



## Unscheduled Grace College Care Packages

Plan an event to assemble care packages for your congregation's college students! Plan to send each student a copy of *Unscheduled Grace: 40 Reflections and Prayers for College Students* and use the ideas in this event for additional care package items.

College is a time when life is full—very full. When days are structured by classes, syllabi, meetings, rehearsals, and cafeteria hours, it can be hard to find time to be alone and even harder to find time to be with God. Students can easily forget to open themselves up to the possibility of grace, especially grace that may come when they least expect it.

Creating a care package for your students can not only remind them that there are people back home who are praying for them and proud of them. But a care package arriving out of the blue can also help them see that despite all of the demands and overscheduling they are feeling, experiencing God's love and grace can happen at the most unexpected of times.

Choose a date for a package assembling event. You may want to do this at the beginning of the semester to help students get settled, during midterms when they are experiencing a slump, or as part of a final exam survival pack to help them push through to the end. Before the event, reach out to the families of your college students to get current addresses as well as information regarding allergies or food preferences.

### Supplies

Invite the congregation to donate gifts to fill the care packages. A mix of lightweight, practical, and whimsical items works best. Food is especially appreciated by this demographic as they tire of cafeteria menus and crave study snacks. Here are items to consider:

- A copy of the book *Unscheduled Grace: 40 Reflections and Prayers for College Students*
- Hot cocoa mix
- Candy, gum, and mints
- Sweet and salty snacks: pretzels, granola bars, crackers, fruit chews
- Microwaveable foods: popcorn packets, mug cake mixes, macaroni and cheese, instant oatmeal
- Home-baked goods prepared and packaged ahead of time
- Stress squeezers
- Sticky notes and other fun office supplies
- Window markers
- Dorm room décor: stickers, window/mirror clings, string lights
- Coloring books, puzzle books, and colored pencils or markers for brain breaks
- Gift cards to local eateries, online shopping, or food delivery services

Prepare for the event by gathering these shipping supplies:

- Boxes
- Address labels
- Scissors
- Packing tape
- Markers
- Large boxes for transporting the packages to the post office or a shipping center
- Cushioning material (bubble wrap, packing peanuts, gift wrap, or tissue paper)
- Postcard stamps (for the return postcard you'll enclose)

## Event Setup

Set up three stations for the event. The assembly line station is where people will fill the boxes with items. The prayer chain station is where people will write messages on prayer chain links. The packing station is where people will seal the boxes.

## Assembly Line Station

On the day of the event, prepare the assembly line station to fill boxes with care package items. Place addressed boxes at the start of the line with plenty of table space for donations. As you fill the boxes with goodies and copies of *Unscheduled Grace*, be sure to include:

- Copies of the "To the Student" letter from page 6
- Copies of the 4 x 6-inch return postcard from page 7– 8
- Copies of the prayer bookmarks
- Stamps for the postcards

Allow enough room at the end of the line for the boxes that are filled but not yet sealed.

## Prayer Chain Station

Create a station for participants to make Prayer Chains. Gather the following supplies for this station:

- Cardstock in various shades of colors, cut into 2" strips (about 20-25 per college student)
- Scissors/paper cutter
- Masking tape
- Pens and markers
- Resources for notes: Bibles, quotes, joke books, etc.
- Church directories (so participants can see photos of the college students)
- Staplers

Invite the event participants to write personal notes on the strips to each student with encouraging messages, Bible verses, inspiring quotes, or jokes.

Write each student's name on a piece of masking tape and use it to stick a starter strip to the edge of a table. When the congregation members are finished writing a note on a strip, they may loop it through and add it to the growing prayer chain under each recipient's name with a stapler. The students will be instructed to tear off one loop each day to read a note from a church friend.

## Packing Station

Top each care package with a prayer chain, making sure to match each student's personalized chain of notes to the corresponding addresses. Seal the boxes with packing tape and stack them in the center of your gathering space.

## Box Blessing

Wrap up the event with a Box Blessing. Invite the participants to circle the pile of packages they've created. Place several pens near the boxes. Have a leader read this blessing, and invite the group to repeat each line and take each action:

**Dear God,  
Bless these boxes!  
They are filled with the love, laughter, and grace  
that Jesus brings to the world.  
Bless the hands that created them.**

Lead the participants to use their fingers to trace a cross on the hands of the people next to them.

**Bless the hands that deliver them.**

Lead the participants to draw an air cross in the direction of the post office.

**Bless the hands that open them.**

Lead the participants to use a pen or marker to draw a small cross on the sides of the boxes—away from the address labels.

**Amen.**

Send your College Care Packages on their way as soon as possible. Watch for the return postcards to come in the church mail. Post the returned postcards on a bulletin board so the congregation may see these updates from their beloved college students.

On the following pages you'll find additional resources to include in each care package.

**To the Student Letter Template on page 6**

Personalize and copy this letter to go in each College Care Package or use this template as a springboard to create your own.

**Return Postcard on page 7–8**

Copy and cut this silly return postcard to go in each College Care Package. Don't forget to add postage so your college students won't have to!

**Prayer Bookmarks on page 9–16**

Print and cut out these bookmarks so students have prayers handy whenever needed.



DEAR \_\_\_\_\_,

We know your life is full of learning and assignments, opportunities and pressures. In the midst of your classes, homework, meetings, rehearsals, and cafeteria hours it can be hard to find time to be alone and even harder to find time to be with God. We want you to remember that, even though every moment of our lives can be scheduled, sometimes God, like this package, can surprise us.

As you eat the treats we've packed, read the cards we've sent, and enjoy quiet moments reading *Unscheduled Grace*, we hope that you find ways to stay open to God's presence and love, which is with you always.

We support you. We are proud of you. We are praying for you.

We love you!  
Your Church Family

P.S. Take a moment to complete and mail the enclosed postcard to church. We'd love to hear from you!

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A Letter From \_\_\_\_\_  
College Name

Dear Church Family,

Thanks for the care package! I was so:  surprised  confused  thrilled  worried  other \_\_\_\_\_  
when it arrived that I:  dropped it  gave it to my roommate  high fived the mailroom worker  
 jumped with joy  other \_\_\_\_\_.

College is:  great  hard  boring  exciting  annoying  confusing  everything I dreamed it would be  
 other \_\_\_\_\_, but I really miss my:  best friend  pastor  bed  dog  shower  
 little brother  other \_\_\_\_\_. My classes are:  fascinating  boring  confusing  
 I'm supposed to be in class?  other \_\_\_\_\_.

Every day when it's time to get up I think:  yeah, more learning!  I need more sleep  wait, I just went to bed!  
 other \_\_\_\_\_. Besides school, college is great because of the:  extracurriculars  friends  
 possibility of athlete's foot from the showers  other \_\_\_\_\_. Although I miss you terribly  
and can't wait to see you soon. Thank you for the treats! I will think of you all every time I:  pray  read  eat  
 use the microwave  trip over the empty box I'm too lazy to recycle  other \_\_\_\_\_.

See you soon!

Love  Sincerely  Yours truly  XO  Best wishes  Warm regards  Other \_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign Here

A Letter From \_\_\_\_\_  
College Name

Dear Church Family,

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when it arrived that I:  dropped it  gave it to my roommate  high fived the mailroom worker  
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See you soon!

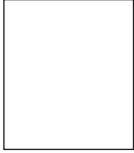
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Draw us a picture:



Please deliver to:



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## Directions

Below are 6 bookmarks containing prayers for students. Print the pages on cardstock and cut out into bookmarks. Feel free to punch holes in the top to add a ribbon or tassel.





### TIRE

I am tired.  
I am exhausted.  
My schedule is full  
and assignments  
weigh heavy on my mind.  
Grant me rest, O God.  
O God, grant me peace.  
Restore me.  
When this day is over  
and a new day has broken,  
bless me with energy  
and a renewed sense of purpose.  
But for now,  
slow my body,  
slow my mind,  
and let me sleep. Amen.




### MY FUTURE

O God,  
I think about the future all the time.  
I wonder what's ahead for me.  
I think about what I might want to do,  
where I want to live,  
the relationships I want in my life.  
Sometimes the answers are clear,  
sometimes I'm excited,  
but often I am confused  
and anxious about what lies ahead.  
Help me when my anxiety about  
my future  
prevents me from making decisions.  
When I am discouraged, send  
me support.  
When I need advice, send me  
wise counsel.  
When I need to relax, grant me rest.  
Surround me with your love,  
wherever my future might lead.  
Amen.



### PROCASTINATION

*I can't do it, God.*  
I know I have work to do,  
there are deadlines looming,  
I am feeling the pressure, and yet ...  
I just can't seem to get it done.  
I tell myself there is plenty of time,  
I try to get organized, and then,  
I put things off.  
I want to do better.  
But, here I am.  
Forgive me my shortcomings.  
Help me create new habits so  
I feel less stressed.  
Give me the strength to  
move forward  
and the insight to set priorities.  
Surround me with others who will  
set good examples  
and who will help me use my  
time well.  
Amen.







## STRESS

Merciful God,  
I have so much to do and  
I don't know how it's all going  
to get done.  
I feel like I should be able to  
handle things  
—everyone else seems to—  
but I am not keeping up.  
I don't sleep or eat well and  
I am starting to feel a sense  
of despair.  
I need a deep breath.  
Help me get through this.  
Instill in me,  
even for a few minutes,  
a sense of calm.  
Give me self-confidence and  
determination to keep going.  
Send me support and  
encouragement.  
I know you are with me,  
and I have hope.  
Amen.



## ROOMMATE PROBLEMS

Holy God,  
things are really hard with my  
roommate right now.  
We are not communicating well.  
We irritate each other.  
I try to compromise but it just  
doesn't seem to be working.  
We're too different.  
We can't accommodate each other.  
You, O God, are gracious  
and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in  
steadfast love.  
Please grant me some of your  
graciousness,  
patience, and forgiveness.  
Guide us in how we might work  
through our problems,  
and give us wisdom to know when  
we might need help.  
Send friends to support us,  
and fill us with your love.  
Amen.



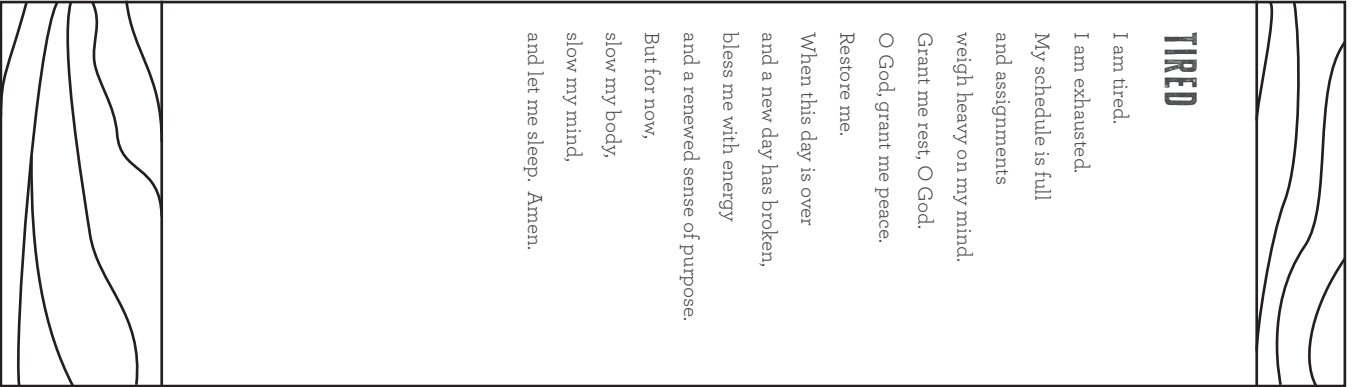
## BEFORE A TEST

I am nervous about this test, God.  
I always am!  
My classes are so important to me.  
I want to do well.  
I feel prepared and yet always  
want more time to feel ready.  
Do not let me be consumed  
by worry.  
Help me bring all that I can to this  
moment, O God,  
and then put this test in  
perspective.  
While it is important, a test is not  
who I am.  
I am a child of God, and my life is  
defined by  
being loved unconditionally and  
being called to love others.  
But, if my nerves start to get the  
best of me,  
center me, O God, in you.  
Amen.



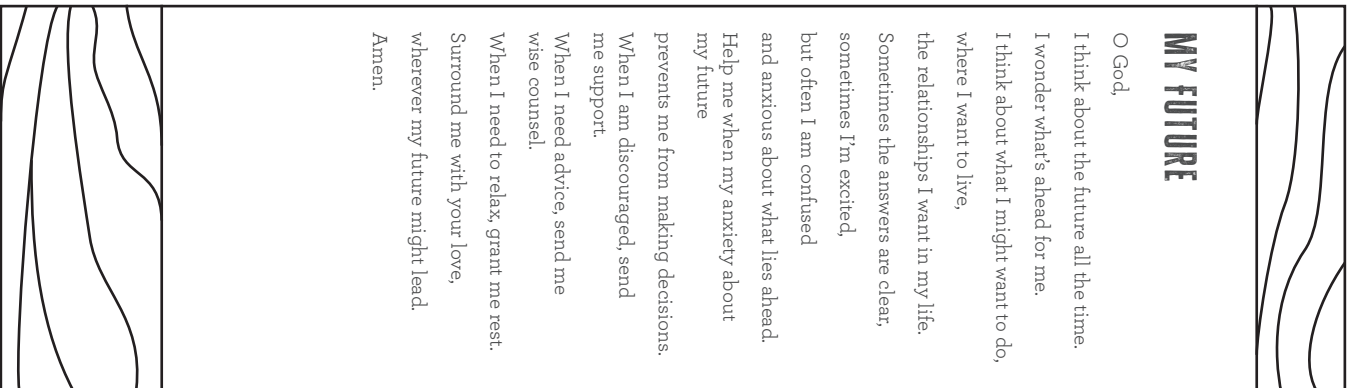
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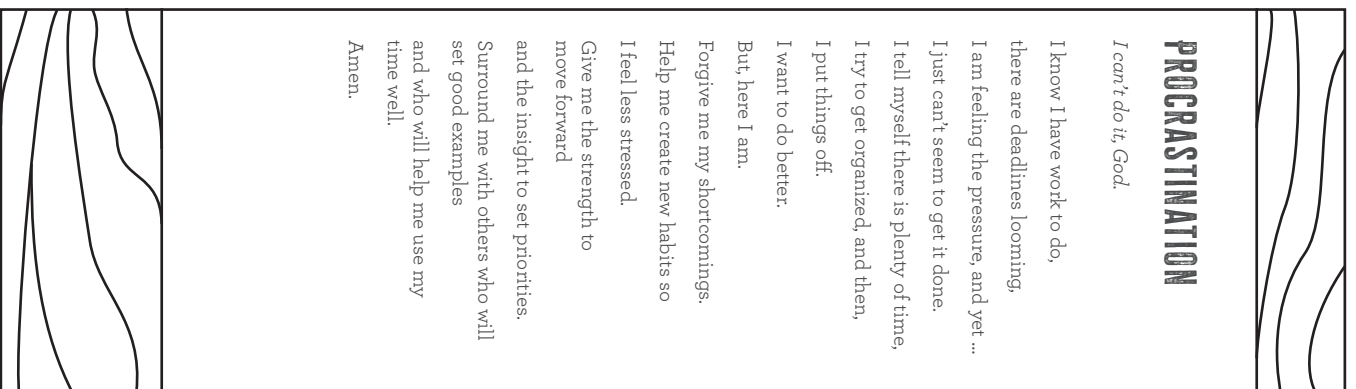
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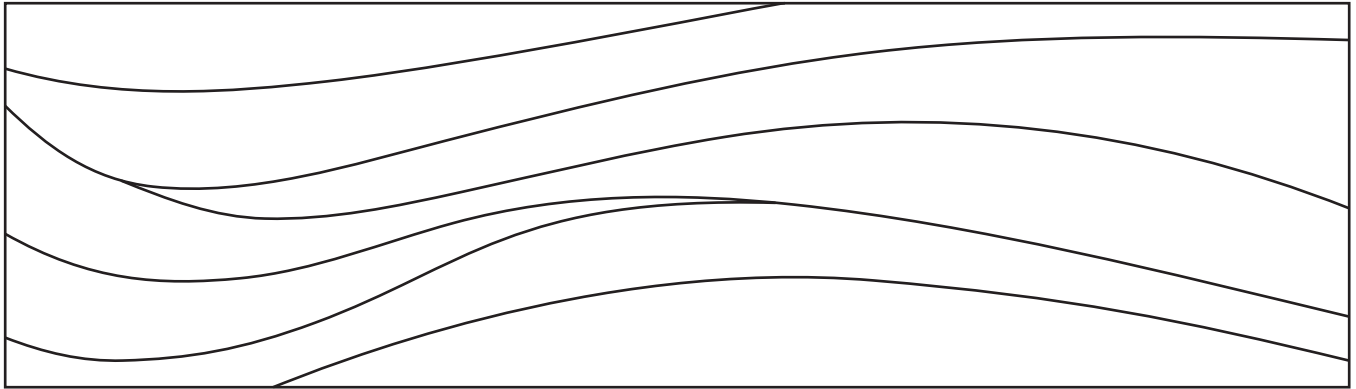
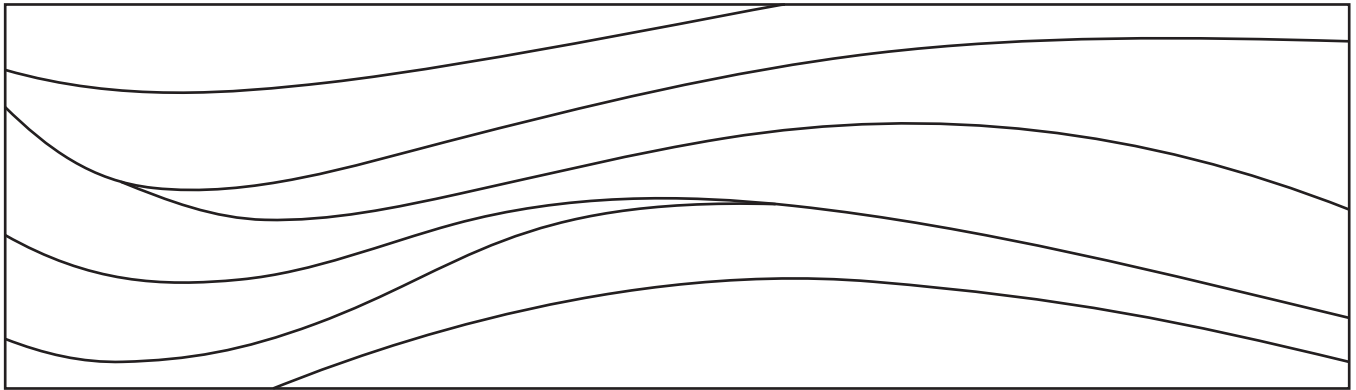
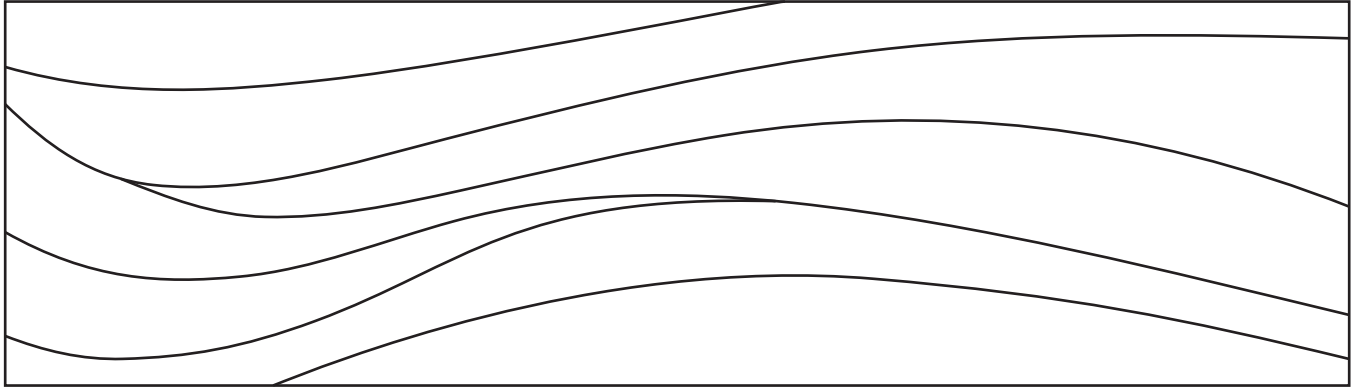
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