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MAILING ADDRESS: 616-G Matthews-Mint Hill Rd., Matthews, NC 28105 PHONE: 704.849.2270 EMAIL ADDRESS: office@Proverbs31.org WEB ADDRESS: www.Proverbs31.org

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Proverbs 31 Ministries is dedicated to glorifying God by "Bringing God's Peace, Perspective, and Purpose to Today's Busy Woman." Through Jesus Christ, we shed light on God's distinctive design for women and the great responsibilities we have been given.

Our children are blessed by teachable moments at home and at school. What a joy to know that God can use us to teach, and use our children to teach us, in the everyday moments of life.



sent my second-born to school today. Not long ago she was a preschooler watching from the window as her big brother raced to the bus stop. This morning she was a kindergartner smiling proudly at his side.

Feeling so big, yet looking so small, the two made quite a pair as they confidently marched up to the lofty glass doors of Lincoln Elementary School. The newfangled backpacks slung over their shoulders and spotless tennis shoes hiding their summer-tanned toes bore testimony to the preparations we had made for this day. We shopped for notebooks, markers and glue. We met the teachers, janitors and cafeteria workers. We rehearsed phone numbers, locker numbers and our address. But more importantly, we had prayed — too many times to count — about the school year that stretched ahead.

As I followed my children through the crowded hallways, I was confident they were embarking on a delightful year of elementary education. Festive bulletin boards and clever cardboard frogs beckoned the knee-high students to "hop into the joy of learning," while shiny name tags on miniature-sized desks invited even the most anxious of pupils to sit down and stay awhile. After hanging each backpack on its designated locker hook and relaying a quick "hello" to my children's smiling teachers, my job as a firstday-of school mom appeared to be finished.

Without a backward glance, my little learners waved me on and promised to be watching for me at the end of the day. Attempting to appear as poised as the youngsters in my midst, I lingered in the hallway long after my drop-off duties were done. When the final tardy bell rang, I took one last peek into my children's classrooms, then sauntered to the parking lot with unsolicited tears clouding my vision.

I used to be perplexed by these "first-day-of-schooltears." After all, I have never been one to cry over the changing seasons of motherhood. While I love the carefree days of summer, I am equally fond of the daily routine the school year provides. In fact, after summer's flurry of ball games and impromptu picnics, late night star gazing and family vacations, I actually welcome the quieter days that lie ahead with autumn on the horizon. And though I enjoy having my children with me, I am also grateful for the confident steps they are learning to take as they explore new opportunities within the safe confines of their elementary school. But no matter how "ready" I am to shift gears when school begins, the tears still come.

Perhaps it's the colorful textbooks stacked carefully on each little desk or the undeniable sense of expectation that brightens the halls, but for whatever reason, I realize afresh on the first day of school the great privilege I've been given as a mother to be my children's first teacher. Commissioned to teach, not because of who I am, but simply because of Whose I am, I am humbled by God's summons to school my children in Kingdom matters. I am grateful for lessons taught in the dirt of our own backyard "science lab," for questions posed climbing the jungle gym at the park, and for creativity sparked by messy projects at the art studio of our kitchen table. I am delighted with textbook moments scripted by the Creator Himself, for butterflies that teach of transformation and sunsets that speak of beauty.

As I launch my children into a new school year, I am equally grateful that motherhood is God's personal invitation to learn, as well as to teach. I may never acquire an advanced degree or receive a title of academic distinction, but the instruction I've gleaned from the four-foot-high professors beneath my roof has left me a wiser woman indeed. My son's squeals of delight over the unusual colors of a passing beetle have instructed me in lessons on wonder; while my daughter's tears have enrolled me in the difficult course of

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compassion. And though I may never have chosen to pursue advanced character training on my own, a toddler's tantrums in the middle of the grocery store have plunged me into a graduate-level course on humility.

I don't know how many "first days of school" still lie ahead or how many more classrooms await my offspring. I can't imagine the staggering number of shoes my aspiring graduates will outgrow as they continue down their chosen path of education, or exactly how many backpacks will be left behind when their schooling is complete. But I AM certain of this: I will continue to delight in the Lord's invitation to join Him in the mighty task of instructing His children's hearts in truth. And this tearfully grateful teacher will pray that each lesson learned in the humble classroom of our home will be one thing my precious students (and their mom) never outgrow!

"Teach a child in the way he should go and even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6 NAS).

A freelance writer and speaker, Alicia is the mother of four little learners and the wife of one marvelous husband, Rob. She loves teaching God's word and learning from the Author of life Himself. She makes her home in Pella, Iowa.