honest and confident way.

Simple ways to say no:

- "Thanks for asking, but I can't."
- "I don't think that's a good choice for me."
- "No, thank you. Maybe I can another time."
- "I am not available."

When you're already over-committed:

- "I'd love to, but I already have enough on my schedule."
- "I'm keeping some time free for my family."
- "Not this time. I'm learning not to over-commit."

When you need time to think:

- "I need to ask my parents before I decide."
- "Can I let you know tomorrow?"
- "I want to pray about it first."
- "Let me think about it and get back to you."

When you feel pressure:

- "That's just not for me."
- "I'm choosing something different."
- "It isn't the right opportunity for me."
- "I don't feel comfortable doing that."

PACK YOUR HEART

A 6-WEEK BACK-TO-SCHOOL FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be provided for you." — Matthew 6:33



Every day we pack our backpacks—but are we packing our hearts? Over the next six weeks, your family will discover six truths to carry with you as you learn, grow, and follow Jesus this school year.

Week 1: Pack God's Word

Focus Verse: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." - Psalm 119:105

Big Idea: God's Word Guides Me

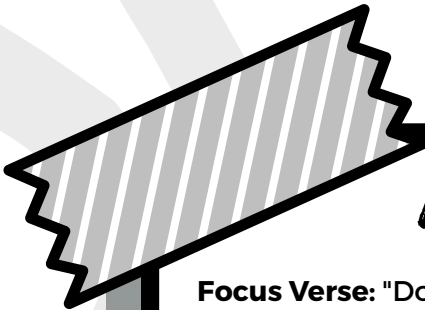
Maps help us know where to go. God's Word is like a map for our lives. It helps us know what is true, right and how to make wise decisions. Just like you wouldn't start a road trip without directions, don't start your day without God's word!

Family Discussion

- Why do you think God gave us the Bible?
- When is it hard to obey God's Word?
- How can reading even one verse each day help us?

Pack It In!

- Write your family's favorite Bible verse on an index card and place it inside your backpack, at your desk or work station.
- Read the verse once together every day this week.



Week 2: Pack Prayer

Focus Verse: "Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and thanksgiving, present your requests to God." - Philippians 4:6

Big Idea: I Never Walk Alone

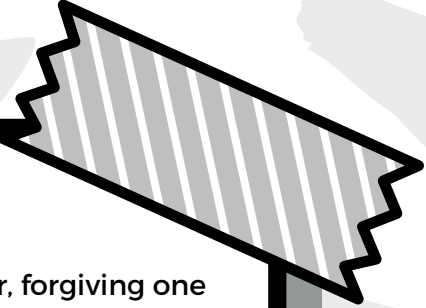
Prayer reminds us we never face life by ourselves. God goes with us into every classroom, before every test, practice and conversation. He wants us to talk to Him all day long.

Family Discussion

- What are you worried about this school year?
- What are you excited about?
- When could you pray during your school day?

Pack It In!

- Before leaving each morning, pray a 30-second prayer together.
- Read all of Philippians 4 as a family this week!



Week 3: Pack Kindness

Focus Verse: "And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ." Ephesians 4:32

Big Idea: Shine Bright

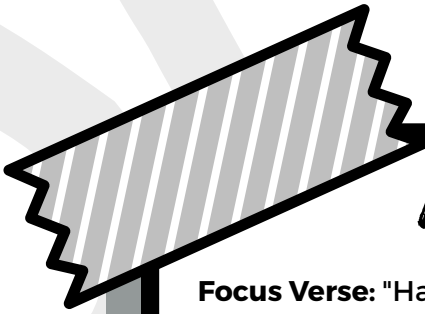
Kindness is one of the easiest ways to show people what Jesus is like. Each day is full of opportunities to encourage someone and choose kindness even when others choose the opposite. Showing kindness when others don't allows you to shine even brighter for Jesus.

Family Discussion

- Who needs kindness at your school?
- What makes kindness difficult?
- How did Jesus show kindness?

Pack It In!

- Create encouragement cards for teachers, classmates, or co-workers.
- Do one intentional act of kindness toward a family member every day!



Week 4: Pack Courage

Focus Verse: "Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua 1:9

Big Idea: God Is With Me

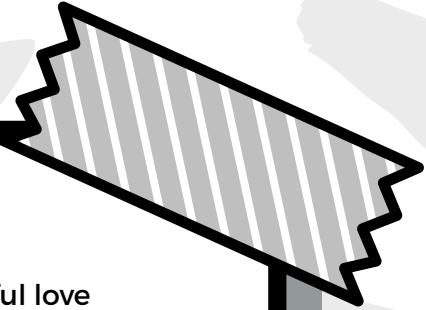
Sometimes following Jesus takes courage. It takes courage to stand up for what is right. To be kind. To include someone who is lonely. To tell the truth. To invite someone to church. But we never do it alone. God is with us always and it is His presence that makes us strong and courageous.

Family Discussion

- What makes you afraid or lack courage?
- What does courage look like at school?
- When have you seen God help you be brave?

Pack It In!

- Paint Courage Rocks: Collect small rocks and paint them with Joshua 1:9 or with a simple heart or cross. Keep them in a spot that will remind you to be courageous.



Week 5: Pack Gratitude

Focus Verse: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His faithful love endures forever." Psalm 118:1

Big Idea: Choose Thankfulness

It is often easier to only focus on everything that is wrong or the things we don't have in life, but a grateful heart notices how God is working, even in the hard circumstances. We can choose thankfulness even as we navigate difficult times, and we can find contentment with our lives because God is with us!

Family Discussion

- What are three blessings from today?
- Name something difficult to be thankful for.
- How does gratitude change our attitude?

Pack It In!

- Write thank you notes to teachers, coaches, bus drivers, bosses, co-workers and other people in your life that help with school or work.

Week 6: Pack Identity

Focus Verse: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do." Ephesians 2:10

Big Idea: Remember Who You Are

The world tells us our worth comes from grades, sports performance, popularity, good looks, and followers, but God says our identity and worth come from Him. We don't have to perform or look a certain way for God to love us. He already loves us. As the verse above says, we are His workmanship, not to perform, but to live with purpose in His kingdom.

Family Discussion

- What do people your age think makes someone important?
- What does God say makes you valuable?
- Why is it important to remember who you are?



Pack It In!

- **Mirror Truths:** Write Bible verses or identity statements on sticky notes and place them on all the bathroom mirrors. (Ex. I am loved. I belong to Jesus. I am God's masterpiece.) Download a free Identity in Christ Card.

Pack My Heart Daily Prayer

Dear God,

Thank You for this new day. As I head to school, help me pack my heart with what matters most.

Guide me with Your Word, remind me to pray, help me choose kindness, give me courage, and fill my heart with gratitude.

Help me remember that I am loved by You and created for a purpose. May my words, actions, and attitude point others to Jesus today.

Amen.

BACK TO SCHOOL BINGO

A CHALLENGE TO BLESS, ENCOURAGE & PRAY FOR OTHERS



Be the Reason Someone Has a Great Day

As you head back to school, remember that God has placed you there for a purpose. Every class, lunch table, hallway, sports or music practice is an opportunity to show the love of Jesus through your words, actions, and prayers.

The **Back-to-School Bingo Blessing Challenge** is designed to help you notice the people around you, make new friends, pray for others, and be a blessing wherever you go. Use the Bingo card on the next page for this challenge.

Here's the Challenge:

Meet Someone New

Find someone who matches one of the descriptions in the bingo squares. Introduce yourself and learn their name.

Write Their Name

Write their name in the blank on your bingo card. Every name represents someone God created, knows, and loves.

Pray For Them

Take a moment to pray for that person with your family or on your own. Ask God to remind him or her of His love for them.

Get a Bingo!

Once you fill the whole card, post it in a place you can see it and remember to pray for and bless others.

Bless & Encourage

Look for simple ways to bless or encourage 1 or 2 people per week. And keep praying for them.

Blessing Ideas:

- Smile and say hello.
- Invite them to join you at lunch or recess.
- Give them a sincere compliment.
- Offer to help them.
- Include someone who seems left out.
- Continue praying for them throughout the month.

BACK TO SCHOOL BINGO

A CHALLENGE TO BLESS, ENCOURAGE & PRAY FOR OTHERS

Use this bingo card to notice others at school, pray for them by name, and look for opportunities to encourage them. Each time you find a person who matches a description write their name on the square. Once you get a BINGO (fill the whole card), celebrate with your family. Check out the instructions on the previous page for more details.

**A NEW
STUDENT**

A TEACHER

**A PRINCIPAL
OR ASSISTANT
PRINCIPAL**

**A CAFETERIA
WORKER**

**A BUS DRIVER,
CROSSING
GUARD, OR
DOOR MONITOR**

**A TEACHING
AIDE OR
CLASSROOM
HELPER**

**SOMEONE WHO
HAS TROUBLE
GETTING ALONG
WITH OTHERS**

**A CLASSMATE
WHO NEEDS A
FRIEND**

**SOMEONE WHO
IS DIFFERENT
FROM YOU**

**A COACH OR
PE TEACHER**

**A SCHOOL
VOLUNTEER**

**SOMEONE
HAVING A
BIRTHDAY
SOON**

**A FRIEND YOU
WOULD LIKE
TO GET TO
KNOW BETTER**

A LIBRARIAN

**A STUDENT
YOU DON'T
KNOW**

**SOMEONE WHO
IS BORN IN THE
SAME MONTH
AS YOU**

***FIND MORE FAMILY
RESOURCES TO
HELP YOU WIN AT HOME:***

