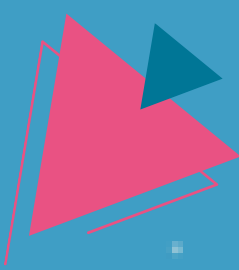




IFES

Lift up
your
eyes



DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

REFLECTIONS TO HELP YOU
PRAYERFULLY ENGAGE WITH SCRIPTURE
IN PREPARATION FOR
**WORLD
STUDENT
DAY 2026**

THURSDAY
8 OCT

IFESWORLD.ORG/WSD



Welcome to the

Lift up
your
eyes

Devotional Guide!



Let's be honest:

Following Jesus in our fractured and hostile world isn't easy.

In the face of failure or adversity, we may feel overwhelmed and downcast. Our upward gaze towards God can slide.

But we are not alone in this.

The honest lens of Scripture reveals that God's people have often felt downhearted. That's why God's living-and-active Word speaks into our lives, campuses, and communities:

"Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens."  ISAIAH 40:26

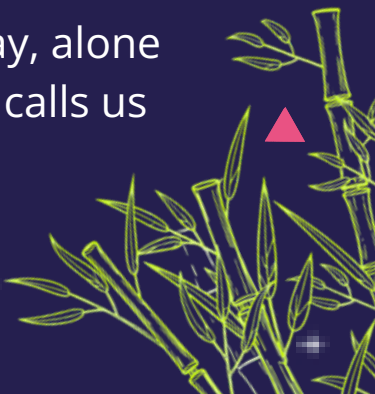
"Lift up your eyes and look around you."  ISAIAH 49:18 & 60:4

On World Student Day 2026, we want to respond to that call.

Wherever we are, whatever we're facing, however we're feeling, we want to lift up our eyes to a Creator, Redeemer God who has done – and is doing – great things.

This devotional guide will reflect on what it means to "lift up your eyes" so that together we might pray with fresh faith for God's work among students worldwide.

You can use it in the run-up to 8 October or on the day, alone or in a group. Let's hear God's Word and see what he calls us to focus our eyes on.





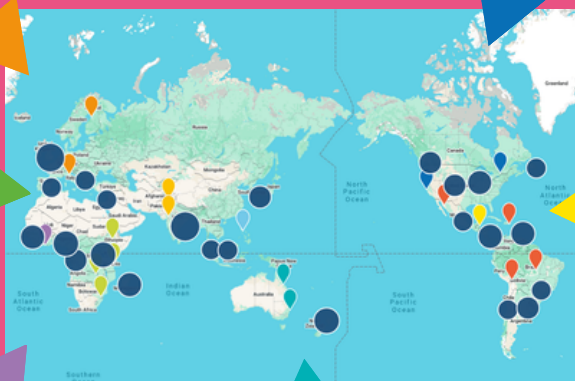
Lift up
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Are you on the map?

If you're planning to pray on 8 October, then make sure you've signed up on the [World Student Day Prayer Map](#)!

Show students around the world that you're standing alongside them in intercession.

Sign up [here](#).



See the map [here](#).



Day 1



A Creator Who Cares

*"To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.*

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens:

Who created all these?

*He who brings out the starry host one by one
and calls forth each of them by name.*

*Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.*

Why do you complain, Jacob?

Why do you say, Israel,

*"My way is hidden from the Lord;
my cause is disregarded by my God"?*

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

*The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.*

*He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.*

*He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.*

ISAIAH 40:25-29

(If you have time today, read all of Isaiah 40)



Reflection

In the life of faith, our deepest pain comes not from adversity itself but from the doubt of divine abandonment that can lurk alongside it.

In Isaiah 40, God's people are living in the awful reality of exile in Babylon. Lives lost. Nation humiliated. Place of worship destroyed. Homeland far away. How do they feel? Unseen and ignored – by God (v.29).

At times, we can feel let down by the One we trust and worship.

And it's real. It's not a spiritual sulk. It's a genuine complaint, like we see in the psalms of lament (e.g. Psalm 22).

So, what is God's Word to us in such times?

Comfort (Isaiah 40:1). In these verses, God may be gently challenging the people's view (*"To whom will you compare me?"... "Do you not know, have you not heard?"*), but this is no harsh rebuke.

God wills *tender words* (v.2). We are to hear *good news* (v.9). We are to see a powerful, protective shepherd God (vs.10-11) – the all-powerful, all-knowing, incomparable Creator of the universe (vs.12-24).

Is it too abstract? No, we're pointed to something beautifully physical: the stars (v.26).



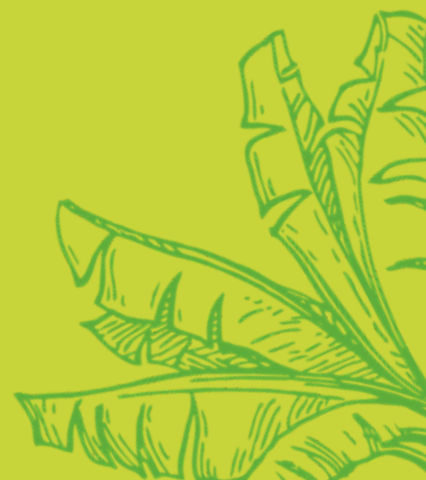
“Look up!”, says Isaiah. They don’t just “appear” each night. Their Creator *calls forth each by name*. Each one is accounted for *because of his great power and mighty strength*.

The point here is not cold, cosmic theology. It’s warmly pastoral – it’s meant as a gaze-lifting encouragement. For, **with the same power, this mighty Creator calls us forth, each by name, to shine:**

Do you not know? Have you not heard?... He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. (v.28-29)

When the eyes of our hearts turn downwards in disappointment, even the strongest among us can *stumble* (v.30). But we have a God who can *renew our strength* (v.31). Will we look up to him? Will we lift up our eyes?

Today, let’s fix our focus on all that testifies to a mighty Creator who powerfully cares for us.



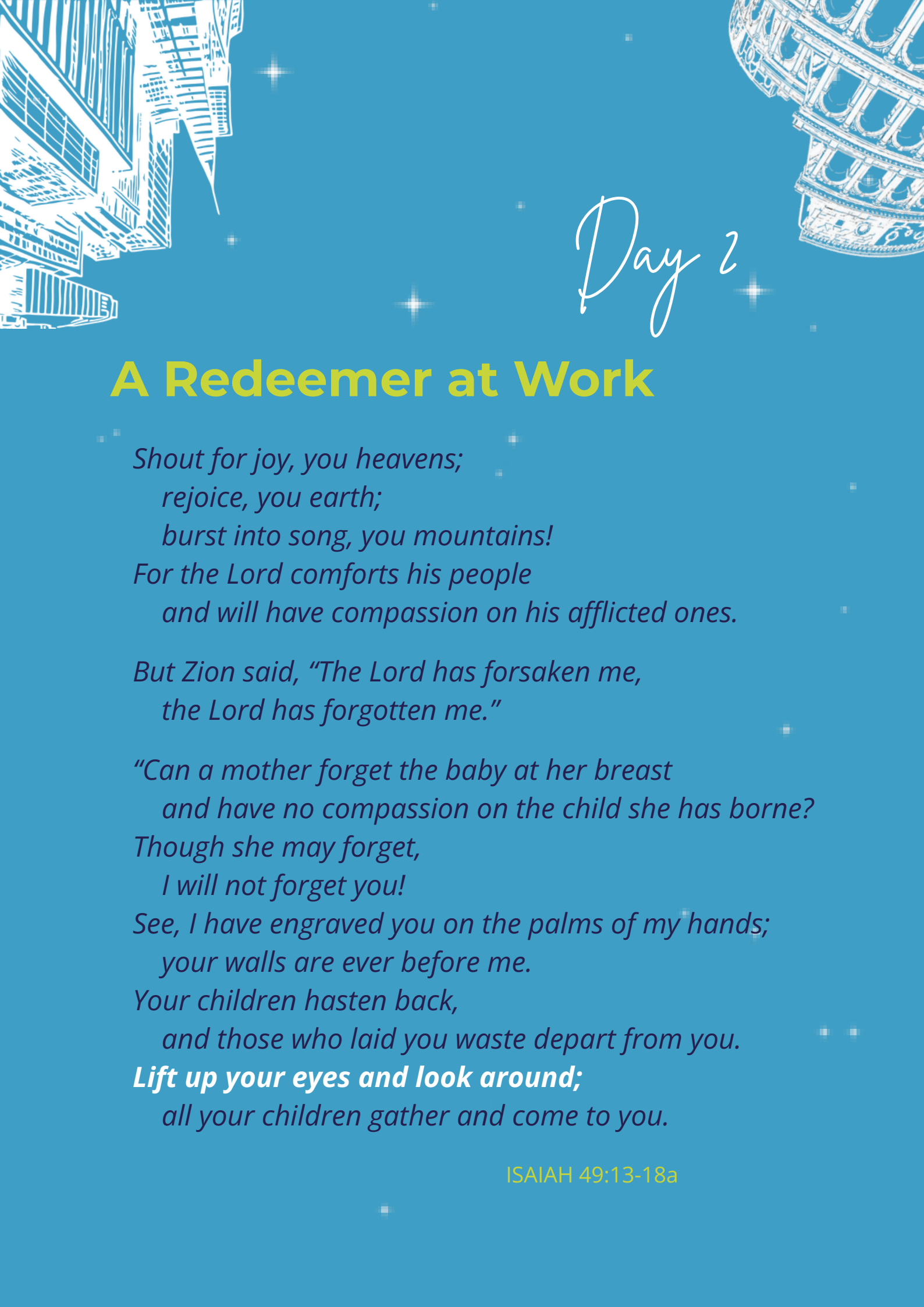


Pray

- Does adversity in your circumstances or ministry lead you to feel unseen or ignored by God? Bare your heart before him now. How does this lift-up-your-eyes Word speak into your situation?
- Today, find a time and place where you can see and marvel at an element of creation. How does it reveal God's powerful care? Consider how it echoes his heart for you.
- Pray for students and staff workers who are feeling weary and weak, especially those facing humiliation and persecution. Be encouraged by the testimony of this IFES movement in South Asia, where ministry has been flourishing despite discrimination, excommunication, and arrest.



To finish, read this *lift-up-your-eyes-to-heaven* word from Jesus: **Matthew 6:25-34.**



Day 2

A Redeemer at Work

*Shout for joy, you heavens;
rejoice, you earth;
burst into song, you mountains!
For the Lord comforts his people
and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.*

*But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me,
the Lord has forgotten me."*

*"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
Though she may forget,
I will not forget you!*

*See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;
your walls are ever before me.*

*Your children hasten back,
and those who laid you waste depart from you.*

Lift up your eyes and look around;
all your children gather and come to you.

ISAIAH 49:13-18a

*"Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.
See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.
Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

"Lift up your eyes and look about you:
*All assemble and come to you;
your sons come from afar,
and your daughters are carried on the hip.
Then you will look and be radiant,
your heart will throb and swell with joy;*

ISAIAH 60:1-5a



Reflection

When our gaze on God has dipped, it might feel like the heavens are too high, too distant, to look up to. But perhaps we can at least lift up our eyes enough to look around? To see signs of God's redemptive work.

That's what God calls his people to do in today's verses (from Isaiah 49 & 60).

They are still feeling *forsaken and forgotten* (49:14). So, once again, God uses vivid language to reassure them of his tenacious *compassion* (vs.10, 13, 15).

And that's not just a heavenly feeling. It's expressed through divine action: he promises a better-than-before *restoration* (49:8 and following), a *glorious*, dazzling renewal (60:1 and following).

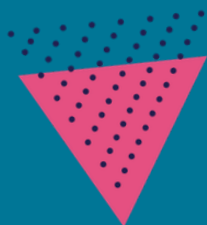
The mighty star-calling Creator (see Day 1) is also a mighty table-turning *Redeemer* (49:7, 26 & 60:16). He will put wrongs right: captives set free – darkness turned to light – ruins rebuilt – shame exchanged for honour.

No wonder these chapters buzz with *joy* (40:13, 60:5a).

But what to do in the meantime?

Lift up your eyes and look around... Lift up your eyes and look about you.

Why? What will they see?





Their children – *sons and daughters* – *gathering, assembling*, coming back (49:17-18 & 60:4). The great restoration starts with the redemption of lives. They should be on the lookout for signs of this. And isn't it striking that all nations will be part of it (49:22 & 60:3)?

When Jesus arrived, and people gathered (from far and wide), lives were redeemed. But not everyone could see God's hand (e.g. Luke 5:17-26). In the darkness of prison, even John the Baptist had questions (Luke 7:18-20). But Jesus asked them to look at his undeniable work.

Whatever your sense of "exile", however dislocated you may feel, you are called to *lift up your eyes and look around* – for signs of God's redemptive action.

It might not be immediately obvious. It may not be what you were expecting. But the God who has your name engraved on his hands has not given up on you.

So today, let's focus on all that testifies to a mighty Redeemer who is powerfully at work.



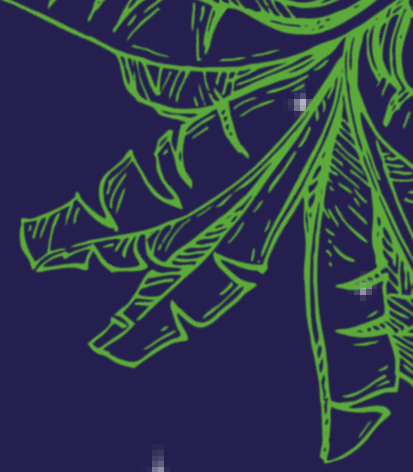


Pray

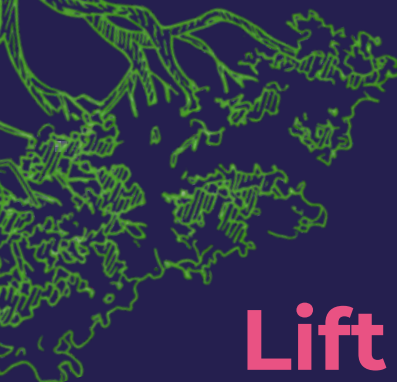
- How does this lift-up-your-eyes Word speak to you? Give thanks for the signs of redemption that are visible in your context. Are there things going on around you that you haven't yet seen and recognised as God's work?
- Browse through the World Student Day Prayer Cards to look for how God is already at work on the world's campuses. Praise him with the buzzing joy of today's passages.
- Pray for students and staff workers who are discouraged or disappointed in their ministry. Ask that they will see unexpected opportunities – like this student leader did in the United States.



To finish, read this *lift-up-your-eyes-and-look-around* word from Jesus: **Matthew 11:2-6**.



Day 3



Lift Up Your Eyes

Today is World Student Day!

Lift up your eyes and look around – visit the [WSD webpage](#) to discover how God has redeemed people across the globe who you'll be praying with today. (And if you haven't yet put yourself on the map, [sign up now](#) so that others can see you!)

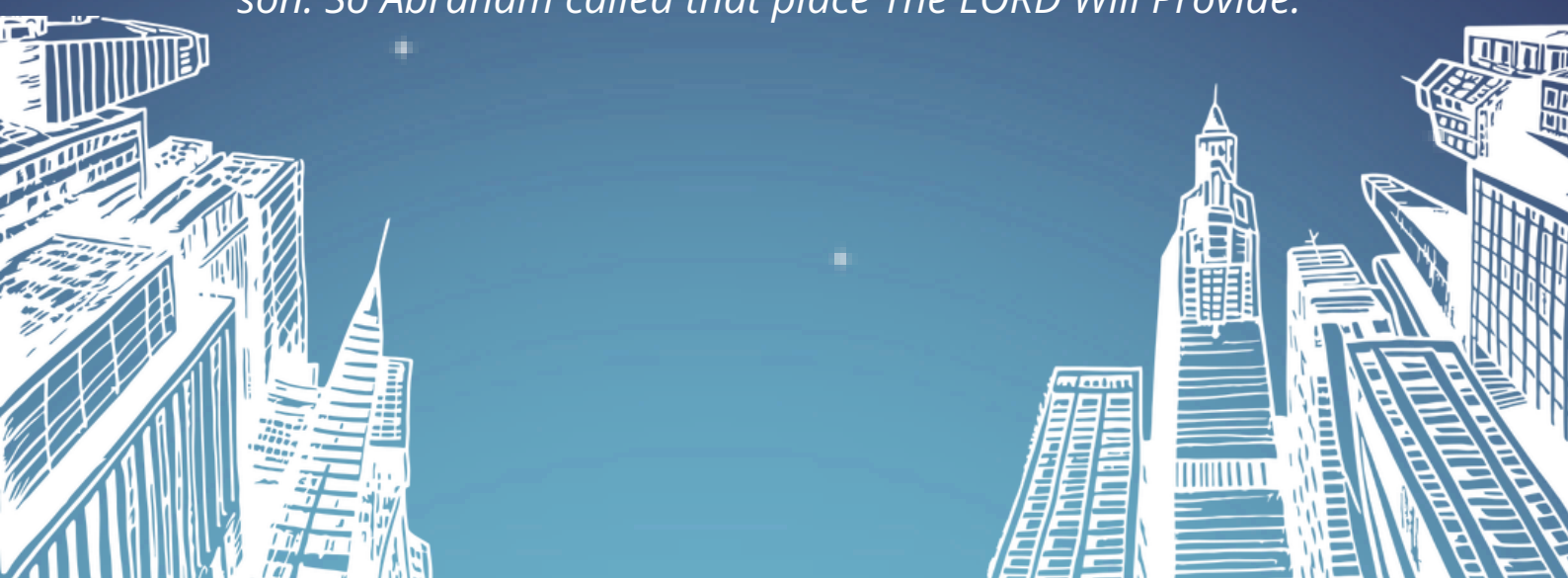
Let's hear God's Word in story and song:

Read Psalm 121 & Genesis 22:1-14

How do these passages echo the message of "A Creator Who Cares" (Day 1) and "A Redeemer at Work" (Day 2)?

***I lift up my eyes** to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

***Abraham looked up** [literally "lifted up his eyes"] and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place **The LORD Will Provide**.*



Reflection

The pilgrim going up to worship in Jerusalem looks up *to the mountains*.

Scholars have different opinions about the significance of what the traveller saw. Was it danger (with robbers lurking in them)? Was it idolatry (the shrines on them)? Was it his hoped-for destination (the hills that hosted the temple)?

Whatever the trigger, the point is that – just as in Isaiah 40 – we are guided beyond to *the Maker of heaven and earth*. The One in charge. The ever-attentive Creator God who watches over every step: *The LORD will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life*.

Today, let's pray for student witness with confidence – let's *lift up our eyes to the heavens*, to a mighty Creator God who cares for us, for our campuses and communities.





Abraham was also going up to worship on a mountain.

But this was a terrible *sacrifice* – literally and figuratively. Besides the personal loss Abraham would face in offering up his *only son*, he'd also kill the prospect of blessing the nations through him. Yet Abraham believes that *the LORD will provide*.

And, sure enough, not only is Abraham stopped from sacrificing his son, but he is also provided with a lamb to take his place. Isaac's life is redeemed. Abraham "lifts up his eyes and looks" – and sees God at work.

Today, let's pray for student witness with faith – let's *lift up our eyes and look around*, to see a mighty Redeemer God at work among us, on our campuses and in our communities.

It's time to lift up our eyes.





Pray

What can support your prayers for student witness today?

Prayer Cards – use requests shared by students and staff on campuses worldwide.



Regional Overview Maps – get a brief overview of the ministry context of each region and see names of its IFES national movements on a map.



Prayerline – be inspired by stories of student witness:





Discover more resources!

For more resources to help you and your group pray on World Student Day:

> [Go to the WSD Resource Hub](#)

Includes the latest Prayer Cards that give specific requests from students and staff in every IFES region.



Share your experiences!

How did you and your group spend World Student Day 2026?

Share your photos, stories, and testimonies by emailing:

hello@ifesworld.org

And don't forget to use

[#ifeswdsd](#)

when posting on social media!





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