

The book cover features a grayscale photograph of a fountain with water spraying upwards, set against a background of decorative, swirling patterns. The title is centered in a white, oval-shaped frame.

Splashes
of *Grace*

DEVOTIONS
FOR TEACHERS

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CONTENTS

PAGE 6	Lightbulb Moments	<i>Gerald Kieschnick</i>
PAGE 8	Who's Counting?	<i>Carolyn Sims</i>
PAGE 10	No Doubt About It	<i>Bill Cochran</i>
PAGE 12	Routines and Renewal	<i>Bill Hinz</i>
PAGE 14	Together, On Jesus' Team	<i>Carolyn Bergt</i>
PAGE 16	A Yearlong Journey	<i>Diane Tinker</i>
PAGE 18	More Than Simple Brick and Stone	<i>Thomas R. Ahlersmeyer</i>
PAGE 20	New Day, New Year, New People	<i>Brian L. Friedrich</i>
PAGE 22	The Most Important Intervention	<i>Candyce K. Seider</i>
PAGE 24	Progress Report	<i>David G. Ebeling</i>
PAGE 26	Great Books	<i>Sandra Doering</i>
PAGE 28	Fountain Always Flowing	<i>Carl C. Fickenscher II</i>
PAGE 30	The Best of Times, the Worst of Times	<i>Jane L. Fryar</i>
PAGE 32	Feed My Lambs	<i>Lawrence R. Rast Jr.</i>
PAGE 34	New Math	<i>Rodney Rathmann</i>
PAGE 36	Who's Got The Worst Job?	<i>Chuck Strohacker</i>
PAGE 38	The Foundation Is Love	<i>Barbara Morton</i>
PAGE 40	Lunch Time!	<i>Barry Bobb</i>
PAGE 42	Putting Things in Perspective	<i>Joan Gerber</i>
PAGE 44	Seeking Shelter	<i>Reed and Sharolyn Sander</i>
PAGE 46	It Does Take a Village	<i>Doreen Tarirai Moyo</i>



PAGE 48	Hope for Thirsty Soldiers	<i>George Guidera</i>
PAGE 50	Give Me a Break!	<i>Michele Pickel</i>
PAGE 52	In Our Place	<i>Pam Nummela</i>
PAGE 54	Exploring New Experiences	<i>Jane Blaile</i>
PAGE 56	Paper Cuts and Paper Jams	<i>Clarence Berndt</i>
PAGE 58	Sing a New Song!	<i>Ruth Geisler</i>
PAGE 60	A Special Kind of Love	<i>LuJuana R. Butts</i>
PAGE 62	The Simple Message	<i>Becky Peters</i>
PAGE 64	Emergency	<i>Perry Bresemann</i>
PAGE 66	Fight the Good Fight	<i>Kevin Kromminga</i>
PAGE 68	Here a Book, There a Book	<i>Kurt Krueger</i>
PAGE 70	One Hundred	<i>Kathy Slupik</i>
PAGE 72	“I Don’t Know”	<i>Tim Schumacher</i>
PAGE 74	A Masterpiece	<i>Jane Wilke</i>
PAGE 76	God’s Piercing Light	<i>Willie P. Stallworth Sr.</i>
PAGE 78	From Generation to Generation	<i>Bruce Kintz</i>
PAGE 80	Evaluations	<i>Rachel Eells</i>
PAGE 82	A Heavenly Alarm Clock	<i>Terry Schmidt</i>
PAGE 84	Welcome, Grandparents! Welcome, Mission!	<i>Drew Gerdes</i>
PAGE 86	The Play’s the Thing . . .	<i>Jeffrey E. Burkart</i>
PAGE 88	Death Brings Life: Celebrate!	<i>Lauren Wellen</i>
PAGE 90	The Blue Ribbon	<i>Edward Grube</i>
PAGE 92	The Perfect Celebration	<i>Eileen Ritter</i>
PAGE 94	It Doesn’t End Here	<i>Brenda Trunkhill</i>
PAGE 96	TOPICAL INDEX	

INTRODUCTION

Written for Christian educators by Christian educators serving in a variety of roles, this collection of devotions applies God's Word to the events of the school year and the school day. As you read and meditate on God's Word and reflect on the insights provided by a writer who might be a kindergarten teacher, college professor, district executive, synodical president, high school teacher, or other teacher of the faith, you will realize the spiritual refreshment and renewal that only God's grace and mercy can provide.

At times, the tasks and challenges you face as a classroom teacher may leave you feeling overwhelmed, tired, and spiritually dehydrated. But take heart, "Blessed are those who . . . thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5:6).

These devotions are designed to encourage and guide you as you anticipate and experience the special and ordinary activities and events associated with life in the classroom. As you pause for a moment to pray for your students and their families, your colleagues, your church and school, your family and yourself, these devotions will help you to remember the extent of God's great love for you. Especially in times of disappointment and discouragement, they will remind you that He who gave His life for you has promised to remain with you every day and to go with you into every lesson, discussion, and activity. Through His Word and promises, God splashes us with His grace as we teach others about Him.

Jesus promises, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). How invigorating!

*O God, renew With heav'nly dew
Our body, soul, and spirit
Until we stand At Your right hand
Through Jesus' saving merit.*

("Who Trusts in God a Strong Abode," LSB 714:3)

Lightbulb Moments

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness
has not overcome it. John 1:5*

While I was a student at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, my part-time job was teaching educable mentally handicapped children at the seventh grade level in the local public school system. This teaching role was both undeniably challenging and indisputably rewarding.

On one occasion, there was a boy in my class who was confused by the seemingly impossible images that he would see on television. I began to explain to him the concept of trick photography by which such “impossible” images were captured. However, the concept of trick photography was not easily grasped by my student.

Using objects at hand, I illustrated how camera angles, mirrors, lighting, editing, and a number of controlled factors could produce something that on television would appear impossible. After some time of tedious explanation on my part and patient observation on his part, the *lightbulb went on* in his mind and he got it! He was one excited young man. It was such a thrill to see the joy this young man was experiencing because he finally grasped what had previously seemed so impossible to understand.

Admittedly, there are some difficult concepts for students to grasp in the course of education. In Lutheran schools, many of these occur in the truths of religious instruction. The doctrines of Law and Gospel, justification and sanctification, Christology and eschatology, and the like are not always easily comprehended. In fact, the truth that God

would send His Son to die for our sins and then grant us forgiveness of sins by grace through faith seems “impossible.”

But, it is true! What is impossible for mankind is possible for God! God turns on the light of faith through Baptism. By the power of the Holy Spirit and through the hearing of the Word, in both young and old, the *lightbulbs come on* when they know their sins are forgiven and believe in Christ for salvation. Lutheran educators have the joy of seeing the light of Christ displace the darkness of sin in those they instruct and share in the joy and excitement of the moment.

It is my prayer that such lightbulb moments in your life will be reminders of why God has placed you in the special calling in which you serve. See the light of Christ shining in those whom you instruct. Be filled with the joy of the Lord as you see His mercies that are new every morning. Christ has turned a lightbulb on in you—enjoy the moment!

Almighty God, shine anew in my heart with the light of the love of Christ. Use me as Your servant so that lightbulb moments of faith may shine forth in the lives of those I teach and serve. In Christ's name I pray. Amen.

GERALD KIESCHNICK

Who's Counting?

Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.

Romans 4:8

Everyone likes counting down the last few days before the start of a new school year. Parents love them because their children will soon be back to routines and out of the house all day. Children love them because *this year* they will have a nice teacher. They will be popular among their friends. They can use their new crayons and wear their new outfits. They owe no back homework or time on the bench at recess. Teachers love them because *this year* they will have a great class. Lesson plan books and grade books are all ready for new entries. The students will all be kind and obedient and studious. Nothing has gone wrong—yet.

The joy of new beginnings seems to be instinctive. We crave a fresh start, a time to plan ahead and anticipate positive experiences, a time when the old has passed away and the new is before us. These weeks of preparation are a time of renewed vision. They are also a time of considerable stress. Sure, God could create heaven and earth in only six days. He didn't have to put up bulletin boards, make home visits, and attend endless planning meetings!

In addition to counting the days, we also need to count the costs. In Luke 14:28, we read about the necessity of counting the costs before we begin an important task, whether it be constructing a building or teaching a classroom of students. We must have the right resources available if we are to accomplish our goal. Educating children is an especially daunting task, for we will be teaching them not only what

they need to succeed in this world, but also what they need to live eternally with their Savior.

The costs are astronomical. They are figured not only in terms of receipts from the teacher supply store but also in terms of our investment of time and instructional know-how. Even more, these students (and you and I) have been purchased at a great cost—with the blood of Jesus. Our sins are not counted against us. Instead, Jesus counts us as His own and leads us to grow together as His disciples.

As the principal of a Lutheran school, at the end of the day before school starts each year, I like to go into each room and sit in the teacher's chair. I glance at the lesson plans, enjoy the bulletin boards, and leave a little token of encouragement. Then I pray for that teacher specifically and for the children in the class. If you are a teacher, I would encourage you to do the same. Sit in your students' seats either individually or at the head of each row or group and pray specifically for each child. It is the most effective preparation you can make.

God answers the prayers of His people. Bulletin boards will be changed. Students will have strengths and weaknesses. We will experience blessings and discouragement. But Christ Jesus will remain faithful. We can count on Him as we prepare and as we live out this year. He already sat at our desks, forgave our sins, and has interceded for us before His Father. We can anticipate that He will continue to do the same all year long.

Thank You, Father, for preparing a place for us and for all our students in heaven. Please let our time with these children this year guide them and nurture them in faith. When we are tired, renew our energy by showing us the vision You have in mind, and bless all our preparations toward that end. We pray in the name of Jesus, who has sufficiently paid every cost. Amen.

CAROLYN SIMS

No Doubt About It

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

Excitement. Anticipation. Apprehension. Those words describe a teacher's or administrator's thoughts about the first day of school. It is a new year and you are facing another first day of school. What will this year bring? Will I like all my students? Will all my students like me? Will I be able to meet each student's needs? What will be my biggest challenge this year? You are probably asking these questions and many others.

You are excited and nervous. You are anxious. You want to do your best.

God has chosen you to be a teacher in this school at this time. Because He has called you and placed you with this class, He will not leave you alone to fend for yourself. There will be times during this school year when you will face difficult situations with children, parents, other teachers, and maybe even your administrator or pastor. During those times, remember our Lord's invitation to come to Him for guidance and help.

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me," Philippians 4:13 reminds us. These words from Philippians bring us great comfort and hope for the new school year. No matter what happens during this school year, we can take comfort from the fact that Jesus Christ is standing right next to us with His arms strong, capable, and mighty to help.

There will also be times when everything seems to run smoothly, children are successful, parents are happy, and you feel great. During those times, we can remember to thank God for the successes. God would have us enjoy this school year. He would have us share His love as we look forward each day to seeing the students and getting to know them as the unique individuals they are. He delights in hearing the names of our students as we pray for them by name. He would have us share His love as we get to know our students' parents and join them in the journey before us, one yet untaken for the children God has placed into our mutual care.

As we bring our curriculum into action, we will have many opportunities to stretch each student and help each student to reach his or her potential. But as important as that work may be, God has given us an even greater work to do. He would have us help each student come to know Jesus as their risen Lord and Savior and to share the Gospel message with their families and friends.

Even as we experience excitement, anticipation, and apprehension, we can know joy; the Savior whose forgiveness and salvation we teach and share is our Savior too! We may have many questions about the school year, but we have no doubt that God's enabling hand is guiding us.

Dear Lord, I come to You today a little apprehensive about this school year. I do not know what each day will bring. Will I be successful? Will my students be successful? I ask You to give me a special measure of Your wisdom and strength as I begin this year. I thank You for enabling me to be a teacher and giving me the opportunity to share You daily with my students. Thank You for promising to be with me and guide me through this year. Help me to be a blessing to my students and their parents. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

BILL COCHRAN

Routines and Renewal

*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name
of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

Colossians 3:17

Procedures, routines, and schedules establish structure and order in the learning process. Students need assistance in developing routines that add familiar patterns and direction to their days. In our own lives, we usually develop some patterns and routines; for example, when we shop for groceries, do laundry, or plan whose house we will be at for Thanksgiving. God has also shared with us procedures that give structure to our lives: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8); “Forgiv[e] one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32); “Abide in Me” (John 15:4).

Sometimes, procedures and routines really help things progress efficiently in our classrooms. However, over time, procedures, routines, and schedules can become somewhat mundane, and even so downright predictable that they become boring. We settle in, and, sometimes, we just settle. Before long, one day just blends into the next.

We may even look at ourselves and not like what we see. We recognize that our attitudes toward co-workers, students, and parents are not what they should be. We examine our own patterns and routines and find they are woefully lacking. We look at our devotional and prayer life and see that it is not where it should be. We do not feel refreshed and renewed. We feel like we aren’t really making a difference. But wait. Satan is the great accuser. He wants God’s people to live in the past and to focus on their own, very incomplete efforts.

Thankfully, in God’s Word and by the power of His Holy Spirit, we are reminded again of the grace and unconditional love we have every morning when we wake up. “The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning” (Lamentations 3:22–23). We are daily reminded that our baptismal grace is not about us, but that it is all about what Jesus has already done on the cross and at the empty tomb. His victory turned the world upside-down. It breaks us out of the ordinary and makes all things new, even us. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

With this renewed perspective, we may notice new, refreshing things coming into our lives and routines. We may find a new friendship. We may develop a new interest. We may enjoy a new sunrise or the gift of refreshing rain. We marvel at God’s timing and at His spectacular power at work in nature and in our lives.

Begin each new day of the school year with these words from the psalmist: “Renew a right spirit within me . . . restore to me the joy of Your salvation . . . then I will teach” (Psalm 51:10–13).

We may begin to see the impact we are having on our students as we focus on God’s amazing provision and recognize that we cannot change or accomplish anything on our own. Jesus’ victory over sin and death is our victory. His power not only redeems us but also restores, renews, and refreshes us. “Behold, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5). He has a plan to use us every day to share that message of His love and mercy. That’s our daily routine and daily renewal.

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for those unexpected splashes of grace and encouragement in our lives. May we, by Your power, share Your grace and encouragement with those You place in our lives. In Jesus’ name. Amen.