

Let's Pray: September 2021

How can we pray well as we
head into this new season?

September is often a month of change and transition. Even those of us who haven't set foot in a classroom in years can find ourselves adopting a 'back-to-school' attitude when autumn rolls around; we set new rhythms and routines, and approach new goals and dreams with renewed motivation and excitement.

For families with children and young people, this feeling of change and transition is even more tangible and confronting; ahead of children lie new classrooms or even new schools, different teachers or different classmates, new uniforms and shoes, different subjects and things to learn.

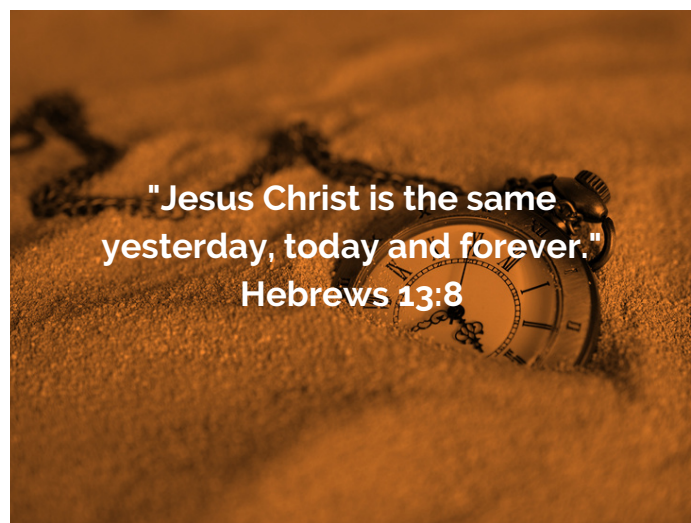
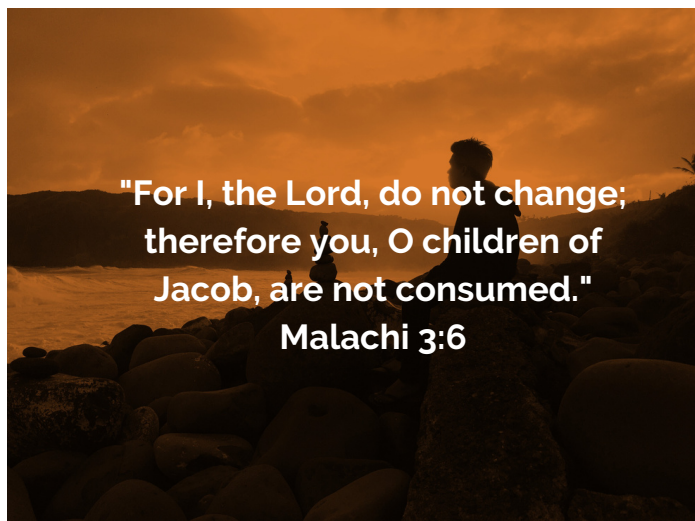
Due to the pandemic, it's likely this September will bring an extra few worries...

While the routines and rhythms of school can be helpful for some children and young people, getting ready for those first days back can be unsettling and this season can be particularly difficult for children who have had a tricky start in life. Add to this the fact that, due to the pandemic, transitions and introductions to new teachers and spaces weren't able to happen in the way we would have liked, and the added worry about what the autumn and winter months might have in store with regards to restrictions and the health of our loved ones – it's likely this September will bring an extra few worries compared to other years.

How are you feeling as we enter into this new season? Ready and excited for more structure and routine? Anxious about the unknowns? Exhausted at the thought of the early-morning school run? Perhaps all of the above?



In this time of transition, may you find a moment of rest and peace in this reminder that whatever may be taking place around you, our God is unchanging. We are reminded of this truth again and again in Scripture:



As we enter into this new season and all the change it may bring, we can trust and be confident in the knowledge that our Father in Heaven does not change, that He is constant, that He is faithful. And as we pray together for children and young people and for the foster and adoptive families and other adults who care for them, let's do so in that same knowledge and confidence.

Points for Prayer

Foster and Adoptive Families

Pray for foster and adoptive families as they prepare for the new term; pray over the to-do list (new shoes, new uniform, new haircut) and the emotions and conversations (new teacher, new classroom, maybe new school and new friends). Pray that children and young people would experience God's peace amid all the preparation.

Those who work with young people

Pray for teachers, classroom assistants, youth leaders, coaches, and other adults who will be welcoming children and young people back into schools, clubs, rhythms and routines this month. Thank God for them, and for the difference they make. Ask that God grant would them energy, excitement and hope for the year ahead.

Carers and Parents

Pray for carers and parents who may have to advocate for their child and their education. Pray that God will sustain and encourage them when conversations feel repetitive, or like they're going round in circles. Pray too for teachers, headteachers and other leaders and staff involved in these conversations, that they would be attentive, understanding and proactive in supporting children to learn. Let's pray that children and young people will feel encouraged, cared for and championed in their schools and their homes.



Creative Prayer Idea

Have you ever been on a walk or hike and spotted a pile of stones or rocks? These are known as cairns – the word derives from the Scots Gaelic ‘cárn’ which literally means ‘heap of stones’. Cairns can be found all over the world, and they have been, and continue to be, used by different cultures for a variety of purposes.

Some people build cairns to mark a trail, to help guide travellers on their journey. Others place stones to mark the end of their journey, such as at the summit of a mountain. Some cultures incorporate the building of cairns into religious ceremonies and traditions, and for others, cairns are built to act as a reminder of something or someone important.

We can read of people doing something similar in the Bible. In the book of 1 Samuel, for example, after God helped Israel in battle we see Samuel take a stone and set it upright, naming it an Ebenezer and saying “Thus far the Lord has helped us.” (1 Samuel 7: 12). When the Israelites would pass by this Ebenezer they would be reminded of God’s faithfulness and what He made possible.

As we pray together for children, young people and their families in this back-to-school season, we invite you to try building your own prayer cairn! You might want to do this on your own, or involve others in your house as a group activity.

You will need:

- Some pebbles, stones or rocks (or whatever is handy for you – blocks, lego bricks, bean bags or even balled-up socks could work just as well!)
- Some open space – please be safe and careful when building your cairn.

Take a stone and hold it in your hand. Take some time to be quiet, and to settle your mind and your heart on God. As you hold your stone, lift up a prayer. You can use the prayer points above to guide you, or pray for something or someone else. You may want to pray out loud or share with others near you what you’re praying for, or you may prefer to pray silently.

Place the stone on the ground, and pick up another as you continue to pray for something or someone else. Repeat the process, building a small mound of stones with each prayer.

When you’ve finished, spend a moment looking at your cairn and thank God for His faithfulness and goodness. You may want to take a photo, or visit your cairn from time to time to be reminded that through all seasons, our God who hears our prayers is constant, faithful, and never changing.