



Day 1

Listen:

But now, this is what the Lord says—

he who created you, Jacob,

he who formed you, Israel:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

²*When you pass through the waters,*

I will be with you;

and when you pass through the rivers,

they will not sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire,

you will not be burned;

the flames will not set you ablaze.

⁴*Since you are precious and honored in my sight,*

and because I love you,

I will give people in exchange for you,

nations in exchange for your life.

Isaiah 43:1-2, 4

Think:

Have you ever been worried about the first day or first few weeks of school? What will my new teacher be like? Who will have similar schedules? Well, my guess is that you are not alone in your worries about beginning a new year. I bet most of the people beginning school this year are nervous too. It is OK to wonder what a new school year will look like...

Even though we get the first day or first week jitters and wonder what transition might bring, it is important to remember that God is always with us as we start new things and as we adjust to new routine. It's hard understand how God surrounds us, but today's scripture from Isaiah reminds us that God is constantly present, and God shows us compassion even when life is hard and scary. While it is easy to worry about new things, we are told that we shouldn't worry, because God knows us, and God knows our name.

As God is present for us and shows us compassion, we are called to show compassion to others. Just as we need God's presence and assurance of His love, sometimes friends or people we are around need to know that we care for and about them.

Do: Look up the definition of “compassion” online or in a dictionary. Was the definition of compassion different than what you initially thought? Talk with a family member and remember how someone showed compassion to you in a time when you needed to know that you were loved and cared for.



Pray: Fill in the blanks in the prayer below, then pray this prayer out loud.

God, Thank you so much for _____ . I am grateful that you show us how to live compassionate lives. I hope that this year I will be able to _____ and _____ . Help me remember that you are always with me, and that you love me. Amen.

Reflect:

How did this scripture speak into your life today? Think about one way that you might be able to show compassion to a friend, neighbor, sibling, or someone else as you begin this school year...



Day 2

Listen:

¹² Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12

Do: Use a computer, tablet or phone to look up this BBC article titled "Would we starve without bees": <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zg4dwmn> . Read it solo or with a family member – however you want to do it!

Think:

Did you know that bees were THIS important to our world? Bees are tiny creatures, much smaller than human beings, but they participate so much in the creation of our flowers, fruits, and vegetables, that it would be hard to imagine life without them!

Do you ever feel like you are "small" and don't matter? Well, even if you feel like you might not matter, you DO! God created you to be exactly who you are, and as the scripture above shares, you are able to set an important example to the people around you. When people seem rude, be kind. When your siblings make you mad, show them compassion and grace and try to forgive them.

People assume that adults set the example for the rest of us, but I think that often, young people are the ones who set examples and teach others how to love, live, and be devoted followers of Jesus and compassionate Christians. YOU can set an example that grown-ups will notice. Even if you are just getting to know Jesus, your actions matter, and when you show compassion to others you point people to the good in this world.

Pray:

God, help me to set a good example to all people who I am around. It is hard to be compassionate and to love other people, but I know that you call us to live well and love well, so I want to try my best to do this. Forgive me when I don't show the love that I should. I want to reflect the love that you have for me. Amen.

Reflect:

How did this scripture speak into your life today? Can you think of a time when you felt like an adult or someone older than you looked down on you simply because you are "young"? Have you ever done this to someone else who was younger than you? How do bees set an example for us of how to live well and as examples in the kingdom of God?