



My School

Copyright © 2007 by Kurt Johnston and Mark Oestreicher

Youth Specialties products, 300 South Pierce Street, El Cajon, CA 92020, are published by Zondervan, 5300 Patterson Avenue Southeast, Grand Rapids, MI 49530.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible: New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other (except for brief quotations in printed reviews)—without the prior permission of the publisher.

Web site addresses listed in this book were current at the time of publication. Please contact Youth Specialties via e-mail (YS@YouthSpecialties.com) to report URLs that are no longer operational and provide replacement URLs if available.

Creative Team: Dave Urbanski, Laura Gross, Mark Novelli, Janie Wilkerson, and Rich Cairnes
Cover design by Gearbox

Printed in the United States

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

8

SECTION ONE: MIDDLE SCHOOL BASICS

11

1. Whose Idea *Was* School, Anyway? 12
2. Why Learning Is a Good Thing 14
3. Did Jesus Go to School? 16
4. Why Do We Need It? 18
5. So Many Classes, So Little Time 20
6. Why Is It So Boring? 22
7. Will I Ever Use the Stuff I'm Learning? 24
8. Learning about Life, Not Just Algebra 26

SECTION TWO: WHERE SCHOOL HAPPENS

29

9. Why Your School Setting Should Influence How You Read This Book 30
10. A Special Chapter for Public School Students 32
11. A Special Chapter for Christian School Students 34
12. A Special Chapter for Home School Students 36

SECTION THREE: THE PEOPLE YOU MEET @ SCHOOL

41

13. The Cafeteria Lady 42
14. The School Bully 44
15. The Jock 46
16. The Gossip 48
17. The Loner 50
18. The Geek 52
19. The Popular Kid 54
20. The Rude Kid 56
21. The Principal 58
22. The Substitute Teacher 60
23. The Strict Teacher 62
24. The Teacher's Pet 64

SECTION FOUR: HOMEWORK AND GRADES	67
25. Why Do My Parents Make Such a Big Deal about Grades?	68
26. What Difference Do Grades Make, Anyway?	70
27. This Class Is Tough!	72
28. Study Tips	74
29. How to Make Homework Not So Horrible	76
30. Getting Ready for a Test	78
31. How to Do a Long-Term Project	80
32. How to Raise Your Grade in Three Easy Steps	82
33. When to Ask for Help	84
34. My Mom Wants to Get Me a Tutor!	86
35. I Have Trouble Paying Attention in Class	88
SECTION FIVE: MAKING THE MOST OF AN AVERAGE DAY	93
36. How Not to Be Tardy	94
37. How to Make the Bus Ride Fun	96
38. Carpooling with Brats	98
39. Food Stuff	100
40. The Terror That Is...the Bathroom	102
41. The Pop Quiz—The Surprise That’s Never Fun	104
42. I Sit Next to Somebody I Don’t Like	106
SECTION SIX: THE P.E. PUZZLE	109
43. I Hate the P.E. Uniforms (<i>and School Uniforms</i>)	110
44. I Hate Changing in Front of People	112
45. I Always Get Picked Last	114
46. Why Do They Make Me Run the Mile?	116
47. Dodgeball Strategies	118
SECTION SEVEN: THE UGLY SIDE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL	123
48. Cheating	124
49. Fights	126
50. Peer Pressure	128
51. Mean Kids	130
52. Drugs	132
53. Drinking	134

54. Gangs	136
55. Feeling Left Out	138
56. Being the New Kid	140
57. Science Class	142

SECTION EIGHT: MIDDLE SCHOOL URBAN LEGENDS 145

58. Trash-Canning	146
59. Cafeteria Mystery Meat	148
60. “My Dog Ate My Homework”	150
61. The Mystery That Is...the Teachers’ Lounge	152
62. The Pool on the Roof	154

SECTION NINE: CAMPUS KINDNESS 157

63. Making Friends with the New Kid	158
64. Using Your Gifts to Help Others	160
65. The Power of Your Words	162
66. Sticking Up for the Underdog	164
67. “Did You Bring Enough for Everybody?” “Why Yes, I Did!”	166
68. Birthday Cards for Homeroom	168

SECTION TEN: MISCELLANEOUS SURVIVAL TIPS 173

69. Life with a Locker	174
70. Choosing What to Wear	176
71. Bad Hair Days	178
72. The Comparison Game	180
73. The Popularity Problem	182
74. Three Final Thoughts from Marko	184
75. Three Final Thoughts from Kurt	186



WHOSE IDEA WAS SCHOOL, ANYWAY?

STUFF YOU MAY NOT HAVE LEARNED IN MIDDLE SCHOOL: EVERY U.S. BILL, REGARDLESS OF DENOMINATION, COSTS JUST FOUR CENTS TO MAKE.

Well, there's no one answer to that one. In some ways, you could say it was God's idea because God instructed parents to teach and guide their kids. And that process of teaching and guiding shifted over the years.

One of the earliest groups of people to have an educational system (a school system) for *all* kids (not just the rich ones) was the Jewish people. All Jewish kids (well, all boys—only some of the girls), no matter if they were rich or poor, went to study with a rabbi (say RAB-bye). Rabbis are Jewish leaders, so it'd be like if you went to study with the pastor of your church.

And get this—Jewish kids memorized the entire Torah (say TOR-ruh)—the first five books of our Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Seriously! Can you imagine trying to memorize that much? Grab a Bible, flip through those pages, and check 'em out.

The kids in the Jewish schools didn't just memorize stuff, though. They also had long conversations about what the stories and teachings meant. By the time they were 12 years old, they could quote the entire Torah and answer all kinds of complicated questions about Jewish beliefs. How does that make you feel about *your* homework?

Anyhow, except for the Jewish people and a few other exceptions, for thousands of years schools were for rich kids only. But about 100 to 150 years

ago, people in many countries of the world decided *everyone* has the right to an education. Even then, until much more recently, school was offered through only the eighth grade for most kids.

Sometimes the idea that “school is good for you” might feel like a parent trying to get you to eat Brussels sprouts. But really, whether or not you like all your classes, you know it’s true. No matter if you want to be a doctor or a factory worker, a mom or an artist, going to school is a process that helps you learn to think, and it’ll help you no matter who you are or what you become.



WHY LEARNING IS A GOOD THING

Take a few seconds to think about some of the stuff you've learned. You've learned to walk and talk and throw a ball. You've learned to load and unload the dishwasher. You've learned the difference between a noun and a verb. You've learned how to surf the Web and how to send an attachment in an e-mail. The fact that you're now holding this book in your hands is proof you've learned how to read.

Now take a few seconds to think about what your life would be like if you didn't know how to do the stuff we just listed. Kinda weird, huh? The truth is all of us are learning stuff all the time. One place we learn is in the school of life. All of us—grown-ups, too—are enrolled there. So there's a whole bunch of stuff you've learned just because you're experiencing the joys of being alive. You've learned most of it naturally, and you probably can't remember exactly how or when you learned it.

Another place we all learn is in the school of—well, the school of school! It's in the school of school that we learn some of the more formal stuff like reading, writing, and arithmetic.

So here's some bad news: Like it or not, you're *always* in school.

Here's some good news: Because you're always in school, you're almost always learning. And learning is a really good thing. Maybe you need to hear that one more time: Learning is a really good thing! In the Bible it says, "Intelligent people are always

ready to learn. Their ears are open for knowledge” (Proverbs 18:15, New Living Translation).

For some of you, learning comes easily. For others, learning to be a learner is going to be a learning process. (Huh?) We know you could be doing lots of other stuff right now, like playing video games, duct-taping your little brother to the wall, or trying to discover if cats really do always land on their feet. Instead, you’re reading this book. And the fact that you’re reading this book means you’re a learner, and learning is a really good thing.

Go ahead—pat yourself on the back.



STUFF YOU MAY NOT HAVE LEARNED IN MIDDLE SCHOOL: “THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER,” THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF THE UNITED STATES, ACTUALLY HAS FOUR VERSES, BUT EVERYONE KNOWS JUST THE FIRST ONE.

DID JESUS GO TO SCHOOL?

Jesus totally went to school. Isn't that a riot? It's hard to think of him sitting in the fourth row, right behind some little know-it-all, just to the left of that kid who's always picking his nose, and in front of the student who falls asleep in class all the time.

We know Jesus went to school because *all* Jewish kids (all boys, that is, and some girls) went to school. They studied with a rabbi (see the previous chapter) and learned *tons* of stuff. Most kids also studied a “trade” (a skill that would be used for a job someday), and they usually learned this from their parents. So Jesus would have gone to school for part of the day, and then studied carpentry with his dad—Joseph—the rest of the day.

Here's an interesting thing to think about: We don't really know what Jesus knew about himself and at what age. Like, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus was completely human and completely God. (That's 200 percent, which can make your brain hurt if you think about it too much.) Yet the Bible also makes it clear Jesus grew up like a normal kid. Check out this verse:

AND JESUS GREW IN WISDOM AND STATURE, AND IN FAVOR WITH
GOD AND MEN. (LUKE 2:52)

Sure, the verse doesn't say, “Jesus went to school, and got pretty good grades.” But what it *does* tell us is that Jesus grew up. Okay, we know you're thinking, *Duh!* And you're wondering if you can keep reading this book because we, the au-

thors, must be the two stupidest guys ever to write something so obvious as though it were important. But wait—it *is* important. Jesus didn't just grow up physically (that's what the verse means when it says he grew in "stature"). Jesus also grew "in wisdom"—ooh, that's the key phrase!

When the Bible says Jesus "grew in wisdom," it means he became wiser and smarter, right? That also means he didn't know *everything* since the moment he was born (super-baby!). Now, we don't know exactly when Jesus understood he was the Son of God, the Messiah sent to save the world. Although he seems to understand it by the time he's about 12 years old because he says some stuff to his parents after they lost him on a trip to Jerusalem that makes it pretty clear *he knows*. (You can read about it in Luke 2:41-52. The verse in the middle of the previous page is the last verse of that story.)

All of this to say: YES! Jesus went to school! And he wasn't just sitting in class feeling bored because he had to listen to stuff he already knew (because he's God). Jesus actually learned, and he grew in wisdom. Just like you're doing (we hope!).