

# CHRISTIAN *School* COMMENT

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## BACK TO SCHOOL—ROUND 2

The start of the school year is akin to New Year's Day: it's a new beginning, and you have no idea what the days ahead will bring. For that reason, it's a great time to re-center on God. I've invited Jay Ferguson, headmaster of Grace Community School (Tyler, Texas), to address some ideas on keeping a godly perspective this year. —Dan

As you read this, your children have started a new school year. Well, so have mine. This year, however, I'm sending one off to college. Her school-age years are finished. I thought it would be easier the second time around, having launched her sister two years ago. But each is different, and every memory that comes flooding back now plays a different chord on my heartstrings.

I remember her walking out of the testing room for junior kindergarten with the teacher who would teach her to read her first words and how to hide God's Word upon her heart. I remember her wearing her little blue-and-white striped dress and yellow patent leather boots, announcing that someday she would be a cheerleader for the "Dace Toogers" (Grace Cougars). Even then, the girl was determined. On her first day of school I stood outside the two-way glass looking in on class and cried like a baby, knowing her toddler days were over and, projecting toward this then-distant day, I wanted to grab her and run away to somewhere where she'd never have to grow up. But God stayed my hand, reminding me she was not ours, but His, and lovingly preparing us for this day—even then prying just one of our pinky fingers from her life. As Christian parents, it's so important to remember we are only stewarding our children, shepherding their spirits and their hearts as an act of worshipping our Lord.

I suppose everyone who has more than one child has "that kid"—you know, if something is going to happen, it's going to happen to that one? Well, this was "that kid." She achieved her dream of becoming a cheerleader for the "Dace Toogers," but wrist problems resulted in three surgeries. She had a bout with mononucleosis her sophomore year that took her out of school for most of the second semester. She has an issue with fainting, and hitting her head while going down resulted in multiple concussions. Then she had a three-month stomach virus her senior year. All of this, in addition to the regular threads that weave the fabric of life for every adolescent girl, meant her schooling years were not all smooth sailing.

As head of our school, one would think I had the power to manipulate results for my children. God used this child to remind me how absolutely impotent I was. He showed me that all I can do—all any parent can do—is ask the God who loves our children more than we even have capacity to love to watch over them, molding and growing them, especially through the pain. With three girls at home, none of whom is immune to a sense of entitlement, one of our favorite (paraphrased) movie lines comes from *The Princess Bride*: "Life is pain, princess." As Christian school parents, we can all be grateful our kids learn this vital lesson in the context of a Christian school, surrounded by a community of supporting, loving teachers who teach them that, yes, life is pain, but God is good and delivers us through trials with profound meaning and joy through His Son's blood.

Here's a prayer we can all pray at the beginning of this school year:

"Oh, Lord, we've made so many mistakes and we'll make so many more, because parenting is for life. Yet, as I draw back this beautiful arrow, I'm grateful—grateful for the times You tell me to sit down and shut up, to let You be Lord of her life. Grateful that You surround us with a Christian school community that supports her, teaching her to view life and learning through Your eyes, mentoring her in how to live those truths, and loving her into making her faith her own. Grateful most of all that You hear our daily prayers to make our children passionate for You, no matter what it takes."

—Jay

