

PRAYERS FOR YOUR STUDENT'S FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL

by Office of Christian Formation and Church Relations

1 WISE CHOICES

Holy God, thank you for giving my student a mind capable of making wise choices. Guide my dear one to make decisions based on your Word and guided by your Holy Spirit. Lord, may my student remain humble and teachable in heart, choosing your instruction over the ways of the world, seeking wisdom rather than temporary gain. May my dear student listen to godly advice and sound teaching in order to find life and steer clear of harmful situations. Lord, interrupt any enticement my student may have to take a shorter, self-advancing route in life. Instead, give this dear one insight to know the better way and the integrity to walk in that way. When life is hard and the road seems dark, as it certainly will, provide my student with reminders to choose to trust you in that unknown. Help my beloved student stay resolute—using your Word as a lighthouse, a beacon of hope guiding through the storms of life. You have set before us life and death, blessings and curses. May my student always choose life and in so doing find your abundant life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

2 ASKING FOR HELP WHEN THEY NEED IT

Creator God, you have made my dear student talented, capable, and uniquely gifted. But my beloved student will need help in this next chapter—maybe even today. Give my student the humility of heart and the presence of mind to see the need for help and to identify the resources you have provided. And then—when needed most—help my precious student summon the courage to ask for help. With the Psalmist, may my precious student cry out today, "I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth!" (Psalm 121:1-2) When my student needs your help, may your Spirit impart the truth that you will not let my dear one stumble. You watch over without fail. You will not slumber. May my beloved be strong enough to stand alone, wise enough to know when help is needed, and brave enough to ask for it.

3 DEEPENING DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Our Gracious God, thank you for the responsibility and the wonderful gift of my child. May the time I have spent with them be a reflection of your love and an example of how to live life with others. I pray that if they have not known you before that they may know you now. I pray that you speak into their life loudly and boldly that they may hear you clearly. I pray that you refine their character, that they may be more like you. Surround them with relationships and people that reflect your love and will push them to understand you more clearly. Teach my child to love like you love and may that overflow to all around them. Provide them with the wisdom and knowledge they need to accomplish all their tasks. And help them remember that you, God, are the source that sustains their life and the one that defines them. I rebuke any and all evil that may try to lead them astray in the name of Jesus! And I pray that your Spirit will continue to lead them in the path of righteousness. God may my child's life be a life that honors you above all things. Do this for your glory and yours alone. In the name of our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

4 HELP WITH HOMESICKNESS

God, home is a special place. As we have worked to build a home filled with love and all of the good things that you provide, I ask that you make our child's new home at college a place filled with many of the same good things. God, I know that adjusting to a new place will come with its challenges—for me and for my child. But I also know that you will be with them, that you will never leave or forsake them and that you will bind us together in love. Please use this time that we are apart to strengthen our bond and to teach us all to depend more deeply on you. God, when my child is missing home and things are especially hard on all of me, help me to trust that things will get easier with time. Give my child the understanding that growing up is a part of the process and that I will always be close by with words of encouragement, challenge and hope. Thank you for my family, God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

5 INCREASING FAITH

God of grace and transformation, guide and hold close this precious love of mine. Even in the midst of questions, hold this precious one close. Even in the midst of wrestling, hold this precious one close. Even in the midst of doubt, hold this precious one close. Even when they are, as the hymn says, "prone to wander Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love," hold this precious one close. We trust that all questions are answered in you. We trust that all wrestling is with you. We trust that all doubts are resolved in you. We trust that all wander leads to you. Jesus Christ, our model and our savior. You have welcomed us as brothers and sisters, and as friends. You have shown us the path of devotion, in times of quiet prayer and in the midst of public scrutiny. Be with this precious love of mine in moments of deep devotion. Reveal hope and love and grace and mercy and justice. May this precious one be received like the little children who were brought to you. Bless this precious love of mine. Holy Spirit, our source of discernment and our source of life. Help this precious love of mine to no longer conform to the patterns of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of their mind. May they be stretched. May they question. May they be challenged. It is through the hard times that their faith will become their own. May they lean in when it would be tempting to lean away. We trust that at all times you, Holy Spirit, are at work. May the faith of this precious love of mine grow.

6 HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Dear Heavenly Father, before the foundations of the world, you knew my child. From the moment they were conceived, they were unique, special, one of a kind. There is no one else like them in the world. From their first day of education until now, as they began to form relationships with others, my hope and prayer has been that they would be loved and known and valued for who you have made them to be. God, I ask in the name of Jesus, that you would work in my child's life to form strong and healthy relationships with their roommate, floor mates, Resident Assistant (RA), Resident Director (RD) classmates, coaches, faculty, and staff. I pray that you would help my child make wise decisions, learn the art of conversation, develop trust, use discernment, and walk in grace and forgiveness. I pray that Jesus would be at the center of every conversation and interaction. He is the friend that sticks closer than any brother. Please help my child to know that they are enough, that they have value as they are and that you are working to develop them into the person that you would have them to be. Help our child to resist the pressure to perform for others, and instead focus on their intimacy with you—Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Thank you for my child. I release my child to you with joy and in anticipation for their future. In Jesus' name, Amen.

7 TRUSTING IN THE PROCESS

"Oh God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. Our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home." There has never been a time that you have not been present. There is nothing that escapes your all-seeing eye. There is no one greater than you. You are the God of all wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and comfort. The world and everything therein belongs to you, including my precious child. God, you have given my child a fine mind, a thriving spirit, and so many other gifts. Thank you! You have also provided my child with a unique opportunity to embark upon this journey called college. I know that this time will be a challenge for them. I also know that you will be with them every step of the way. God, there will be times when my child feels overwhelmed, unsure, or unsteady as so much around them will be new. Classes will be new. Faculty, areas of study and learning will be new. Friends will be new. Teammates will be new. God, please help my child to trust the process, that with your help and that of the Bethel community, my child will find their place and their rhythm and will grow into an amazing young adult. Thank you, God for your divine and wonderful plan for my child to give my child a hope and a future. In Jesus' name, Amen.

