

MAGNOLIA MINDS: Prepping for Summer with Paul

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Watson

This week, my home brims with excitement! My six-year-old son James wraps up first grade on Thursday, and the signs of summer surround us. The homework schedule is empty and the neighborhood pool is full. Every afternoon, art projects and treats spill out of his backpack, each given by teachers and friends to celebrate this unique school year. The excitement for summer mounts each day.

However, the end of school signifies additional realities for a parent. Watching my son close a chapter of his life tugs at my heartstrings. I also face the fact that our family's routines drastically change next week. The summer brings me more time with my children, an opportunity I want to use to honor the Lord.

As I prepare for the next two months of summer, I turn my thoughts to 1 Thessalonians 5. Though the Apostle Paul addresses the early church in these verses, his words hold truths we all can apply to our summer preparations.

Show Gratitude

As he wraps up first grade, James's teachers are the true

heroes of our school year. My top priority this week is to write each of his teachers a letter, detailing what their hard work means to my family. They hurdled many COVID-19 coronavirus precautions to make the 2020-2021 school year full of learning, growth, and fun.

Showing gratitude – a key hallmark of our faith – allows the world to see Christ in us. In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul writes, “...acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord” (v. 12), and “...give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (v. 18).

Even if you do not have a child finishing school this week (or if they did not attend a traditional classroom), someone has probably helped you navigate the challenges of 2020. Find a way to thank that person this week.

Celebrate Success

Watching James finish first grade brings many emotions: nostalgia, relief, but mainly joy! I want to find ways to intentionally celebrate this chapter of his life. For example, this weekend we let him choose art from the year to hang on his walls. On the last day of school, we will get ice cream and have a special dinner!

Hopefully, he will see our joy shine through these simple acts, and they will build a family culture of celebrating milestones. I pray my home will offer the encouragement Paul asks the church to give one another in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 when he writes, “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

If you do not have a child wrapping up school this week, find a teacher, coach, or student in your church or neighborhood and congratulate them on finishing a challenging school year. They will feel the encouragement of Christ in your words.

Renew Routine

I won't lie – summer brings challenges of its own. Without the routine of school, I can waste the precious gift of time. Paul addresses idleness in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 when he writes, “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.”

Summer goals help me combat my tendency toward idleness. James committed to reading 100 books this summer, lured by the prize of a mystery trip. We will start a daily chore chart, which will include mom as well!

However, I want to set goals that extend beyond ourselves. The rush of the school year can close my eyes to the needs around me, so I plan to intentionally look for ways to serve this summer. We can start with our church, which will offer opportunities for involvement, but we will also find ways for our family to minister together.

Are your routines changing this summer? Can you use some of this extra time to serve others?

The Light of Christ

The excitement of summer spills into our homes, churches, and communities this week. As you cross paths with the students and educators in your life, I hope you find opportunities to show your gratitude, celebrate their success, and encourage them to seize the gift of time this summer.

In doing so, we can all make sure the light of Christ outshines the summer sun.

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