

DON'T BE AFRAID

I don't remember much about going back to school after summer break. What I can recall is pretty superficial. I do remember this: covering textbooks with brown paper bags, trying to memorize locker combinations, the distinct smell of the gym and cafeteria, my teacher's first-day bubbly demeanor and enthusiasm, and being surrounded by a couple dozen of my peers all day long. The most distinct thing I remember is **fear**. New places, routines, and people paired with the dynamics of the social atmosphere always unsettled me a bit.

Our kids are going back to school this week. They are going to have so many experiences, thoughts, and feelings. No doubt, they will all likely face some sense of fear as they step into the new and unknown. The greatest encouragement we can give them is to remind them that they don't have to be afraid. They might encounter fear, but it doesn't have to define who they are and what they do. Fear is unavoidable. Our bodies and brains are created to sense it and process it. Our hearts and faith are meant to guide us through it.

As our children enter this new territory and continue their academic journey, use these scriptures daily in your time of prayer and devotion. Send them on notes or in text messages. Share frequently and liberally. Remind them that God is the solution to all our fears, and he is the comfort that quells them all.

Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”

Psalms 34:4-5

I sought the Lord, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to him are radiant,
and their faces shall never be ashamed.

Psalms 56:3-4

When I am afraid,
I put my trust in you.
In God, whose word I praise,
in God I trust; I shall not be afraid.
What can flesh do to me?

Isaiah 41:13

For I, the Lord your God,
hold your right hand;
it is I who say to you, “Fear not,
I am the one who helps you.”

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Matthew 10:31

Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

2 Timothy 1:7

for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Have a great year!

Ryan