

+WEEKLY SERMON

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Can you remember your time at school?

This week over 200,000 children across our county will go to school. Most will be returning, some will be just starting out.

Can you remember your time at school and what did the beginning of the school year feel like to you?

Were you excited, nervous, relieved or dismayed?

Lots of preparation goes into the start of a new school year. New uniforms, rucksacks, book bags, pencil cases and lunch boxes are purchased. Drop-offs and collections are arranged, breakfast and after-school clubs booked. It might even be an occasion for a new hair cut!

But how do we prepare children and young people spiritually for school? And what about all those who work and volunteer in education?

Some churches host 'schoolbag blessing' services. Others write prayers onto luggage tags and then distribute them to be attached to bags or put into blazer pockets. What else could we give to our children and young people to remind them that God is with them as they go to school?

This Sunday's Bible reading from the letter to the Hebrews contains two verses that I know particularly well because they were taught to me as 'memory verses' when I was young.

The first is 'God has said, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you' (Hebrews 13 v5b) a phrase used multiple times in the Old Testament (in Deut 31:6 and 8; Joshua 1:5 and 1 Chr 28:20). The writer of Hebrews uses this quote with reference to caution against the love of money but the Old Testament passages use it as part of an encouragement to be strong and courageous. I remember the summer camp where I was taught it.

The second is 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever' (Hebrews 13:8). I don't remember as clearly when I learnt this, but it was cemented into my memory through a worship song.

It can of course be problematic to memorise a sentence out of the Bible without awareness of its context and purpose. But it can also be incredibly helpful to have God's word 'written on our hearts'. I've repeatedly come back to the promises that God is faithful, reliable, loving and present because I've been able to recall verses such as these.

As so many go 'back to school' this week. What can we do to help them go with life-giving truth as well as a new pencil case?!

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