

Responding to Our Current Reality for the School Year Commissioning and Praying for Back to School

Commissioning and praying for this new school year

Before dismissing for Kids Church, it is our privilege to commission and pray for students, teachers, staff, and parents as we start the school year in this unprecedented time of pandemic and social unrest. If you are online right now, I invite you to gather your students around the stream so that they can receive this blessing and commissioning. After I have shared briefly, Margaret Petry will come and lead our time of commissioning and prayer.

We want to commission students, teachers, staff and parents:

1. As agents of blessing: we bless you to be a blessing (Genesis 12:2-3).
2. As salt to get out of the saltshaker to bring out the God-flavors all around you (Matthew 5:13).
3. As light to bring out the God colors around you (Matthew 5:14-16), that you might shine for Jesus and before others, *“that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16 NIV).
4. As ambassadors who have a ministry and message of reconciliation to God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).
5. As citizens of the kingdom of God, demonstrating how people of the kingdom of God are to live according to the way of Jesus, and bringing to life the reality of God through Jesus Christ in your spheres of influence (Philippians 3:20-21).
 - a. *My beloved friends, imitate my walk with God and follow all those who walk according to the way of life we modeled before you. 18 For there are many who live by different standards. As I’ve warned you many times (I weep as I write these words), they are enemies of the cross of the Anointed One and 19 doom awaits them. Their god has possessed them and made them mute. Their boast is in their shameful lifestyles and their minds are in the dirt. 20 But we are a colony of heaven on earth as we cling tightly to our life-giver, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our humble bodies and transfigure us into the identical likeness of his glorified body. And using his matchless power, he continually subdues everything to himself (Philippians 3:17-21 PNT).*

We pray for you to have:

1. Grace to deal with all the changes and unknowns.

2. Encouragement for yourself and for you to give away faith, hope and love to others. May you have a “can do” spirit. I declare you were made for such a time as this.
3. Favor in all that you do.
4. Anointing to deal with fear, anger, and frustrations with faith, hope, and love.
5. The capacity to excel like Daniel and the other Hebrews did in their challenging environment.

Now, Margaret Petry will lead us in our time of commissioning and prayer.

Message:

Today, I want to tackle the topic of *Responding to Our Current Reality for the School Year*. Often, I focus on instruction and equipping. In this message, I am asking the Lord to touch our hearts and hurts.

Point 1: Current Reality

Our current reality is challenging. Some of us are hurting. Some of us are tired. Some of us are missing out on so much. And, some of us are anxious about how we will get through a year with so many unknowns.

1. **Current reality: In March 2020, who would have thought that when students went on Spring Break that school would not meet again in person?**
 - a. Who could have imagined that we would have a lock down? Who could have imagined that spring concerts, events, sports, proms, and graduations would be canceled or changed significantly?
 - b. Last spring during the time of stay home and work safe, a lot of parents and students developed a new appreciation for teachers, staff, and schools. It was a challenging time for students, parents, teachers, and staff for sure, as well as for the rest of the population.
2. **Current reality: Last Spring and through the Summer, there has been a lot of grieving and loss.** This has been a trying and challenging time.
 - a. Many older adults are isolated and suffering from mental and emotional pain from separation.
 - b. Many people have lost their jobs and livelihoods.
 - c. Some people have lost their lives due to the COVID-19 virus; others lost their lives because of lack of medical care for various reasons. (Some were scared to go to the hospital. Some elective surgeries and

procedures were canceled; they really weren't optional, but were treated as such.)

- d. Many of us are tired and weary.
 - i. Because of the intensity of the spiritual warfare with principalities of fear and hatred.
 - ii. Because of the rancor and divisiveness in our culture.
 - iii. Because of the racial unrest and injustice in our nation.
 - iv. Because of the political vitriol poisoning our national discourse.
 - v. Because of the lies, deceptions, and exaggerations of our broken culture and influencers of culture.
 - vi. Because common sense is no longer common.
3. **Current reality: Over the past months, much has been lost in the area of education.**
 - a. Experts in education have told us that students lost more than three months of education.
 - i. Because of developmental issues and processes of learning, educators estimate that many students return to school having lost 6 months to 1 and a half years of progress.
 - ii. It is easy to forget what you learned and it is easy to forget what you need as the building blocks for the next classes.
 - b. Funding for public education is being threatened at a time when we are in need of more funds to help our students succeed.
 - c. Who could have imagined such an impact on education or our world?
4. **Current reality: We know that this is going to be a challenging school year, requiring grace, patience, and perseverance.**
 - a. Some students will get their schooling in-person. Others will participate in education online.
 - b. For example, students will need water bottles for the school year.
 - c. Social distancing affects classrooms, lunches, and every aspect of school life.
 - d. Teachers will have to expend a lot of emotional and mental energy to teach students in-person and online.
5. **Current reality: We know that this school year will be hard and draining.**
 - a. You will expend a lot of emotional and mental energy as you adapt and as you innovate.
 - b. At times, you will wish that things would just go back to normal. During the year, it will seem like you are slogging through mud pits of change and the ebbs and flows of adjustments being made.
6. **Suggestions in light of current reality:**
 - a. I want to challenge you be an encourager for others and to find people who will stir you up to love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24-25).

- b. I want to encourage you to give grace to yourself and to others who are also using a lot of emotional and mental energy (forgive, forebear, be patient, be kind, be merciful, be gracious, etc.).
- c. I encourage you to walk in the light with others when you are down or struggling. Walk in the light by sharing what you are thinking or feeling, and by asking people to pray for you. The bottom line is that we need others. We were made to be interdependent. And, authentic community is one of the ways that the Lord transforms us. Don't be a Lone Ranger.
 - i. Summary:
 - 1. Share with others and get prayer.
 - 2. Process out loud for the sake of emotional and mental health.
 - ii. Here are some questions that you can use to help yourself or others to be open and honest (authentic):
 - 1. What are you celebrating?
 - 2. What are you learning about yourself?
 - 3. What challenge(s) are you facing?
 - 4. Where are you stuck or stopped?
 - 5. What transformation are you currently working on?
 - 6. What do you need to say?

So, we have painted a picture of current reality concerning the new school year that we are facing.

Point 2: Preferred Future

In light of our current reality, we need words of encouragement and hope. Now, I want to share a vision of a preferred future.

To every student, teacher, staff, and parent... to every believer... I say:

- 1. **You were made for such a time as this** (Esther 4:14).
 - a. Every challenge becomes an opportunity in the grace and leadership of the Lord.
- 2. **We were made to overcome and to rise up to the challenge in Christ; that is part of being created in the of image of God** (1 John 5:4-5; Hebrews 10:35-39).
 - a. *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:4-5 NIV).*

1. Thank you, Calvary, for your service and impact with Copperfield Church at Hairgrove Elementary.
 - a. The academic standing and achievement of this Title 1 School continues to amaze people at the local and state levels.
 - b. Our partnership is a part of the success of Hairgrove as we support staff, teachers, and students.
 - c. There are tangible results like higher academic marks for the school and students. And, there are intangible results like impacting for good staff morale, the climate of the school, and individual lives.
2. Thank you to our students, parents, staff, and viewers for your impact on the schools and school districts in which you live and work, and for your impact through other school partnerships.
3. Encourage people to advocate especially for public education, which is one of the highest leveraged activities we can do to help change the trajectory of children for good.
4. Encourage believers and churches to advocate and cast vision for school partnerships across Greater Houston.
 - a. We have seen almost half of the schools in CFISD adopted by churches and businesses.
 - b. Loving Houston has worked tirelessly to see more than 100 new school partnerships started in school districts across Greater Houston.
 - c. And, we have so much more to do.

Point 4: The Power of Prayer (Matthew 18:18-20)

"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:18-20 NIV).

Here are some ways that we have been praying for our students, teachers, staff, parents, and school districts for back to school.

May you be encouraged and inspired by these prayers.

1. *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze (Isaiah 43:2).*
 - a. Pray that the Lord would give teachers and staff grace as they expend emotional and mental energy to innovate and adapt.

- b. Pray that the Lord would give teachers and staff wisdom.
- c. Pray that the Lord would give students, parents, teachers, and staff the grace and strength to adjust and flow in a tumultuous time.
2. May the Lord help students to have a testimony of Jesus through this year.
 - a. Let this be the year of the testimony of Jesus. May talk of Jesus “be the buzz” around the school when they go back to school.
 - i. “The buzz” today is all about COVID-19, about what has been lost, about fear and hatred, about politics, and about political rancor.
 - ii. We bless this revelatory word: may “the buzz” of the school year be about the testimony of Jesus.
 - iii. Chorus: We want to talk about you, think about you, and live for you all our days. Let our community see Jesus, this we pray.
 - b. This is a Psalm 2 moment, just as it was for the disciples in Acts 3-4. There was a buzz about what Jesus did in healing the lame man. The rage of opposition and the rulers reminded the Early Church of a Psalm 2 moment. May this school year be a “buzz” with testimonies of Jesus.
 - i. This is what God has done (healing, touching, and changing lives).
 - ii. This is what God can do (giving us boldness).
 - iii. This is what we are believing you to do (extending your hand to do signs, wonders, and miracles to the glory of Jesus).
3. *Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations. 11 The Lord has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: “Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.’” 12 They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted (Isaiah 62:10-12).*
 - a. Send them back to school with your anointing. They go back as agents of hope, as salt and light that you have called them to be.
 - b. May salvation be strong, may hearts be strong, may hope abound. I pray that the testimony of Jesus will ring clear in their hearts. I pray for open doors and gateways into the hearts of people who have been shaken.
 - c. I pray for students returning to class who are on fire; I ask that they will stand out as different when they go back. I ask for your anointing to be on them. Pour out your spirit of boldness on them to share Jesus.
 - d. There are people who are ripe for harvest. At the sound of the name of Jesus, they will get saved.
 - e. May the flood of rising revival waters pour into the schools from our children and youth.
 - f. I pray for a season of harvest.

- f. In Matthew 11:28-30, you told us to come to you so that we can find in you our rest.
- g. Remind us that we are light. Where there is light, darkness does not prevail.
- h. Let your glory fall on this place that we might testify about your grace, goodness, and miracle working power.

Summary:

Today, we have talked about responding to our current reality for the school year. Yes, it will be challenging.

And, in every aspect of our culture today, including our schools, it is our opportunity to shine for Jesus and with Jesus in new ways for the sake of the Lord and others.

Ministry Time: