



Blessing of the Backpacks

If your church does a Blessing of the Backpacks as part of worship, this is a potential add-in based on the Back2School parent resource that camper parents receive in early August. We hope you will share and promote the conversation starter with all parents in your ministry sometime before the Blessing of the Backpacks is scheduled during worship. We suggest you promote this time of blessing so students know to bring their backpacks to church. Below are suggestions, but feel free to adapt to your worship style. If you didn't receive buttons at camp this summer, you can find artwork below that can be used to print stickers or make your own buttons.

1. Invite students to come to the front with their backpacks at the designated time in the service.
2. Explain why we do this in worship. Say something like: *“As a church family, we like to pause and notice the important moments in each other’s lives. Starting a new school year is a big moment, and we want to pray for you as you get ready for all that this year will bring.”*
3. Read (or ask a student to read) Romans 12:2 (CEB): *“Do not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is - what is good and pleasing and mature.”*
4. Tell the students: “This is the verse we hope will guide you this school year. Every day is a chance to restart and to turn your mind toward God. This verse reminds us that we can renew our minds - try again, think in new ways, and choose thoughts that build us up instead of tearing us down.” **(Hold up theme sticker)**
“When you see this sticker, remember that you can pause and reset anytime. If your day feels tough, take a breath and turn your attention back to God. God helps us start fresh and think in new and helpful ways. God is always helping us learn and grow. As you move through your classes and spend time with classmates and teachers, try to choose kindness, courage, and wisdom each day. God fills our lives with new ideas and new possibilities. God’s love can shine in us and through us. Even on hard days, God is making us new and helping us see ourselves and others with love.”
5. Invite volunteers to pass out the stickers (or tell students they can pick one up as they leave).
Say something like: *“We hope you’ll put this sticker where you’ll see it often. Let it remind you that God loves you, that your church loves you, and that we believe in you as you begin this school year.”*
6. Invite the whole congregation to join in the Prayer of Blessing over the students.
7. After the prayer, say: *“Think back to the conversations from the Discussion Sheet your families received (or will receive). Where might God be giving you a chance for a fresh start? What changes might God help you make this year in how you treat others, how you handle problems, or how you think and speak about yourself? Remember: God loves you and is always at work in your life. Be open to the ways God can help you grow, learn, and shine in new ways this year. A new school year is a wonderful time to begin again.”*
8. Prompt students to return to their seats with their backpacks.



Check out d365.org for four weeks of Back-to-School themed devotions.

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Prayer of Blessing

Leader's Prayer: Holy God, you are always at work renewing us, shaping us, and guiding us toward what is good. As our students begin a new school year, help them not be shaped by fear or pressure, but transformed by your love. May their minds be open to your wisdom, their hearts open to your presence, and their lives open to new possibilities in you. Amen.

Leader: Now, your ministers, your families, and your congregation will speak words of blessing. Listen closely to these voices of love and support as this new school year begins.

Church Staff: God invites you to a fresh start. Every day brings a chance to renew your mind and grow in new ways. As you learn, create, and explore this year, may God help you make choices that are kind, wise, and full of courage.

Family Members: God is with you - in the easy moments and the hard ones. As you meet new teachers, make friends, solve problems, and discover new things, may your thoughts and actions reflect God's love.

Congregation: God loves every person in your school and loves you too. Sometimes renewing our minds means thinking in new ways, trying again, or doing something brave. We are excited to journey with you and pray for you as you grow into the person God is shaping you to be.

Leader: You are an important part of God's blessing of your family, your school, and our congregation.

Congregation: We promise to pray for you now and during the school year. Let us know how we can pray for the things happening in your life and in your school.

Leader: We thank you, God, for the chance to bless the students, trusting that you will guide, renew, and transform them each day.

All: Amen.



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INTENTIONAL CONVERSATIONS FOR FAMILIES WITH STUDENTS GOING

Back²School

Conversations about faith make a difference! Talk about this school year as an opportunity. God calls students to reflect Christ's love in their attitudes, actions, and words as they build relationships.

“Do not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is - what is good and pleasing and mature.” Romans 12:2 (CEB)

PACK



- How are you feeling about going back to school?
- When you think about school starting, what do you feel first? - (happy, worried, curious, etc.)
- What are you most excited about as the school year starts? Who are you most looking forward to seeing? (New classes, seeing friends again, joining a new team or club)
- Is there something from last year that you hope will be different this year? (Nicer classmates, easier classes, better grades)
- What will you pack in your backpack?
Name things that you normally carry in your backpack. (Books, pencils, paper, snacks, etc.)
- What do we bring in addition to stuff? (Attitudes, actions, words, thoughts, feelings, ideas)
- In this new school year, you may have new classes, new teachers, and new classmates. What are your thoughts and attitudes about all the things this new year will bring?

UNPACK

Discuss Romans 12:2, inviting your students to think about how they might be transformed or changed when they let God guide their thoughts and actions toward themselves, their classmates, and their teachers.

“Do not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can figure out what God’s will is - what is good and pleasing and mature.” Romans 12:2 (CEB)

- When your day feels hard or stressful at school, what is one way you can pause and “reset” or “renew” your mind? Take a deep breath; ask God to be with me; try again and choose better thoughts or actions.
- What is one way God might help you grow or change this year in how you act, think, or treat others? I can be more patient, kinder, and braver. I can make small changes that help me act and live more like Jesus.
- When you make a mistake or have a tough day, what do you want to remember about God and about yourself? God loves me no matter what; God is helping me learn and grow; Just because I made a mistake today doesn't mean I can't try again tomorrow.



PRAY

Say a prayer together for the new school year. Pray that students will do their best to see each day as a new start, and that they will work to see others and the world the same way that God does.



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