

Back-to-School Supply List

Back-to-School Service '24

Bethany Assembly of God

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Introduction

How many of you are excited about school starting back up this Fall? Your teachers probably sent a list of what you're going to need: erasers, markers, pencils, notebooks, scissors, glue... If you're in High School or College, you may have been provided a laptop and you'll be given a syllabus for each class where expectations are spelled out. If you're a teacher, you've probably been getting curriculum, lesson plans, and your room set up for a month or more. But many people don't think about how to prepare for school beyond the educational requirements. Whether you're homeschooled, going to a public school, a private school, or you're enrolled in college, as a believer in Jesus, there are some preparations that you should make when you head back to school. Let's just imagine for a moment that God has a syllabus or a supply list for this school year; He has a list of the kinds of attitudes and habits and behaviors He wants you to grow in. Let's think about the items on this supply list, one by one.

1. Love the Lord your God. See Mark 12:29-31; Colossians 3:23-24; Matthew 6:25; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 2:10. Sometimes students treat God as if He is an extracurricular activity. Or they treat God like extra credit. If you get all your other work done first, then you can honor God. But that's not what Jesus says. He says that loving God is the first and most important goal. It's foundational for everything else. And Jesus says that you're supposed to love God with all that you are.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart.

Loving the Lord with all your heart is greater than your first crush, or a passing fascination with a new hobby. It will definitely mean prioritizing God. Sometimes that will be easy because you'll want to. Sometimes it will be hard and you won't want to. It includes forming good habits like reading His Word and praying every day. It will mean making sure you worship God with other believers at Church. Loving the Lord your God with all your heart also has a lot to do with attitude. Attitude is about how you approach things. It's about how you do what you do.

Love the Lord Your God with all Your Soul

Heart and soul overlap a lot. Like heart, the word soul can refer to a person's inner life or just to life in general. By including the word "soul," Jesus made sure that we didn't think that all there is to loving God is an emotional experience, or just a spiritual experience, or just doing good works with our strength. Loving God with all your soul means that you love Him with every part of your being, every minute of the day, through every circumstance...you keep loving the Lord. Trust God with your whole life. He will take care of you.

Love the Lord Your God with all Your Mind

God wants you to love Him with the thoughts you think and with every exertion of your will. This means dedicating your thoughts to God. He has given people the responsibility to take care of the world. He made us stewards of His creation. And now, He has also called us to use our minds to serve Him in how we bless others and how we creatively share the good news about Jesus. But before we can love God with our minds, they need to be transformed. When you come to Jesus, you are transformed, but that transformation is not a one and done deal. Instead, every day you submit your mind to the Lord for His direction.

Love the Lord Your God with all Your Strength

This last supply for loving God means that your body, will, and courage are tools of worship. God has good things for you to do. You don't do them so that God will love you; you do them because He already loves you! Those good works could be creating something beautiful that reminds others about how good God is. It could be telling someone about Jesus. It could be honing your skills so that you can design something that helps others and honors God.

2. Love your neighbor as yourself. See Matthew 7:12.

When you go back to school, who is your neighbor? It's the students who sit next to you in class. It's your fellow athletes. Your neighbor is the girl who always gets left out or who sits alone at lunch. It's the group of people who don't look like the others. Your neighbors are the students that you get along with and the ones you don't agree with. As defined by Jesus, your neighbor is anyone you come in contact with and have the opportunity to show the love of Jesus to. It sounds so simple, but it's not. We all tend to be pretty selfish. But Jesus reminds us that we can trust God to take care of us so that we can show His love to others by caring for them. That doesn't mean everyone will like you. In fact, some people won't like you because you love Jesus and try to share Him. But you can always know that God loves you and be secure in Him.

Conclusion

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength...and love your neighbor as yourself.” If you do that, you're going to have a great year in school. It might be a hard school year, but just because it's hard doesn't mean it won't be great.