

## Entrusting the Lives of Our Children: No Small Matter

Summer is over! It is autumn. The leaves are turning bright orange, red, and yellow, and our school-age children have all returned to school.

Our 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, wrote an essay entitled “World, My Son Starts School Today” when Tad, his youngest son, began his first day of school. Here is one version of President Lincoln’s essay:

World, take my son by the hand—he starts school today!

It’s all going to be strange and new to him for a while, and I wish you would sort of treat him gently. You see, up to now, he’s been the king of the roost. He’s been the boss of the backyard. I have always been around to repair his wounds, and I’ve always been handy to soothe his feelings.

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“Teach him to listen to all men, but to filter  
all he hears on a screen of truth.”

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But now things are going to be different. This morning he’s going to walk down the front steps, wave his hand, and start on a great adventure that probably will include wars and tragedy and sorrow.

To live in this world will require faith and love and courage. So, World, I wish you would sort of take him by his young hand and teach him the things he will have to know.

Teach him—but gently if you can.

He will have to learn, I know, that all men are not just—that all men are not true. Teach him that for every scoundrel there is a hero; that for every enemy there is a friend.

Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest people to lick.

Teach him the wonders of books. Give him quiet time to ponder the eternal majesty of birds in the sky, bees in the sun, and flowers on a green hill.

Teach him that it is far more honorable to fail than to cheat. Teach him to have faith in his own ideas, even if everyone tells him they are wrong.

Try to give my son the strength not to follow the crowd when everyone else is getting on the bandwagon. Teach him to listen to all men, but to filter all he hears on a screen of truth and to take only the good that comes through.

Teach him to sell his brawn and brains to the highest bidders but never to put a price tag on his heart and soul. Teach him to close his ears on a howling mob—and to stand and fight if he thinks he’s right.

Teach him gently, World, but don’t coddle him, because only the test of fire makes fine steel.

That’s a big order, World, but see what you can do.

He’s such a nice little fellow.

Even Abraham Lincoln experienced the emotion of taking his “little fellow” to school for the first time! Clearly, President Lincoln knew that entrusting his child to a school was no small matter.

This is a very different season of life for our family, too, because a few weeks ago my wife, Bonnie, and I dropped off our daughters, Lindi and Aubrey, at Indiana Wesleyan University, where Lindi is a senior and Aubrey is a freshman. We continue to live out our dream of “cradle to grave” Christian education for each of our four children.

The Saturday before we left to drive the 21 hours back to Colorado, the university invited families to a “New Beginnings Chapel.” What a special time! The highlight for me was the students’ prayer of dedication, which provided comfort to Bonnie and me as we entrusted our daughters to the university:

Eternal God, our Father, we give You thanks for these, our families and friends who have loved us and guided us in the way of righteousness. Grant them health, joy, and the security of their peace as they leave us at this university and entrust our lives to those who shall teach us according to Your truth. We dedicate ourselves this day to the task of Christian scholarship. Enlighten our minds with Your wisdom. May the increase of our knowledge confirm Your truth. Mold our wills and understanding with Your Spirit, and make us obedient to Your Holy Word. We present ourselves to You as a living sacrifice to the praise and glory of Your name. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

This part of the service reminded me of the apostle Paul’s words in Romans 12:1–2: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will” (NIV).

How privileged we are to be able to entrust our children to the care of dedicated Christian educators who understand their responsibility to model for our children what sold-out disciples of Jesus Christ look like, and who integrate every subject they teach into the truth of the Word of God!



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