

Before The First Bell Rings

As many educators prepare to begin a new school year, our attention naturally turns to lesson plans, classroom setup, schedules, and the students God is about to place in our care. Last week's guest blog reminded us that our influence often reaches further than we realize. Before the first bell rings, Jesus invites us to focus on something even more important. Take a few quiet moments to read John 15 and allow His words to prepare your heart for the new season ahead.

Read [John 15:1-2](#).

How does Jesus describe Himself and God in verse 1? How does this shape or calm any anticipation, uncertainty, or concern you may be carrying as you prepare for a new school year?

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples in the upper room, knowing the cross was near. Fear and uncertainty were just ahead for those He loved deeply. Yet His final "I AM" statement was not one of warning but of encouragement. Though His physical presence would soon be gone, He would continue to nourish, sustain, and enable them to live fruitful lives. In verse 2, Jesus describes fruitfulness as a process. **What are the three stages of fruitfulness shown in this verse?**

Where do you see yourself right now in that progression? Are you struggling to bear fruit, beginning to see some fruit, or growing into greater fruitfulness?

Important Note: The Greek verb translated "removes" can also mean *takes away* or *lifts up*. In other words, God does not discard us; He lovingly lifts us up, clears away what hinders us, and prunes our lives so that we can grow and bear even more spiritual fruit.

Read [John 15:4-5](#).

Verse 4 of the Amplified Bible reads, "Remain in Me, and I will remain in you." Abiding or remaining implies an intimate, faith-based relationship in which Jesus Christ alone is the source of life. He is our Lord, and nothing works as it should apart from Him. Without the vital union with Christ that salvation provides, there can be no spiritual life or lasting fruitfulness. **What might it look like for you to "abide" or "remain" in Christ as you begin this school year?**

As you prepare to welcome a new group of students, remember that the greatest preparation is not found in a perfectly organized classroom or a carefully planned lesson. It is found in a heart that remains connected to Christ. The influence you have this year will not come simply from your knowledge, experience, or hard work. It will flow from your relationship with the true Vine. Before the first bell rings, choose to abide in Him. The fruit He produces through your life may impact far more people than you will ever know.

Lord, thank You for being the true source of life and fruitfulness. As I prepare for a new school year, help me remain in You each day. In the busyness of planning, meetings, and new beginnings, keep my heart centered on You. Show me where You are growing me, and give me a willing heart as You shape and prune my life. I don't want to rely on my own strength. I want to stay connected to You so that Your love, wisdom, and grace flow through me to every student and colleague You place in my path. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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