

# EVERYDAY PRAYERS

— FOR THE —

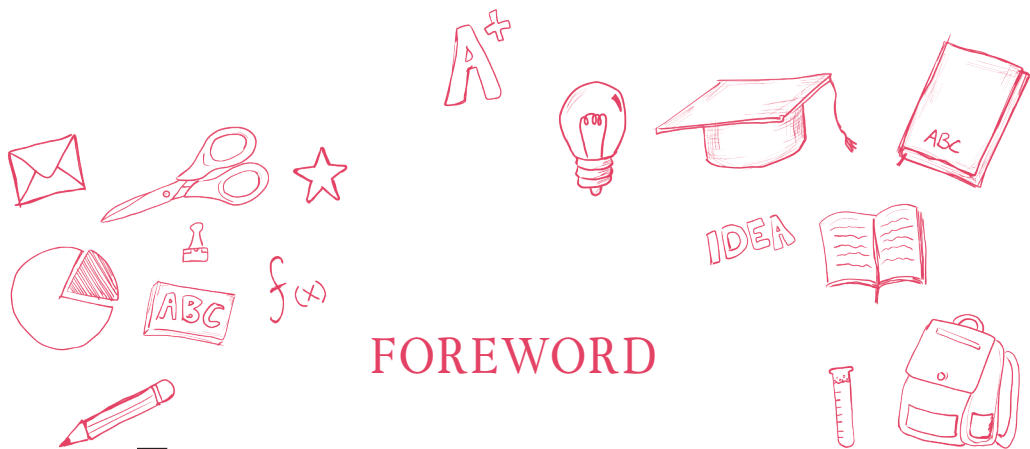
# SCHOOL YEAR

*A 30-Day Devotional & Reflective Journal for Moms*

TARA L. COLE



WHITAKER  
HOUSE



## FOREWORD

Every morning of my oldest son's first year of public high school, I dropped him off, drove home, walked into his room, and laid on his bed, begging God to cover him and keep him safe.

You see, we had just transitioned him from a couple of years at a small, private, Christian school, and before that, he'd been homeschooled his whole life. He was encountering things that year that we had never experienced before as a family, and I'm not sure any of us knew what to do with them.

Looking back, I know that much of what we dealt with was simply growing pains—for him and for us. As we were trying to help him take it all in and interpret his experiences through the lens of God's Word, we were doing the same thing with our own experiences. It challenged us to get outside of our box and look at the world in different ways. I'm grateful we've had the experience of participating in almost every kind of educational option available to us over the years, but it was a hard season, and we struggled as God asked us to expand and learn new things.

Every family goes through difficult times. I know many parents who have taken an opposite path to ours, transitioning from public school to homeschool, and still encountered struggles and spiritual opposition. The enemy *will* throw things at our children—at us—in an effort to fulfill his plan to steal, kill, and destroy. (See John 10:10.) It doesn't matter how our children are educated; the world will find them.

I was a child of the 1990s, and while I faced my fair share of bullies, temptations, and fears, I did not experience the world the same way my children do today. If I had a bad day at school, home was my

refuge. If I needed a break, I could get away from everyone and feel safe in the warm, loving home my parents offered me.

Now, school follows our children home. Bullies spread information—or worse, pictures—of our children’s mistakes and most awkward moments all over the world before we even know it’s happened. Recent statistics show that our children, at younger and younger ages, are dealing with depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts, all directly related to the device they can’t seem to function without—their phone. Maybe, if we dig down to the heart level, our kids are experiencing the same challenges we did, but I think we can all admit that the expression of those challenges is entirely different. So many parents find themselves asking the question, “How in the world do I do this?”

So, what is a God-fearing, normal Christian parent to do? How can we protect our children from everything the world throws their way?

We pray.

I know that may seem like a simple or even trite response to some pretty loaded, very serious questions. I want to assure you, at the time I’m writing this, I’m still raising two teenage boys who are in the thick of it. While we waited longer than most parents to allow our children to have phones and even social media at all, they do have them now. I know what you’re going through! We do our very best to shepherd our boys and believe that God’s Word applies even to the way we handle cell phone usage and the latest social media app. But it isn’t easy. Nothing about parenting today is easy, but God has given us a way to partner with Him in the parenting of our children, no matter what period of history we live in. As believers, through prayer, we have direct access to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Creator of our children’s hearts, and the One who breathes life into their bodies.

I don’t know exactly how prayer works, but I believe it does work because the Bible says it does. Somehow, God uses our prayers for

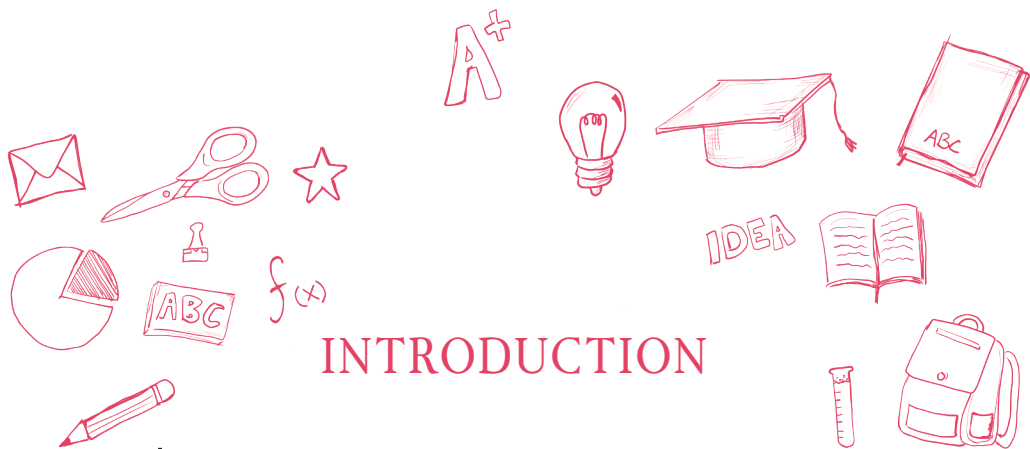
our children as a part of what He's accomplishing in and through them, for their good and His own glory.

Parenting can leave us feeling helpless. Prayer fills us with holy purpose. That's why my dear friend, Tara Cole, has written this beautiful prayer journal for parents of school-aged children—to fill you with holy purpose and the knowledge that you are not helpless. Prayer is not passive. It's a preemptive, strategic partnership with God. Tara understands the needs of moms today and knows how to fight for them in prayer. She's a faithful praying mom, and I can't think of a better person to lead us on this journey.

It's my fervent hope that as you spend the next thirty days with Tara in prayer for your school-aged children, God will meet you with the knowledge that prayer—simply talking to Him, asking for His wisdom—is *not* a last resort. It's your proactive privilege as a child of the King, and it's the first and best response to the challenges of parenting.

It's also my prayer that you will fall in love with the method we use of praying God's Word back to Him. At Million Praying Moms, we believe there's no real wrong way to pray. But when you pray God's Word—seeking not to take it out of context or use it for something other than what God intended—you can never go wrong. It has the power to divide and change hearts (see Hebrews 4:12) and always accomplishes exactly what God purposes for it (see Isaiah 55:11).

Together,  
Brooke McGlothlin  
Founder, Million Praying Moms



## INTRODUCTION

January 2020 found me on my knees praying for my children—again.

Even though I'm a teacher, my university has classes year-round. The past few summers, I had enrolled my boys in a childcare program, but it was no longer a good fit, and they were begging me to not put them there again. I didn't have any clear options and dreaded what the summer would hold.

For weeks, I scrambled to find a good solution. I researched other options, stressed over my schedule, and prayed for ideas. My first thought each morning was what our summer would look like. It was the main topic of all my conversations, and I'm sure my husband and friends grew tired of my fear-filled talk.

For eight weeks, I carried around the burden and guilt of not being able to be there for my kids like I wanted to be.

Finally, right before spring break, a good friend said she could watch my children. I felt relief knowing they would have fun and be with friends, but I still wanted to be with them myself.

You know where this is going, right?

COVID-19.

My schedule and theirs was utterly wiped clean and completely rearranged when the pandemic hit the United States in March 2020. That spring, we *all* did school from home. That summer, we had months together, day in and day out.

While being home with three kids was exhausting, I am so grateful for that time I had with them. I was delighted to have the

opportunity to get to know them better inside and out, to look them in the eyes and slow down, and to be present with them. Daily, I thanked God for His provision during that year.

This situation and many others have shown me that my God is faithful. He doesn't just answer our prayers—He answers them abundantly.

This school year, I have the same choice I had in January 2020.

I can choose to worry and stress over my sons' school situations, to carry that burden of uncertainty and frustration. Or I can choose to focus my eyes on Jesus and to trust Him.

Today, I'm choosing trust.

Here is a verse that has encouraged me often as I face the unknowns related to raising kids: "*We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you*" (2 Chronicles 20:12).

This is my prayer for us as we all go through this school year. Actually, it's the perfect verse to pray any time because our children will always face challenges and uncertainties. It's tempting to dread those challenges. It's tempting to stress over what school will or should look like. It's tempting to fear circumstances that can impact our children for years to come.

But as I look at the Bible and my own life, I'm reminded over and over again that even when times are uncertain, I can look to the One who has all the answers. He might not reveal them to me yet, but He has them, and I can trust Him with my children's future.

No matter what choice you've made to educate your children—public school, online, distance learning, or homeschool—as mothers, we have similar concerns and prayers for our children, prayers about our children making friends, connecting to teachers, learning in class, and growing in their gifts and character. As we consider this school year, we can choose to be anxious or choose to trust.

Let's choose trust together.

## FRIENDS

Friendships are at the forefront of many conversations around my table. No matter your schooling choice, we all hope our kids will make good friends who point them to Jesus, and they will be those friends for others. Some kids are gifted in this area and can make friends with anyone, while others struggle for years, and it breaks our mama hearts to watch that struggle.

We know the importance of good friends and hear over and over that the difference maker in many young adult lives has been their friends.

This school year, we're going to cover our children's friendships in prayer and ask God to do what only He can.

## TEACHERS

Whether your children are in a classroom face-to-face, distance learning, or homeschooling, we all want teachers for our kids who don't just teach them reading, writing, and arithmetic but really see and hear our children and value them for who they are.

One of my boys is a strong leader. In our karate classes, I can easily tell the type of instructor by the way that son acts. Teachers who understand him and require him to do his best get that boy to follow along and listen through a forty-five-minute class. Teachers who treat him like a cute little kid are going to have a terror on their hands. He lives up to their expectations and takes the whole class with him.

For him and my other sons, I constantly pray that their teachers will have insight into what they need and love them for who they are.

In our prayers in this journal, we'll join together and pray for our children's teachers, whoever they may be, asking God to grant them wisdom and insight this school year.

## CLASSES

We send our kids to school or teach them at home in the hopes they will get a good foundation in the basics so they can do well in other pursuits, but sometimes they still struggle. They feel defeated by work that is hard or instructions they don't understand. Getting them motivated can feel like pushing a boulder up a hill of slime.

Whether the basics come easily or are a constant struggle, our prayers in this journal will focus on God granting them understanding, a good work ethic, and endurance when things get hard.

## GIFTS

More than the basics, it's our hope as mamas that those God-given gifts we see in our children will grow and flourish. Yes, I want my kids to do well in writing (I'm an English teacher after all!), but more than an A on a report card, my constant prayer is that I partner with God to help grow and develop my children's gifts.

I have one son who does well in school, but his real gifts lie in relationship building. He is the most generous boy you have ever met. Recently, he willingly let his brother borrow a brand new scooter for several rides up and down our street. When his friends come over, he's the one who thinks to get drinks and snacks before they even ask.

As I think about his gift, my prayer is that I can help him use it wisely but that others don't take advantage of him and harden his heart. I pray he makes it to adulthood just as generous and thoughtful as he is now.

My other sons are similar. They have gifts that don't fit the mold, and I love them so much for it! This school year, I want them to grow in those gifts and learn how to serve God through them. He has a purpose for them. My job is to steward them well.

## CHARACTER

Beyond their gifts, we all hope that our children will be men and women of character. We pray that God will grow in them the fruits



of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It can be tempting to try to force the development of these traits in us and our children, but it is really the Spirit who grows them in us all.

In our final prayers of this journal, we'll focus on the fruits of the Spirit and asking God to grow them in our children's lives. Because even as important as reading, writing, and arithmetic are, *who* our children are becoming is even more important.

With all the choices we have to make, school years can seem scary, full of dread and uncertainty, but with our focus on Jesus, we can have hope. We can lift our eyes up from the circumstances surrounding us and our children and place them firmly on the One who is in control. As we seek Him this school year, He can turn our dread into delight, our stress into song, and our fear into a focus on Him.

*As a special gift for you, I've designed a bookmark with a reminder for each of the thirty days of prayer in this book. Find it and other school prayer resources at [taralcole.com](http://taralcole.com).*

Grace and peace,  
Tara L. Cole



## READ ROMANS 8

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us,  
who can be against us?*

—Romans 8:31

My cell phone rang as I left my last class of the day on a Tuesday afternoon.

“Hello, Mrs. Cole? This is the principal from your son’s school. He was in music class, and another student jumped on him and choked him. He’s okay, but he went to the nurse’s office...”

As I hung up the phone, I was furious. This wasn’t the first time I’d been called about my son being attacked by this student, but I was determined it would be the last.

Thankfully, based on my mom’s sound advice, I didn’t go full mother bear that afternoon, but I did pray and talk to friends who worked in the public school system.

The advice was not encouraging.

Due to the circumstances surrounding the situation, it did not look good. My friends were certain that, at the very least, my son would have to switch classes. But I didn’t want that because he was excelling with his current teacher.

So, I prayed.

Armed with documentation of the previous incidents, I was ready to talk to the school officials, but God's Spirit said, "Wait." Although I didn't understand why I should wait, on Wednesday, I waited and prayed.

On Thursday, I emailed the principal to request a meeting. Instead, she called me, and I calmly explained the relationship and struggle between the two boys over the last year and a half.

I wanted to rant, I wanted to...but God.

She listened, and then told me she would see what she could do.

Later that day, she called back. "The other student will be moved to another class tomorrow."

My friends were in shock! The only explanation I have is "but God."

I still don't know what God did or how His Spirit moved on Wednesday while I waited, but I am confident He moved in the waiting.

Waiting is hard. Trusting is hard.

As moms, we know all too well that God doesn't promise an easy road for us or our kids. As much as we'd love to protect them from heartaches, it just isn't possible. Jesus even tells us in John 16:33 that we will have trouble, but we can still be confident because He has overcome the world.

Then, in Psalm 46:1-2, we're reminded:

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the  
mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.*

God doesn't tell us the earthquake isn't scary. He doesn't say that moving and shaking mountains aren't dangerous. However, He does say that we can release any fear because He is our refuge and strength, and He is with us.

This idea is shown clearly in one of my favorite Bible stories in 2 Chronicles 20. During the reign of Jehoshaphat, who became king of Judah after his father Asa died, three large armies came to attack Jerusalem.

In verse 3, we are told, “*Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.*” This was an impossible situation. On his own, Jehoshaphat had no hope of defeating the armies that were coming against him. But instead of running scared, he ran toward God and prayed.

Jehoshaphat’s prayer is one of my favorite prayers from the Bible:

*For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.*  
—2 Chronicles 20:12

There have been so many times in my parenting journey when this has been my prayer. I want it to become my kids’ prayer, too. Whether it is a relationship struggle, homework situation, grades, friends, or one of the other many challenges our kids may face during the school year, we can’t go wrong when we teach them to focus on God first.

Later in chapter 20, we see the people of Judah didn’t even have to fight their enemies that day. Instead, God fought the battle for them. All they had to do was collect the spoils.

## **SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

While they are in school, kids need the type of assurance that Judah had. They need to know that they might have struggles, but Jesus goes with them. God is their refuge.

That is where our family’s peace is grounded. Not that there won’t be conflict, not that they won’t struggle with learning or relationships, but we can always be confident that God is with our families.

## EXTRA VERSES FOR STUDY OR PRAYER

Second Chronicles 20:1–24, Psalm 29:11, Psalm 46:1–3, John 16:33.

### VERSE OF THE DAY

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* —Romans 8:31

### PRAYER

Lord, may \_\_\_\_\_ know that You are for them throughout this school year. May Your presence bring them peace.

### THINK:

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### PRAY:

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### PRAISE:

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**TO DO:**

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**PRAYER LIST:**

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**QUESTIONS FOR DEEPER REFLECTION**

1. What concerns does your family have as we approach this school year? List them below.

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2. How does God's promise of His presence bring you peace in the middle of those concerns?

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