

- Please write back to me in a three-step process:
  - FIRST-- start out writing your thoughts about what I've written to you in the beginning of the journal entry and
  - THEN-- share you're thoughts about the middle part of what I wrote to you
  - and LAST, answer any questions. Follow this pattern every time you write back.
    - For Gavin - write to me and draw a picture of what he wrote.
- Please... Make the most of this. You'll love what you get from it. One day it'll mean the world to you to have this glimpse back. Today, it'll be like a magic mirror revealing what you never knew was there.
- Please fill in the following pages using your thoughts, feelings, engaging your mind and utilizing your vocabulary and most importantly exploring your heart.
- Let your mind wander, your creative side to explore, let your imagination paint a picture with your words. Journaling connects you to what you didn't even know was there. Now....start your adventure.
- Thank you for opening this door of writing, allowing me to not only peek in your heart, but to be welcomed in-- as if stepping through a door, coming in and staying for a cup of tea.

If you could be one animal which would it be?

Why do you like this animal? Can you draw a picture of this animal too please?

What special and fun memory do you have from each of your teachers?

If you could be in a movie, which one would it be? Which character would you want to be? What is it about that character that made you pick them?

We talk a lot about being **blessed and privileged**.

But what does privileged mean to you?

Is it something you can work for? Is it something you deserve?

Being privileged is like a gift you must take care of-- something you must steward. So please tell me what "privileged" means to you and what that looks like to you.

The next word goes along with it-- **Responsibility**.

**Please share what being responsible--** taking ownership and being self-motivated-- **means to you.**

Share how having responsibility affects your life at home with your family, in your room by yourself, playing soccer or basketball, being at school, interacting with friends and doing your school work.

Will you share with me 3 things you love most about summertime?

\*\* extra for older kids-- Share with me what you miss most when summer is over.

Can you remember your favorite gift? When did you get it? What was it? Who gave it to you? Can you draw a picture of it?

You are so special to me-- just like a precious gift!

Your bright big smile— it's the kind of smile that you're not only using your mouth, but the kind of smile that radiates from your eyes as well. Is that possible?

Is it possible to smile from your eyes? Yes, because your eyes are a gateway to display the joy from your heart! The Bible tells us to guard our hearts and not let any bad stuff in because life comes from our hearts. Have you ever felt yucky in your heart and had difficulty smiling because of it? How did you find your joy again and get your smile back?

Challenge: see if you can make a list of every single teacher you have had. Choose three teachers to write about in your journal and tell me what made each of them so special.

Make a list of students in your grade who are good people for you to build friendships with over the summer and when you go to back to school.

Go get the yearbook to look at each person and decide if they have the character and qualities to go on your list.

Please tell me a little something about each person. What is their name? Do they have any siblings? How do they act at school? What do you like about them? How do you feel when you're with them?

For the younger kids I asked for a **Top10 List**

For the older kids I asked for a **Top 20 List** since more of the students come together in the same school in older grades

Follow Up—

I told you that I'd tell you what good would come from your list.

Well...here it goes...

Your list will show you who you are-- not all of who you are, but we are a reflection of the people we hang around, so if you like what you see in these people and want to see some of what they are in yourself then build relationships with them and you'll see yourself gain more than a friendship, you'll gain some character and qualities of theirs too. Ta Da! ☺

**Antidote** is a substance that cancels out the harmful effect of something else. The word "antidote" is in Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and some of the superhero movies. Well you have superhero powers of an antidote too! It's gratefulness. When you start to think negatively or feel ugly inside, you can get rid of those harmful effects by being grateful. So... Can you **write 3 things you are grateful for**? It can be a memory, a place you've been, a person, a food, a toy or gift, books, sports-- anything you are thankful for.

\*\*\*same subject for the older kids-

Antidote is something you take to cancel out something bad. For instance, if you got bit by a snake we would take you to the hospital and they would give you the antidote to cancel out and stop the snake venue. I heard a podcast that gratitude is the antidote to negative thinking. Did you know negative thinking is like a poison? So what do you use to cancel out or stop the poison of negative thinking? Gratitude. Please write a page of what you are grateful for. You can make a list of 25 (for the older kids I asked for a Top 50 List) things OR you can pick just 4 to 5 things and tell me about them. "When I'm worried and I can't sleep, I count my blessings instead of sheep and I fall asleep, counting my blessings." When we count our blessings, it keeps us from having a negative mindset and helps us to focus on a grateful state of being.

Will you share with me your favorite food?

It's hard to stand up for someone when the bully has a group of people who are always around to take their side. One of the most difficult things to do is to stand up to someone who is prideful, because a lot of people who are prideful are also arrogant.

The Bible tells us that pride comes before a fall.

So what is it that causes us to trip up, stumble or fall? PRIDE!

Can you think of 2 different times that having pride/being prideful caused you to fall, fail or be embarrassed? What happened? What was the story? How did you feel? What did you learn? How did it change you?

*For the Boys:* think about 3 Disney guys you would want to be, and write a paragraph for each one sharing with me why you chose them and what it is about them that you would like to see in yourself.

*For the Girls:* think about 3 Disney girls who you would want to be and write a paragraph for each one sharing with me why you chose them and what it is about them that you would like to see in yourself.

Then the next entry—

*For the Boys:* Pick three Disney girls you would want to marry and tell me three things you like about each one.

*For the Girls:* Pick three Disney guys you would want to marry and tell me three things you like about each one.

Here's a question about one of our movies-  
*The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*

The witch enticed Edmond to bring his brother and sisters with him so she could capture them all! What did the witch use to entice Edmond? Power and Treats! Edmond wanted to be the most powerful of all his family and he wanted to be the boss and tell them all what to do. Then... he wanted to have all the yummy treats possible. The enemy, the witch, tricked Edmond because he was greedy and selfish. How sad. **Can you share with me TWO things the enemy could use to trick you into doing something that is bad or wrong?**

\*\*extra for older kids-- You can probably understand why Edmond wanted power. He was sick of being the younger kid. He wanted to have the authority to finally tell Peter what to do. Edmund got all caught up in working for the bad guy all for what he thought he could get out of it for himself. It's crazy how greed and selfishness can be the trap to get us right where the enemy wants us. But... there is power in knowing our weak areas. That way, when the enemy tries to use it to tempt us, we have the awareness of our weakness to ask the Lord for help. **What is an area or areas of weakness for you?** Self awareness is key here. Boldly, bravely and honestly evaluating yourself (also known as self evaluation). **What are the areas of your heart and mind that the enemy might prowl upon to slip you up? Finally, how will you be prepared to battle and overcome those attacks?** You are getting stronger just by acknowledging and answering these questions.

There are a lot of great things about starting a new school year.

#1 New Friends

#2 New Teachers

#3 New Start to Do Your Best & Succeed

Sometimes though, we can feel nervous about new things.

Tell me if you are nervous, excited or both about the topics listed in #1, #2, & #3.

Share your favorite scripture and what it is about that verse that speaks to you.

There can be more than one, but be sure you write about what the scripture means to you on each one you share.

## The Following Are Discussions I Wrote About with My Older Kiddos.....

Let's discuss fear.

Makes me think of the song, "I'm no longer a slave to fear. I am a child of God."

Can you share three areas of fear for you? What is it that makes each of those areas fearful? What is the worst-case scenario from your fear?

In other words, think of your fear and think of the worst possible thing that could happen. Next, can you strategize in your mind and spirit to overcome those fears?

It's going to take some time and maybe a lot of words. Give this entry the time, words and space on the pages needed to answer thoroughly. Give your best-- not the basic. In the pages you'll find that God equips us to deal even with the worst-case scenarios, if those worse-case scenarios even unfold. But fear is a tool to block us from ever trying. Fear keeps us from our potential. It's better to pursue your passion and possibly have a little hiccup than to allow fear to keep you from exploring how awesome it feels to walk with purpose, passion and determination.

Today, I'd like for you to share your thoughts about conviction.

**#1 Think of the show 48 Hours on CBS. The jury will convict a defendant of a crime. SO that means they are guilty.**

**#2 Now. There's the word conviction and this is the word we're going to focus on today.**

The feeling of conviction keeps us from doing what we are not supposed to do OR is what makes us do what we are suppose to do.

*For the Boy Example--* your friends are cussing in the locker room and telling dirty disrespectful jokes about girls. You want to be a part of the group even though you know how they're acting is wrong, but you get this feeling of conviction and choose not to be a part of it.

The other side is there is a guy in the locker room that everyone is poking fun at. You notice the guy isn't taking it well, but you don't want to say anything because you don't want to be the one they start making fun of. But you feel convicted to do what is right, so you stand up for him no matter what that my mean would happen to you.

*For the Girl Example--* you notice a guy and he notices you, then he starts talking to you and some of the students start saying he likes you, but you know your weakness is bad news boys. When he's talking to you, you really like it and feel a little hormonal and excited but you have this feeling of conviction and politely yet firmly let the guy know there's no chance on earth you're going to open yourself up to that stumbling block. That would be keeping you from doing what you aren't supposed to do.

The other side, for example, is there is an assignment you get and have three weeks to complete. To do your best you really do need three weeks, but you get home, mess around the house, get your shower, turn on the TV. The Holy Spirit convicts you to turn it off and discipline yourself to work on that assignment. You know your tendency to procrastinate and then not do very well on school work so you decide to turn off the TV and start on it. You feel convicted to do what is best and you do it.

A lot of people don't think God speaks to them, but He does. Most people just don't want to listen.

So how does He speak to us? Through His written Word (the Bible) **and** through the Holy Spirit-- and the Holy Spirit is Who convicts us-- all in a good way.

The other word is condemnation. Condemnation is from the enemy and tells people they are bad. The Holy Sprit tells us that the situation or the decision is bad, but tells us we are good because God made us and God loves us. The Holy Spirit convicts our hearts to turn to God and ask for forgiveness when we've messed up, stumbled and sinned.

Conviction keeps us close to God. Condemnation separates us from God.

**#3 How have you experienced the Holy Spirit's conviction in your life? Have you ignored His voice? Have you submitted to His voice? Have you ever experienced condemnation?**

Some students don't think they have a testimony because nothing bad has happened to them and they have never really done anything bad either.

Students who have a mom & dad who love one another and who have always been together; students who have been born and raised going to church; students who have been fed the Word of God and whose families pray together.

So... Do they have a testimony? Yes! And so do you!

If you were a sinner in need of a Savior and you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior then you have a testimony and the world will need to hear it. Revelation says we overcome by "*the blood of the Lamb*," that's Jesus' sacrifice," and "*the word of our testimony*."

So pray and seek the Lord to give you insight to **write your testimony**. I want you to be able to have it and read it when there is a challenge for you, you can look at your testimony and say "*Lord, thank You that I'm not the same as I once was. Thank You for Your plans and purposes for me. If you got me out of that, I know You'll provide for this.*"

Your testimony is your confidence in the Lord and when doubt or temptation is thrown at you, go back to what God has already done.

That is why people built altars in the Old Testament. It was a physical reminder of what the Lord had performed and accomplished-- a tribute. This testimony is your tribute saying what Joseph said, that what the enemy (in his case, his brothers) meant to harm you, God will use for the saving of many lives.

People will need to hear it one day, when the Lord says, "*it's time to share*," it will be a token of hope for someone else to know if God could bring you out of sin, He can deliver them too, that just as you overcame darkness, so can they.

You can include memories, your age, you can include conversations you may have had or people who prayed with you or influenced you, you can include scripture or anything you can think of.

There's much power in your testimony!

Over and over and over again you are going to be presented with a choice.

Choose Jesus in this moment or choose popularity.

Choose Jesus in this moment or choose feeling cool.

Choose Jesus in this moment or choose to trip over this block the enemy has put on the ground to mess me up.

You're probably going to have some hiccups along the way, but in those every day moments if you choose Jesus, He'll take you where He has planned and you'll get there faster because you won't have all the detours and regret of poor choices.

Plus, remember that decisions you make against God don't affect just you-- it affects your entire family. If you live a life God can bless it also ends up blessing your family too.

Please, please, please choose the blessing in those moments at school, or in the locker room, on the field or court.

Live for Him. He has such a special calling on your life. Answer that calling now. Don't wait until you're older and have baggage. Answer it now and walk in it and see what He can do with a student your age!

We'll all be amazed!

Don't limit what He wants to do in your life.

When you allow God to work in and through you, you are the best and happiest "you" that you have ever been, could be or will be.

**How will you approach those moments that you are presented with this choice to choose what God wants for you in the long-term over what appears appealing in the immediate?**