

A "HOMESCHOOL HOW-TO" BOOK

Biblical Home Education



Anne Elliott

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Introduction

Our oldest son is 24 years old, and I started looking at homeschooling methods and curriculum before he was even born. Over 20 years ago, in 1990, there were still very few homeschooling publishers or companies who were willing to sell curriculum to homeschoolers. By the time our son was born in 1995, things were starting to change dramatically. By the time he started kindergarten in 2000, choices such as Sonlight, Charlotte Mason, literature-based curriculum, and many other styles of homeschooling were all starting to grow. The Internet was beginning to catch on, especially among homeschoolers. And now, it is estimated that there are over a *million* homeschooling curriculum choices to wade through.

This is a mixed blessing! The original homeschoolers would tell you what a blessing it is to see the rise of great family-based publishers, writers who saw the needs for quality curriculum and began to produce it, and families who made the big companies jealous enough to want to start selling to homeschoolers.

But we are also faced with confusion and uncertainty. Parents who are just getting started this year in homeschooling are overwhelmed by all the choices. Yes, there are lots of websites now to help you, but to whose advice do you listen? How do you know, without wasting a lot of money, which curriculum or methods will work for your family, for your situation?

An important verse from God's Word is 2 Peter 1:3, which says,

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

One of our goals is to train our children for life and godliness, and this verse says we do that by increasing their knowledge of Him. It's comforting to know that He called us by His own glory and goodness, to know I was chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Praise God!

God doesn't ever call us to a task without equipping us. His *Word* is how we gain knowledge of Him. When we use the Scriptures as our instruction manual, His *divine power* will flow through us to give us everything else we need.

Let's examine the Bible carefully to see if it will guide us through all the choices and confusion, to a choice that will line up with His Word.

1. First, we'll see if the Bible has any **goals** for us. Are there things God says clearly that we're supposed to do as parents?
2. Second, we'll look at homeschooling **methods**. Do the popular philosophies of homeschooling line up with biblical methods of parenting?
3. Finally, we'll look at how to choose homeschooling **curriculum** that will help us reach our goals. Does the Bible go so far as to recommend specific ways to teach our children?

I recommend that you have your Bible with you throughout. You'll especially want to have your Bible open to Deuteronomy, God's "parenting book." You will gain the most from this study if you read and re-read God's instructions, straight from His Word.

May the God of all peace fill your heart and home with His grace and love!

~Anne



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Part One

Biblical Goals and Philosophy

Chapter One

Two Goals

Let's start with some goals for homeschooling. I've got some familiar verses to start with. These aren't just good goals for homeschoolers; these are good goals for all parents!

2 Timothy 2:15 says,

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

As parents, our first goal is to train up children who are good workers who can correctly handle the Word of Truth.

We want our children to have a good, working knowledge of God's Word, so that they can go out into a lost world, capable of sharing God's light with lost people, protected from the wiles of the devil because they are filled to overflowing with Scripture. They're capable workers, hammering and sawing with the best of materials, building up the body of Messiah.

This is one of the reasons why God gives us children in the first place. Malachi 2:15 says God is seeking godly offspring. He wants us to reproduce ourselves—no, multiply ourselves—through our children. But it is no good to just multiply if we will not also train them up in righteousness.

However, our goals should not be so short-sighted that they stop with our children. We also desire to send our children out into the world, to share the gospel—the good news—with others.

In Luke 1:17, the angel tells Zechariah the reason that his son John was to be born:

“And he will go on before YHVH,¹ in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for YHVH.”

One of the purposes of John the Baptist’s ministry was to go before Yeshua, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to help prepare the hearts of the people of Israel for the coming kingdom of heaven.

Why does it say he would come in the spirit and power of Elijah? Who was Elijah? He was the prophet who went before wicked King Ahab, and before the rebellious, idolatrous people of Israel, and he confronted them on their sin and told them to repent. Only when they were willing to repent of their sin and turn to the true God were their hearts **prepared and ready** for God to come and heal their land.

Your job as a parent is to do the same thing in your home. You can’t force your children to repent of their sin and trust in Yeshua the Messiah to save them from their sin. Oh, you wish you could guarantee that they would trust Yeshua!¹ But you can’t guarantee that, can you? It’s a personal decision that they have to make. They have to personally repent and turn to God.

But here’s what you *can* do. You can prepare their hearts. God wants to turn the hearts of fathers and mothers to their children. He wants those parents to show disobedient children (which they all are!) the wisdom of the righteous—that’s the Bible, right? Why? To “make ready a people prepared for YHVH.” You can prepare your children to follow Yeshua their Master and to be ready for His return by teaching them “the wisdom of the righteous,” as Luke 1:17 says.

Do you remember the parable of four different kinds of soil, described in Matthew 13? One of the loftiest goals of homeschooling is to help prepare the soil of your children’s hearts, so that they are “good soil” that will produce fruit.

Our goal is to prepare their hearts, so that God’s Word is implanted into good soil, so that they grow up to become workers who don’t need to be ashamed,

¹ YHVH is a shortened form of writing the Creator’s name, Yehovah or Jehovah. Yeshua is the Hebrew form of the name Jesus. For more explanation, see <https://anneelliott.com/2015/11/pure-lips>.

workers who can go out to preach repentance in our world, preparing hearts everywhere they go, carefully handling the Word of God.

Practically speaking, this means that I will do the most “soil preparation” in the youngest years. Those are the years to hide God’s Word in their hearts so that they will not sin against Him, as Psalm 119:11 says. As they grow, I need to begin reproducing myself in them, so that by the time they’re grown, they will have the skills and abilities they’ll need to share the gospel. Can you see how this will affect what things will be taught to them day in and day out?

Chapter Two

Five Basic Principles

The Bible plainly sets forth some principles that we can use as we examine homeschooling philosophy. It seems like there are trillions of options that are available to us. As you read homeschooling how-to books and choose curriculum, keep these principles in mind.

1. Homeschooling starts with “well-educated” parents.

Biblically, the definition of “well-educated” is a father and mother who thoroughly know the Bible, God’s Word. In other words, a knowledge of math, grammar, science, and history isn’t as necessary as the knowledge of Scripture. If you know your Bible, then you are extremely “well-educated.”

Deuteronomy 6:1-7 says,

“These are the commands, decrees and laws YHVH your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear YHVH your God as long as you live **by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you**, and so that you may enjoy long life. Hear, O Israel, and **be careful to obey** so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as YHVH, the God of your fathers, promised you.

Hear, O Israel: YHVH our God, YHVH is one. Love YHVH your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. **These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.** Impress them on your children.” (Emphasis mine)

Education is not just head knowledge, though. A truly well-educated person knows how to *apply* knowledge to everyday life and lives it out in all his or her decisions and actions. The same is true with God’s Word. It’s one thing to *know* God’s Word; it’s yet another to *act* on your knowledge.

Proverbs 14:26 says,

**“He who fears YHVH has a secure fortress,
and for his children it will be a refuge.”**

Therefore, according to God, a successful homeschool is one in which the parents have a thorough, working knowledge of the Bible and a fear of God that results in obedience to His Word. First, be sure you read and study your Bible often, so that you are “well-educated” in His instructions and commands. Then, **as you read homeschooling how-to books and choose curriculum, be very sure that the authors uphold the authority of Scripture and will help teach you first**, especially if you’re lacking in your own knowledge.

2. A homeschooling parent’s job is to teach.

Scripture seems to make it very clear that education is led by the father and mother, not by the child. A child is not born with knowledge, wisdom, or understanding; rather, a child is born with the same selfish, sinful, and pleasure-seeking nature that follows you around most days. Your child, left to himself, will choose to please himself, will rarely think of others, will be lazy and avoid hard work, and will do only what looks right in his own eyes.

When Deuteronomy 6:7 says we are to “impress” God’s commands on our children, the idea is that we are to intensively poke, pierce, prod, and drill these commands into our children. God has presented us with the “curricula,” which are His Words and commands. The “method” He has chosen is for us *drill* it into our children.

Note also that the curriculum is set! We don’t get to pick the subjects. God is clear that we are to teach His commands.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 says,

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Messiah Yeshua. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

As you read homeschooling how-to books and choose curriculum and methods, simply toss out any of that “gentle” advice that seems to hint that

children just pick things up naturally, without any effort on your part or theirs. Keep the methods that require you as a parent to do hard work, impressing and drilling and teaching. It might not be as fun, but it's biblical.

Also, as you read homeschooling how-to books and choose curriculum and methods, get rid of secular, humanistic textbooks and concentrate your efforts on teaching Scripture so your children will be “thoroughly equipped.”

3. A homeschooled child's job is to listen.

Here the Scripture stands in firm opposition to the politically correct notion that parents should be the ones doing all the listening. Rather, the Bible *repeatedly* warns children to honor, obey, listen to instruction, hear, pay attention, and hearken. I don't have time to list all the verses, because there are so many. Here is one example. The book of Proverbs opens with this thought:

**“Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.**

**They will be a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.”²**

Scripture is clear that one of the first jobs parents have is to teach their child to listen to them. Paying attention to authority isn't just a nice thought; it's vital to everything else in your child's life. If your child will not look at you when speak, pay attention to your words, and obediently do what you say, then you will certainly fail in your homeschooling.

Listening is a skill needed throughout life. We will always have others in authority over us. Teaching children to listen is *vital* for their future ability to keep a job, function in society as Scripture commands, be a loving spouse, and to be a parent!

So as you read homeschooling how-to books and choose curriculum and methods, it's important that you choose methods that will help your child learn good listening skills. Choose curriculum that reinforces the importance of following directions, paying attention to you as the teacher, and obeying instructions from the very earliest age.

² Proverbs 1:8-9

4. Homeschooling requires a large time commitment.

If you weren't groaning before, you probably are now! With seven children, I can certainly understand the frustrations involved in trying to have time for your spouse, maintain a home, be involved in ministry, maybe work a business, and even have time to play a little—all on top of getting school done each day. It can be agonizing.

Yet Scripture is absolutely clear where our priorities must be. Proverbs 29:15 (KJV) says,

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

Can it get any clearer than that? “The rod and reproof” require a mother who is physically present in the room with her children. A child “left to himself” will bring her to shame—both now and in the future.

For most of us parents, our own heart inclination is to give our children over to someone or something else who has more time than we do, but the Bible is clear with whom they should be spending their time. It's also clear with whom we must be spending *our* time, even though we would almost always rather be doing something more fun or glamorous.

So as you read homeschooling how-to books and choose curriculum and methods, the Bible is clear that we need to choose ones which require our physical presence in the room with our children, if we expect them to get any wisdom from their education and if we don't want to be ashamed of them someday.

5. Homeschooling instruction should be pleasant.

Aren't you glad God put this into His Word? After the cold, hard facts of the previous four points, homeschooling could be a real drudgery without this. However, God is the author of love, joy and peace. Even though His standards are high, His methods are hard work and His curriculum is rigorous, His schoolroom atmosphere is pleasant, fun, and inviting.

Proverbs 16:21 says,

“The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction.”

Proverbs 31:26 (KJV) also says,

“She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”

I have enjoyed recently having a room set aside for just school, but for many years we used the kitchen table, the living room, and even the back seat of the van as our school room. Maps, decorations, and windows with bright sunshine can certainly add to the pleasantness of our homeschooling days.

However, God says the one essential thing to a pleasant, joyful, instruction-promoting school environment is your tongue. Your words will make or break it. Do you want your children to love learning? Do you want them to be passionate discoverers, lifelong learners, and avid readers? Rather than investing your money and time into special equipment, expensive encyclopedias, and fancy computer software, God says to use “pleasant words.”

So as you read homeschooling how-to books and choose curriculum and methods, look for those that will help you succeed as a parent by promoting your own godly character. In fact, rather than reading all those books and searching through stacks of catalogs, maybe your time would be better spent with God Himself.

As Proverbs 4:23 says,

**“Above all else, guard your heart,
for it is the wellspring of life.”**

Chapter Three

Brainstorming a Homeschooling Philosophy



This is a typical "brain-storming" session at our house.

It's late at night when I'm writing this, and I have simply got to get to bed. My eyes are heavy... I'm falling asleep... Seriously, I'm breaking my "be-in-bed-by-ten-o'clock" rule. I didn't have time to finish like I wanted to, but I'll give you what I've got so far.

Earlier this evening my husband helped me by sharing some of his homeschooling philosophy with me. We had fun by recording it in my digital voice recorder. (Isn't technology great?)

In addition, over the past few weeks I've been writing down scriptural references to educating our children. My husband's sermons, books I've been reading, discussions in the car, and even my private Bible reading have all contributed to an ever-growing list.

Tonight, my husband listed several elements of a biblical education, and then we took our list of Bible verses and compared the two. I thought you'd enjoy listening in on our conversation, even though this conversation will have to continue in the coming weeks.

He began by stating emphatically that **a biblical education is parent led, not child led.** He said,

I believe a biblical education has the teacher at the front, basically the old lecture style, with the teacher facing the students and the students facing forward. It is based upon an understanding that the teacher will teach something and will share examples, and then the students are supposed to work on things. As they have problems, they ask the teacher if they have a concern. The teacher can teach more examples to help the students learn, but the students themselves are supposed to work independently based upon what they are learning in class.

My husband used to be a teacher, so that's the picture he has in his mind. It looks a little different in a home-education environment. But the Bible agrees that the parent-teacher is the one who holds wisdom and needs to impart it to the child-student.

“Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?”³

“These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”⁴

**“The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
for attaining wisdom and discipline;
for understanding words of insight;
for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young—
let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance—
for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.
The fear of YHVH is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.
Listen, my son, to your father's instruction**

³ Job 12:12

⁴ Deuteronomy 6:6-7, ESV

and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.”⁵

My husband felt that a **biblical education emphasized foundations and fundamentals**, including memorization. He said,

Foundations and fundamentals that have to be learned in order to be able to think at a higher level in the future. It’s based upon memorization. They need to learn these foundations and fundamentals in order to think correctly. As children, they can think—but they cannot think correctly.

I was reminded of these verses:

“Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”⁶

“The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.”⁷

“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.”⁸

My husband felt that a **biblical education emphasized application to real-life situations** as a child grows and matures. As he said it,

Then as they continue on into junior high, then they begin to understand things like application, where they can take something that has been taught to them and be able to know how to apply it to a life situation. They learn to take the principles and the foundations they have learned and use them, in math or language arts skills, to be able to read and write better, to begin to understand how to put papers together from paragraphs, equations from math problems (addition and multiplication, etc.), and to be able to use the things they know how to do in math to be able to go on to real-life situations, through word problems and figuring things out.

⁵ Proverbs 1:1-8

⁶ Isaiah 28:9-10, KJV

⁷ Proverbs 12:15

⁸ Isaiah 5:21

*Then as a child approaches adulthood, a **biblical education emphasizes evaluating ideas around us, to see if they're biblical or not, and sharing ideas with the world.** (In other words, the goal is to take our knowledge of God, make right choices that are pleasing to Him, and share Him with the world—evangelism.) In his words,*

And then as they continue on into high school and once they learn the application process, it comes into synthesis and evaluation, where they can then begin to apply the principles, not only to papers but to begin to study and apply it to opinions, not just regurgitate the information but to have opinions and to be able to defend those opinions and to be able share those opinions and apply them to their lives and how those principles apply to what they've been learning and to be able to make choices in those matters.

If you do not have the lower, foundational skills, then you cannot correctly—and there is a correct way—do the higher-level thinking skills. You can do thinking, but you can't do higher-level thinking, because you don't have the basics. It'd be like taking a four year old and then going out and telling him how to have a budget when he has no idea how to do basic math skills, no idea how to deal with word problems. If he doesn't know how to do those two foundational skills, how can he develop a budget and live by a budget? He has never done the basics first and the application process next, to be able to evaluate a budget for himself.

And so what has happened in many kids today is that many are without any foundational skills, and there are huge holes. It's like taking Swiss cheese and trying to fill it with milk. It's an impossibility because the milk flows out all the holes. There's a lot of cheese there, yes, that can hold milk, but there are still holes, and so therefore the milk flows out. And that's what's happening. These kids are coming up into adulthood and are not capable of having all the skills necessary because they have not mastered the foundational skills. Because they can apply it to some aspects of their lives, because they have part of the skills, everybody says, "You just keep going and go out into the world and have fun." It ends up backfiring with many of them.

And there you have it, in rough Kraig-and-Anne discussion form, without worry about correct grammar and writing style. Just a conversation between husband and wife, with lots of note taking and discussion that you didn't get to hear. It was fun!

And now I'm headed to bed ...

Chapter Four

A Biblical Philosophy of Education



Image courtesy of Wikipedia

Adam Clarke's *Commentary of the Bible*, originally published in the early 1800s, has an interesting note on Deuteronomy 6:25. It contains the most excellent summary of homeschooling philosophy I've ever read. I can't stop thinking about it. I wish I were smart enough to have written this in the first place! Ha!

(Sometimes my tired, "momma brain" can't process 19th-century writing by mid-afternoon. But I also admire how every word is *packed* with so much food for thought. Don't you? Below the quote, I've broken it up into more manageable thoughts.)

A most injurious and destructive maxim has lately been advanced by a few individuals, which it is to be hoped is disowned by the class of Christians to which they belong, though the authors affect to be thought Christians, and rational ones, too; the sum of the maxim is this: "Children ought not to be taught religion for fear of having their minds biased to some particular creed, but they should be left to themselves till they are capable of making a choice, and choose to make one." This maxim is in flat opposition to the command of God, and those who teach it show how little they are affected by the religion they profess. If

they felt it to be good for any thing, they would certainly wish their children to possess it; but they do not teach religion to their children, because they feel it to be of no use to themselves. Now the Christian religion properly applied saves the soul, and fills the heart with love to God and man; for the love of God is shed abroad in the heart of a genuine believer, by the Holy Ghost given to him. These persons have no such love, because they have not the religion that inspires it; and the spurious religion which admits of the maxim above mentioned, is not the religion of God, and consequently better untaught than taught. But what can be said to those parents who, possessing a better faith, equally neglect the instruction of their children in the things of God! They are highly criminal; and if their children perish through neglect, which is very probable, what a dreadful account must they give in the great day! Parents! hear what the Lord saith unto you: Ye shall diligently teach your children that there is one Lord, Jehovah, Elohim; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and that they must love him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their might. And as children are heedless, apt to forget, liable to be carried away by sensible things, repeat and re-repeat the instruction, and add line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, carefully studying time, place, and circumstances, that your labor be not in vain: show it in its amiableness, excite attention by exciting interest; show how good, how useful, how blessed, how ennobling, how glorious it is. Whet these things on their hearts till the keenest edge is raised on the strongest desire, till they can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee!"

Whew! Okay, let's ponder a few thoughts at a time, especially as they pertain to homeschooling.

A most injurious and destructive maxim has lately been advanced by a few individuals, which it is to be hoped is disowned by the class of Christians to which they belong, though the authors affect to be thought Christians, and rational ones, too...

This was written in the early 1800s, and my history-loving husband has been reading much lately about the very destructive, humanistic philosophies that were rampant in America and Europe during this time period. To my own frustration, it seems that many homeschooling families are enamored with all things written by "great minds" during this time period, even when those philosophies should have been "disowned by the class of Christians to which they belong."

Just as now, don't accept something simply because the author is a "Christian"—and a "rational one, too." Be a good Berean, and compare all things you read to the Scripture!

The maxim: “Children ought not to be taught religion for fear of having their minds biased to some particular creed, but they should be left to themselves till they are capable of making a choice, and choose to make one.”

This “maxim” is alive and well in our day. Yes, all agree that we should teach our children reading, writing, arithmetic, social studies, and science. Even health should be included in our children’s education.

But one of the main reasons I’m a homeschooler is because I believe that “theology is the queen of the sciences.” The Bible clearly says,

“The fear of YHVH is the beginning of knowledge,”⁹ “for YHVH giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.”¹⁰

No matter how good the school, you simply won’t find “the fear of YHVH” in the education plan at any public school.

According to the Bible, it is our duty to “bias” the minds of our children. Not with creeds, please note, but with the “fear of YHVH.”

This maxim says that children should be “left to themselves.” This is an interesting choice of words, I think, since God specifically says, “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child **left to himself** bringeth his mother to shame.”¹¹

This maxim is in flat opposition to the command of God, and those who teach it show how little they are affected by the religion they profess.

The specific command of God referred to here by Clarke is found in Deuteronomy 6. How easy it is, though, for us to be “little affected by the religion we profess.” How easy it is for us to attend church services on Sundays, to hear the Word of God read, and even to read it daily in our homes—yet be “little affected” by what we profess to believe.

⁹ Proverbs 1:7, KJV

¹⁰ Proverbs 2:6, KJV

¹¹ Proverbs 29:15, KJV

My son had the word *conscientious* as a spelling word recently. “*Con-science*”... with science... with thought and knowledge. Am I *conscientious* as I hear God’s Word read? Do I think about it? Do I allow it to enter my heart and affect my life?

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”¹²

If they felt it to be good for any thing, they would certainly wish their children to possess it; but they do not teach religion to their children, because they feel it to be of no use to themselves.

Ah, and this is *why* we tend *not* to teach the fear of YHVH to our children. We don’t see any use for it ourselves.

Have you ever sat through a sermon or Bible lesson and (yawn...) wondered what on earth you were doing there? How did it make any difference to your life? (It would have been a better use of time to just go ahead and make that grocery list that you were thinking about anyway.)

I firmly believe the Bible is of practical use! But when my heart turns evil on me, it’s because I either don’t want to apply it to my life... or I refuse to make the changes it is requiring... or I’m embarrassed to make the changes.

And those areas of God’s Word in which I see no practical use are exactly the ones I won’t teach to my children. For instance, see Genesis 1, Genesis 10, Leviticus 11, Daniel 7, or Zechariah 14, as passages that don’t typically make it into homeschooling curriculum... but should!

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”¹³

God is quite clear about the exact passages that should be taught to our children—all of them!)

Now the Christian religion properly applied saves the soul, and fills the heart with love to God and man; for the love of God is shed

¹² James 1:22, NIV

¹³ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

abroad in the heart of a genuine believer, by the Holy Ghost given to him.

This is an amazing sentence. If I could wrap my mind around this one sentence, it would not only revolutionize my homeschooling; it would revolutionize my life! I encourage you to write it out and place it on a card. Mull over it all week. Find the Bible verses that back it up. Yes, it's that good!

In fact, to me, this sentence would make an excellent mission statement for homeschooling. Yes, it's that good!

In fact, the instruction of God in Deuteronomy 6 begins with this statement.

“Hear, O Israel: YHVH our God, YHVH is one. Love YHVH your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”¹⁴

All the New Testament explains, illustrates, and clarifies it.

In fact, Yeshua the Messiah IS this love, and He is the only “way, truth, and the life.”¹⁵ He saves my soul! The more He fills my home, my heart, and my homeschooling, the more “the Christian religion will be properly applied.” I can only accomplish this through “the Holy Ghost given” to me.

Yes, this is a great statement!

These persons have no such love, because they have not the religion that inspires it.

Maybe I can understand what he's saying here better by saying that “these persons” don't have Yeshua. They are not filled with the Holy Ghost. They might have head knowledge of Scripture, but they don't do what it says.

So they don't have love. They don't see any use for God's Word, and the only use for God's Word is love.

¹⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4-5, NIV

¹⁵ John 14:6

...and the spurious religion which admits of the maxim above mentioned, is not the religion of God, and consequently better untaught than taught.

Yup. Any “religion” that doesn’t include Scripture (because it isn’t viewed as relevant to our lives) and that doesn’t include love for God and others is “better untaught.” Amen!

If we’re attending churches that don’t believe Scripture is relevant, then we’re wasting our time and corrupting our children. What about Creation? Do our churches teach it as truth?¹⁶ What about Yeshua as the only way to be saved? What about love for God and others? Do you see this evidenced in the lives of those in your church? If you don’t, your children won’t either—and this is religion that is better “untaught.”

How about in your own home? What do your children see there? How about in their mother?

But what can be said to those parents who, possessing a better faith, equally neglect the instruction of their children in the things of God! They are highly criminal; and if their children perish through neglect, which is very probable, what a dreadful account must they give in the great day!

Is Mr. Clarke being a bit dramatic here? “Criminal”? How can parents, Christian parents who “possess a better faith,” be considered criminal if they neglect passing on the instruction of God to their children?

Yeshua says something very similar (and shocking):

“And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”¹⁷

Sadly, I think families have gotten lazy by passing on the instruction of their children to others. It’s fine to delegate, as long as the teacher is held strictly accountable to the mother and father. But we should be extremely careful about

¹⁶ See <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v10/i3/education.asp>

¹⁷ Matthew 18:5-6, NIV

“delegating” the instruction of God. As Mr. Clarke reminds us, **“What a dreadful account must [parents] give in the great day!”**

Seriously, dear mother, have you give careful consideration to the thought that you will stand before God someday? Have you rehearsed what you will tell God about the methods and parenting techniques that you use each day?

“For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat. It is written: ‘As surely as I live,’ says YHVH, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’ So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.”^{18 19}

A right perspective of child-rearing begins with understanding to whom a child belongs. Is that sweet little baby in your house “your child”?

“Sons are a heritage (a “possession“) from YHVH, children a reward from him.” (Psalm 127:3, NIV)

Does this child belong to the state, to be educated to a model citizen?

*“When an opponent declares,
I will not come over to your side.’
I calmly say, ‘Your child belongs to us already...
What are you? You will pass on.
Your descendants, however,
now stand in the new camp.
In a short time they will know nothing
else but this new community.” ~ Adolf Hitler*

Does this child belong to the church, to be educated by pastors, Sunday school teachers, or children’s-ministry workers? Your pastor will stand before God and give an account, but not for the instruction of the children God gave *you*.

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.”²⁰

“Remember the day you stood before YHVH your God at Horeb, when [YHVH] said to [Moses], ‘Assemble the people before me

¹⁸ Romans 14:10-12, NIV

¹⁹ Read also the short but sobering book of 2 Peter!

²⁰ Hebrews 13:17, NIV

to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.”²¹

Note whose job it was to assemble the people to hear God’s words—and whose job it was to teach them to the children.

So Adam Clarke goes on to begin detailing what proper instruction of children looks like:

Parents! hear what the Lord saith unto you: Ye shall diligently teach your children that there is one Lord, Jehovah, Elohim; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and that they must love him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their might.

I notice that Mr. Clarke is beginning to quote from earlier in Deuteronomy 6:4-5:

“Hear, O Israel: YHVH our God, YHVH is one. Love YHVH your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

Jews recite these verses, the *Shema*,²² twice a day, and that’s an excellent start. I also notice that he recommends teaching classic doctrine (teaching or “catechism”), which is also an excellent start. It’s very wise to be systematic and logical in the teaching of our children.

But I also notice that he believes in teaching *heart* knowledge of God, not just head knowledge. Deuteronomy 6 explains how to do this:

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates...”²³

²¹ Deuteronomy 4:10, NIV

²² *Shema* literally means, “Hear.”

²³ Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NIV

“In the future, when your son asks you, “What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws YHVH our God has commanded you?’ tell him...”²⁴

There are actually a *lot* more ideas, all given by God, in Deuteronomy 6 that we parents would be wise to look at and write down.

And as children are heedless, apt to forget, liable to be carried away by sensible things [things that can be perceived by your physical senses], repeat and re-repeat the instruction, and add line upon line, precept [a law with authority] upon precept, here a little and there a little, carefully studying time, place, and circumstances, that your labor be not in vain: show it in its amiableness [loveliness], excite attention by exciting interest; show how good, how useful, how blessed, how ennobling [dignifying], how glorious it is.

This is a great sentence by Mr. Clarke! We can gather much about possible homeschooling methods here!

Whet [sharpen or stimulate] these things on their hearts till the keenest edge is raised on the strongest desire, till they can say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee!”

Mr. Clarke finishes with this amazing quotation from Psalm 73:25 that makes me want to shout and give him a standing ovation! This sentence tells me what kind of end result I should strive for!

How do we measure success in our children? What kinds of heroes do we lift up before our children? Think carefully about this statement before you choose how and what to teach your children! (Compare any list of modern-day heroes²⁵ to the list God gives in Hebrews 11, for instance.)

²⁴ Deuteronomy 6:20-21, NIV

²⁵ <http://www.homeschoolfreebie.wholesomechildhood.com/jan-26-some-successful-americans-classic-biographies/>

So the final summary of an excellent and biblical homeschooling philosophy of education is as follows:

1. **Compare** all homeschooling philosophies, methods, and goals with God's Word!
2. It is my biblical duty to **teach** the fear of God to my children. This is the basis of *all* their homeschooling subjects.
3. If God's Word doesn't **affect** my own life, I won't teach it to my children.
4. **All** of Scripture is to be taught to my children.
5. Truth is evidenced by a **love** for God and a love for man.
6. Anything that doesn't teach God's truth **should not be taught** at all.
7. **It is criminal to neglect the instruction of God** to my children, and my children could be destroyed by my neglect!
8. There are specific pieces of **information** I must teach about God.
9. There are specific heart **attitudes** I must pass on to my children.
10. There are specific **methods** God tells me to use when instructing my children.
11. My goal is to have my children **desire God** above anything else.

Let's take this list, study further in Deuteronomy 6, as I mentioned above, and **begin formulating an action plan**. How can I apply this to my life and to my homeschooling?

Chapter Five

Obedience

If you've been homeschooling for any time at all, you've discovered the same secret I have. Children must be obedient if you're going to enjoy teaching them and if they are going to have the capacity to learn.

God says the same thing:

“The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.”²⁶

In fact, God also says:

“A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.”²⁷

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”²⁸

So let me ask you some questions:

1. **Do your children obey you the first time you speak?**
2. **Do they obey cheerfully?**
3. **Do you enjoy your children?**

If you had to say no, then here are some steps you can take:

How's Your Marriage?

- **Do you submit to your husband?**

²⁶ Proverbs 23:24, KJV

²⁷ Proverbs 10:1, KJV

²⁸ Proverbs 29:15, KJV

This may seem like a strange place to begin talking about parenting, but honestly, do you really expect your children to submit to you if you don't set a good example? The Bible says,

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto YHVH. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as The Messiah is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto The Messiah, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.”²⁹

In “every thing.” That’s pretty specific, isn’t it?

- **Do you show physical affection often to your husband?**

Again, this may seem like strange parenting advice, but your children need to see love in concrete ways. Saying “I love you” is nice, but they need to see you holding hands, hugging, even kissing! (Yes, my kids think it’s gross, too.)

- **Do you put your husband first in the home?**

Do you work on his “to-do” list before your own? Do you clean up the house and welcome him home at the door with a big smile and hug? Do you give him undivided attention and time when he is home? Do you build him up as a hero in your children’s eyes?

The Focus of Your Family

This is the foundation of what I’m trying to say. **The focus of your family should be on others, not on yourselves.** In a marriage, the wife’s focus is on her husband. The parents should learn to focus on others that they can serve. The children should focus on what others want, such as sharing a toy with a sibling or a neighbor child.

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”³⁰

²⁹ Ephesians 5:23-24

³⁰ Matthew 7:12, KJV

This is known as the “golden rule,” but it’s much more than just a nice proverb. Yeshua said that this rule is the foundation of the entire law and prophets.

“This is how we know what love is: Yeshua the Messiah laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”³¹

True love is an *agape* love, which is a love that lays down its life for another. This is an essential principle that should be at the center of everything we teach our children.

We need to teach our children that “me first” has no place in our homes. They can be taught to wait. They can be taught to delay their own pleasure for the joy of serving others. Believe me, this does not come naturally!

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness?

Do your children have too much freedom? I think we all realize that children cannot handle too much freedom, or they get “wise in their own eyes.”³²

I have found, though, that homeschooling families struggle in this area. We have more freedom with our time than other families. We homeschooling moms also tend to be much more busy than other moms. The result is that our children tend to run loose much of the time, without as many constraints and without any idea of what to do with themselves.

What happens when your children lose some freedom? The answer to this question will tell you a lot about their hearts!

For instance, if you poured a drink into a red cup for your daughter, would she complain and want it in a blue cup instead? Or would she be content and thankful? Her attitude when you make a choice for her tells you if she has too much freedom for her age.

³¹ 1 John 3:16-18

³² Proverbs 3:7, Proverbs 12:15, Isaiah 5:21

How to Fix the Problems

I have three primary goals as a parent:

1. **To teach first-time obedience.**³³
2. **To teach obedience out of a happy heart.**³⁴
3. **To teach a love for others over a love for self.**³⁵

If I can accomplish this, I will have laid a foundation on which I can build godly character and devotion for God.

How do I do this?

1. **Mom, spend more time with your children.** “A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”³⁶ Keeping your children close to you throughout your day will allow you to quickly correct any wrong actions or attitudes.³⁷
2. **Mom, be consistent in your discipline.** “Say what you mean and mean what you say.” If your child disobeys, quickly and consistently correct him. If you fail to do this, you are teaching your child that you are a liar.
3. **Mom, think ahead and teach your children before there is a problem.** One of my favorite authors calls this “teaching in moments of non-conflict.”³⁸ Act through various situations with your children, being sure to tell them why they should obey, so that they can apply your instruction to a multitude of contexts.

Enjoy Each Other

Finally, have a happy home by learning to enjoy each other’s company. Home should not just be drudgery, work, and conflict. Home should be a wonderful haven from the sin of the world. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit³⁹ and a sign that your home is healthy.

³³ Colossians 3:20

³⁴ Psalms 40:8

³⁵ Matthew 7:12

³⁶ Proverbs 29:15, KJV

³⁷ See also Deuteronomy 6:4-9

³⁸ <http://gfi.org/>

³⁹ Galatians 5:22-23

1. **How many times a day do you all laugh together?** You can teach yourself to laugh long and often. Honestly, the more you laugh (even when you don't feel like it), the more you'll laugh.
2. **In a journal, write down funny things that happen in your home.** Noticing the positive, happy things that happen in your home will keep you from complaining and murmuring. Again, joy is a choice that is contagious.
3. **Stay offline.** Homeschooling moms can become addicted to the Internet (or television or fiction books or the telephone). The more your children are left to themselves, the less joy you'll find in your parenting.
4. **Play games together, pretend with your children, tickle, give hugs and kisses, and tell funny jokes.** No, life is not all fun and games, but since you spend so much time together, have fun in the doing.

Homeschooling is hard enough! Start with a happy home filled with obedient and loving children, and you've got a foundation for homeschooling success!

Part Two

Biblical Methods

Chapter Six

Where to Begin

The Bible very clearly tells us where to begin. Don't you love when the Bible is black and white?

**“The fear of YHVH is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”⁴⁰**

Our first job is to teach our children the fear of YHVH. Whatever methods we use, this is our first job. This is the “beginning of knowledge.”

I decided to look up “the fear of YHVH” in the book of Proverbs, the Bible's own parenting manual, to see if I could find some guidance on exactly how to teach this.

What Methods to Avoid

“...Fools despise wisdom and discipline.”⁴¹

Since fools despise wisdom and discipline, we can see that we should avoid any methods that despise wisdom or discipline.

In fact, if you start at the very first verse of Proverbs, you'll find out that the purpose of this book is to teach wisdom and discipline to the young:

**“The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
for attaining wisdom and discipline;
for understanding words of insight;
for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young-**

⁴⁰ Proverbs 1:7

⁴¹ Proverbs 1:7b

let the wise listen and add to their learning,
and let the discerning get guidance-
for understanding proverbs and parables,
the sayings and riddles of the wise.
The fear of YHVH is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”⁴²

So I want to **avoid methods that despise wisdom and discipline.** Wisdom and discipline are found in God’s Word, so I want to avoid methods that despise God’s Word.

A lot of secular companies are catering to the homeschooling market. Be very cautious!

“A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”⁴³

Any method or curriculum that you use is invited into your home by you. It becomes a teacher in your school. Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher! **If the curriculum in your home makes a mockery of God or His Word, avoid it.**

What are some other things to avoid in your methods?

**“To fear YHVH is to hate evil;
I hate pride and arrogance,
evil behavior and perverse speech.”⁴⁴**

We need to avoid any method of homeschooling that promotes pride, arrogance, evil behavior or perverse speech. These principles can even guide you as you choose reading materials, families to partner with in co-ops, or future career paths for your children.

**“Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear YHVH and shun evil.”⁴⁵**

⁴² Proverbs 1:1-7

⁴³ Luke 6:40, NIV

⁴⁴ Proverbs 8:13

⁴⁵ Proverbs 3:7

This is an easy thing to watch for in our children’s behavior. Are they being wise in their own eyes? The Bible says that our children are born with a sin nature. That means that it’s the natural thing for them to do wrong. It’s the easy thing. It’s the thing they’re naturally bent toward.

Many people quote the verse,

**“Train a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not turn from it.”⁴⁶**

Well, each child has a natural bent, it’s true. Yes, we need to know our children’s own unique personalities and giftedness.

But the Bible says the way that they *want* to go is toward evil. They are wise in their own eyes. If we use methods that always let the child make all the decisions, the child will naturally make bad decisions. So **avoid methods that lean too much toward child-centeredness**. My child’s heart is filled with foolishness. Only with correction will I be able to drive that correction far from them.

If authors of books, methods, and curriculum believe that children are basically good, or that children are just blank slates made bad only by their environment, rather than saying what the Bible says, that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” then I try to avoid listening too heavily to those authors. They might have a few good ideas that I can take and adapt, but I need to get most of my advice from those who honor God’s Word.

Which Methods to Emphasize

Okay, so let’s move on to the positive side. We want to choose homeschooling methods that **teach our children how to study** to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that don’t need to be ashamed, that can rightly divide the word of truth.⁴⁷

Proverbs goes on to tell us exactly how to do that.

**“My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,**

⁴⁶ Proverbs 22:6

⁴⁷ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding,
and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
then you will understand the fear of YHVH
and find the knowledge of God.
For YHVH gives wisdom,
and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”⁴⁸

So in my daily homeschooling, I want to choose methods that teach my children how to

- ❑ Accept my instruction.
- ❑ Store up God’s commands.
- ❑ Turn their ears to wisdom.
- ❑ Apply their hearts to understanding.
- ❑ How to search for understanding and insight as for hidden treasure.

It is very important to teach my children **how to pay attention to instruction**. Did you know that this is a skill? Yes, it takes practice! It can be taught!

I need to teach my children **how to store up information**. One helpful idea is to use notebooks to store up information. Other moms use lapbooks, or narration, or... you name it! Whichever method I use, I need to be sure that my method of homeschooling provides a way to store up God’s commands. Often this is even through lots of memorization. I would also note that there are some homeschooling methods that ridicule memorization and storing up information. I personally try to avoid those methods.

I need to help my children learn **how to apply what they’re learning to daily life**. There are lots of methods for doing this. Maybe we can read a book together where the main characters have to apply God’s Word to life. This is a great teaching tool, especially if we as a family take the time to discuss each chapter as we read it.

I also need a method that teaches my children **how to search for information**. We live in the Information Age, but if we don’t know how to search for

⁴⁸ Proverbs 2:1-6, NIV

information, what good is it? I want a method that teaches my children strong skills of reading and studying, so that they can learn how to search for hidden and valuable treasure in God's Word.

These skills all take practice.

**“This has been my practice:
I obey your precepts.”⁴⁹**

I am looking for a method that gives my children plenty of **practice in obeying God**. Practice makes perfect! Practice is not a bad thing. It's how we learn to cook. It's how we learn to type. It's how we learn to ride a horse. It's how we learn the times tables. It's how we learn to be an effective workman for God in the world. So I look for methods that use plenty of practice in our homeschool.

You know, here's a really neat verse with a promise that I found:

**“Humility and the fear of YHVH
bring wealth and honor and life.”⁵⁰**

Wealth. Honor. Life. Aren't those some amazing goals for homeschooling? I thought so!

Kinds of Homeschooling:

- ❑ **Textbooks** – preplanned and put into order, these can simplify preparation
- ❑ **Unit Studies** – integrate a topic into several school subjects
- ❑ **Real Books** – similar to unit studies, avoidance of textbooks
- ❑ **Notebooking** – a way to record what you've learned, to show comprehension
- ❑ **Charlotte Mason** – living books, narration, nature walks
- ❑ **Principle Approach** – principles on which America was founded, or other principles
- ❑ **Classical** – grammar, logic, rhetoric

⁴⁹ Psalms 119:56

⁵⁰ Proverbs 22:4

As you can see, there are many choices! Depending on how *you* use them in *your* homeschool, these could be bad choices or good choices. I can't answer that for you. I would advise you to get books by the different proponents of homeschooling methods and to read for yourself, in the authors' own words, what their methods include.

For instance, if you want to know what John Holt, Charlotte Mason, or Ruth Beechick are proposing, get their books. Read it from them, rather than going online and reading quick summaries of the various methods. Give yourself time to grapple with their ideas and to compare them with Scripture.

Compare them with Scripture? Did you hear that? That can take a lot more work than even reading all these homeschooling books! But remember that God's opinion of the people of the city of Berea were more excellent than those in the surrounding towns. Why? Because they searched the scriptures daily to see if the things that Paul was telling them were true. They didn't just take someone else's word for it. They searched it out for themselves.⁵¹

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”⁵²

Hide God's Word in your heart.

“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”⁵³

Meditate on it day and night.

**“But his delight is in the law of YHVH,
and on his law he meditates day and night.”⁵⁴**

God's statutes are our counselors.

⁵¹ Acts 17:11

⁵² Deuteronomy 6:6-9

⁵³ Psalms 119:11

⁵⁴ Psalms 1:2

**“Your statutes are my delight;
they are my counselors.”⁵⁵**

The result is freedom.

**“I will walk about in freedom,
for I have sought out your precepts.”⁵⁶**

God’s Word illuminates my decision making.

**“Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.”⁵⁷**

Don’t be double-minded.

**“I hate double-minded men,
but I love your law.”⁵⁸**

Purpose to read quickly through the entire Bible, asking God’s Spirit to show you things related to your children’s education. Keep a journal, so you’ll remember what He’s telling you.

In the next chapter, we’re going to take a closer look at the book of Deuteronomy, for a small snapshot of God’s homeschooling methods.

⁵⁵ Psalms 119:24

⁵⁶ Psalms 119:45

⁵⁷ Psalms 119:105

⁵⁸ Psalms 119:113

Chapter Seven

Biblical Homeschooling Methods

While reading through the book of Deuteronomy, I noted that it seems to suggest specific methods for not only *what and why* we should teach our children, but *how* we should teach them.

I've been mulling over the book of Deuteronomy for a few months now, and I noticed that each chapter or group of chapters seems to follow a specific theme. I've been wondering if it was just my imagination or not, because I didn't have time to really study it out. I've also been wondering if the "themes" might have anything to do with teaching children.

Finally, one week I took the time to study it out officially. It was wonderful! I'm sure Bible scholars over the centuries have many more profound things to say about the purpose of the book of Deuteronomy, but for me, I'm now absolutely convinced that one of the primary reasons God gave us this book was to give us a guide for *how* to teach our children.

Note: You can download my full-length study of the book of Deuteronomy on my website, to be used as a guide to your own thorough reading of the entire book.⁵⁹

Therefore, it is with complete confidence in the Word of God that I call this chapter "***Biblical*** Homeschooling Methods." The Bible has even more to say about parenting and homeschooling outside the book of Deuteronomy, but for now, I am confident that the following homeschooling methods are ***biblical*** and ***pleasing to God***.

(Isn't the Word of God such a comfort when we're uncertain, filling us with confidence that "we can do this"?)

⁵⁹ https://annceiliott.com/downloads/themes_of_deuteronomy.pdf

Biblical Homeschooling Methods (in order as they appear in Deuteronomy):

1. Teach by a Variety of Methods.

Since the book of Deuteronomy is arranged by topic and it was given by God to Moses as an instructional book for the children of Israel, I see that God uses the topical method when teaching mankind. Of course, we also know He teaches by chronological history (a.k.a. stories), as well as by poetry, lists, and logical arguments in His Word. This tells me that *many* different teaching methods are used by God, and all have their purpose and use. Variety is good. Repetition is essential. The “spice of life” originated with our Creator, and it certainly adds good taste to homeschooling.

The “topical” method used in Deuteronomy means that there is a good deal of repetition in the book. It seems God avoids “gaps in education” by saying the same thing over and over again, in a variety of ways. It’s the original “unit study,” but rather than going broad with too much information, God keeps it trimmed down and narrow, preferring repetition for solid learning.

2. Start with a Good Story.

The first three chapters of Deuteronomy start with a story, hooking the reader with a thorough review of the history behind the subject of obeying God. The key verse to this first section says,

“You have seen with your own eyes all YHVH your God has done.”⁶⁰

The key to telling a good story is to help the listener “see it with his own eyes.” Stories are a great way to pique interest in a topic and to remind the listener *why* you’re studying this topic.

The “story” in chapters 1-3 ends with, “Hear now... what I am about to teach you. Follow them...”⁶¹ Our stories should also end with, “This is why you’ve heard the story. Now get ready for what I’m going to teach you. Today we’re going to learn... then you’ll have a homework assignment so you can ‘practice’ what we’ve learned.”

⁶⁰ Deuteronomy 3:21-22

⁶¹ Deuteronomy 4:1

3. Carefully Review So It Isn't Forgotten.

The theme of Deuteronomy 4 is to not “add to what I command you and do not subtract from it.” God warned that the children of Israel would immediately begin making idols in the shape of created things, being enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping them.⁶²

Rather, God warned them to “be careful” and “watch closely” so that they would not “forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart.” Moses was told to assemble the people, so they could hear God’s words and then teach them to their children.⁶³

I see that we should *begin* with stories, but without careful repetition and review, we will forget! Children don’t outgrow this. The oldest senior citizen needs the same review. It’s a lifelong process.

Repetition needs to be intentional. It needs to happen often. Your homeschooling method *must* include repetition and review, or it simply won’t be effective.

4. Teach with the “Hear, Learn, Follow” Method.

The theme of Deuteronomy 5 is “hear, learn, and follow” the commands of God. In this chapter, God gave a specific body of information to be taught (known to us as the “Ten Commandments”), but He used three ways to ensure that this information would be mastered.

To teach a body of facts, first help your child “*hear*.” This word means to “hear intelligently,” meaning that the first step is to teach the information in a way that the child can understand what it means.

Secondly, help your child “*learn*” the information well. The Hebrew word for learn is similar to our word, “to goad or prod.” You keep poking at your child, day after day, until the information is mastered extremely well.

Thirdly, help your child “*follow*,” which is the Hebrew word for “guard.” You want the child to protect or “attend to” the information you’ve taught, which again means plenty of review, maybe writing it down in a form that can be well preserved.

⁶² Deuteronomy 4:16, 19, 23, 25, 28

⁶³ Deuteronomy 4:9-10

5. Teach All the Time, at Every Opportunity. Use Visual Aids and Discussion.

The classic parenting verses of Deuteronomy 6 now appear:

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.”

First, the teacher has a firm grasp of the information herself. Then, discussion occurs all day long, at every possible opportunity, while going about normal daily activities. Visual aids are used liberally, on every possible surface.

This is classic stuff!

God also says, “In the future, when your son asks you..., tell him...”⁶⁴ Visual aids are useful because they are discussion starters. Again, we forget easily, even as parents! The visual aids will help both you and your children remember the topics being learned.

However, visual aids alone serve no purpose if the discussion doesn't happen, all day long, every day, throughout all your activities. “When your son asks you” assumes that your son would even feel free to ask you a question! Are you available for discussion, or is each member of your home preoccupied with his or her own activities and interests, uninterested or involved with each other? Obviously, the Bible assumes that members of a family are actually spending almost all their time *together*.

Author John A. Stomer notes that it takes *time* to effectively teach children:

- **Time to talk** (Note: Only humans can carry on two-way communication, so children can ask *why* or get further clarification if they don't understand. Television cannot fill this need!)
- **Time to read**
- **Time to teach** new information
- **Time to train** and apply information to life

⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 6:20-21

- **Time to play**
- **Time to care** (Note: This kind of intense interaction shows a child that his parent cares enough to consider his lifelong needs over personal interests.)

6. Ruthlessly Rid the House of False Information.

The theme of Deuteronomy 7 is sobering, as God tells the children of Israel to destroy the wicked nations around them *totally*.⁶⁵ They were to make no treaty with them, show them no mercy, not intermarry with them, break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles, and burn their idols in the fire. *Total destruction.*

I think this is a weak area for most of us homeschoolers, myself included. Yet it cannot be! God devotes an entire chapter to this topic! He minces no words, even as He explains why.

Carefully check your home for false information (and even evil, from God's perspective). What good does it do to teach your children carefully, with the best methods, yet then allow false information an equal footing? Why allow truth and lies to co-exist? You are only dooming your children to failure, possibly even eternal destruction.

“...Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers.”⁶⁶

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to The Messiah.”⁶⁷

Evil and false information have a tendency of creeping into our homes, sneaking in when we're not aware. I strongly suggest that you do “spring cleaning” of all your homeschooling supplies, books, and even companions, every few months. Again, be ruthless in this area! Do a *total destruction* of all evil.

⁶⁵ Deuteronomy 7:2

⁶⁶ James 1:14-16

⁶⁷ 2 Corinthians 10:5

7. Test for Understanding.

The theme of Deuteronomy 8 is that God “disciplines you, as a man disciplines his son.”⁶⁸ God states that His specific method of “discipline” is as follows:

1. He humbles you.
2. He tests you.
3. He teaches you.

Yes, you have to take your children down a notch or two, and often! They get “wise in their own eyes.” You need to teach them to be humble, and the way God did this with the children of Israel was to “test” them. As you check for total mastery of what you’ve taught them, obviously they will occasionally fail your tests. You finish the testing sessions by re-teaching the information, again checking that they can apply what you’re teaching to real-life situations.⁶⁹

Testing should be fair. As God says in 1 Corinthians 10:12-13,

“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation [testing] has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”

Testing is not a popular homeschooling concept, but it is *biblical*.

8. Teach Them to Think of Others — and Why!

Pride can creep into a Christian home very easily, can’t it? We start to think, maybe just because we’re homeschooling, that we’re “all that and a bag of chips.” Yet God quickly reminds the children of Israel,

“It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations... It is not because of your righteousness..., for you are a stiff-necked people.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 8:3 and 5

⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 8:3

⁷⁰ Deuteronomy 9:5-6

Yes, our hearts are naturally wicked and self-seeking. We provoke God, as our children provoke their parents and siblings. We are “stiff-necked.” (Just watch a two-year-old!)

How does God fix this situation? He “shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.”⁷¹ In addition (and this is beautiful), He teaches them to love those who are foreigners to Israel.

We are not “special” because of any inherent goodness. Just the opposite! We are sinners!

We are not “better” than anyone else, of any nation, creed, race, gender, or status. Just the opposite! We are poor and needy!

We need to love others, showing it in tangible ways.⁷² Doing acts of service, mercy, and goodness to those who cannot repay us teaches us to be humble and take our eyes off ourselves. These “acts of service” can start at home, with menial chores and sometimes-distasteful tasks performed out of love rather than payment, extending later to those in our communities and world.

9. Fill “Blank Slates” with Life Experiences.

When I use the term “*blank slates*” in this educational context, I ***do not mean*** the same thing that St. Thomas Aquinas, John Locke, or Sigmund Freud meant, that children are born basically good and need to simply be nurtured with an excellent environment.

Rather, I mean it in the original sense of *tabula rasa*, that “individuals are born without built-in mental content and that their knowledge comes from experience and perception.”⁷³

This is exactly how God words it:

“Remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of YHVH your God: his majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched arm... It was not your children who saw what he did for you in the desert until you arrived at this

⁷¹ Deuteronomy 10:19

⁷² See Isaiah 58 for a list of biblical ideas.

⁷³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabula_rasa

place... But it was your own eyes that saw all these great things YHVH has done.”⁷⁴

Your children were born without the “mental content” that you now have. They can only learn when you tell them what “your own eyes” have seen. They need to experience it, preferably not by the “school of hard knocks” but rather by hearing about *your* experiences.

One of the reasons that you teach your children to honor you is because you *do* know things they don’t! You’ve lived life, and you have experience to back your knowledge. They haven’t! They need to listen to you.

I find it very instructive that it is within this context that God repeats almost word-for-word His teaching method:

“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates...”⁷⁵

One of the main topics of discussion in your home should be the free sharing of your own life experiences and stories, so that your children will learn and not repeat your mistakes.

10. Teach Them “Cultural Literacy” with Discernment. Teach Them How to Purge the Bad.

Chapter 13 of Deuteronomy shares three scenarios of interacting with the culture around us.

- If a prophet appears and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder...⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Deuteronomy 11:2, 5, 7

⁷⁵ Deuteronomy 11:18-20

⁷⁶ Deuteronomy 13:1-5

- If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you...⁷⁷
- If you hear it said... that wicked men have arisen among you and have led the people of their town astray...⁷⁸

In each of these scenarios, God's advice is the same.

- You must not listen.⁷⁹
- You must purge the evil from among you.⁸⁰

First, God told them not to listen, and He says that this is a “test.” Maybe your “test” could be a newspaper current-events article, in which your children are told to evaluate what they read and compare it to God's Word, telling if the reaction of the people in the story is biblical or not. Essay writing, logical arguments, position papers, and speeches are all excellent opportunities of learning to “not listen” to the sinful advice so rampant in our culture. Quietly, you can even include discussions of the actions of acquaintances and other Christians you know, evaluating whether people's actions match the Scripture's words.

Home is the place to *practice* for life. Teach your children how to live observe culture and differentiate between right and wrong. Most importantly, train them how to “purge” evil from their own lives. Be especially vigilant with the close friendships your children form and the opportunities for peer pressure that they face.

11. Master God's Curriculum.

Chapters 14-26 give an extensive overview of God's curriculum, his commands and laws, also called His “Torah.” These laws are *specific, extensive*, and occasionally *arbitrary* (in our view). We don't always know why God wants us to do something, but we know we are to obey anyway. Often, He does tell us why, however. Either way, there is a specific “curriculum,” and we are expected to know and do it.

School feels like this to our children, too. They don't always understand *why* they must learn so much, but as their parents, we do know why. They have to learn to

⁷⁷ Deuteronomy 13:6-11

⁷⁸ Deuteronomy 13:12-18

⁷⁹ Deuteronomy 13:3

⁸⁰ Deuteronomy 13:5

trust us, by obeying us and learning it. Their job is to hunker down and get it learned.

I note one passage in this large section that gives an excellent method for mastering a large body of seemingly unrelated facts:

“When he takes the throne of his kingdom, **he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law... It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days** of his life so that he may learn... and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left.”⁸¹

“Copywork,” as it is popularly called in homeschooling circles today, is a *biblical* method of homeschooling, as well as profoundly effective when carried with the student and *reviewed every day*.

Don’t be shy about requiring your children to memorize huge amounts of information, reviewing it constantly, writing and copying it. Your children will most likely fuss, but it’s your job to teach!

12. Prepare to Teach, Write Down Your Plans, and Communicate Your Plans to Your Children.

In Deuteronomy 27, Moses was told to write the entire “curriculum” (God’s Torah, as reiterated in chapters 5 and 14-26) on “large stones.”⁸² He was then to “recite” the curriculum (in a “loud voice,” no less) to all the people.

Children and kings aren’t the only ones who should write and recite. The teacher also needs to do a fair bit of writing, and that means she needs to completely understand the curriculum, going over it thoroughly and writing out what is to be taught. The curriculum needs to be written in a way that can be then easily communicated daily to the students.

I don’t see that “flying by the seat of our pants” is biblical, do you? “Natural” methods that let life happen as it comes don’t appear in Deuteronomy. Yes, the discussions “just happen.” But the visual aids and most especially, the specific body of information to be learned, are “set down in stone” ahead of time. Are we

⁸¹ Deuteronomy 17:18-20

⁸² Deuteronomy 27:2, 4, 8

better than Moses, not needing to write it all out and to communicate it to our students? Do we think we can be effective without a plan?

13. Give Rewards and Consequences.

Chapter 28 is a long chapter, with much proof that God uses both *rewards* and *consequences* in His teaching methods. It is *biblical* for us to give both rewards and consequences to our students as well.⁸³

I also note that God gives four times as many consequences for wrong behavior in this chapter as he does for good behavior! Mom, don't feel badly if some days go like that for you, too. Are you above God? If that's how much He has to discipline His children, you'll probably have to apply a lot of consequences in your home, too. It's normal—and *biblical*.

“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”⁸⁴

14. Hold Yourself Accountable to Your Children and to Others.

In chapters 29-30, the children of Israel enter into a covenant with YHVH their God, sealed with an oath.⁸⁵ Their children were witnesses to this covenant, as well as the nations around them.⁸⁶

Accountability is a bad word in many homeschooling circles. We want the political right to homeschool, without any responsibility to *prove* that we are being effective, in the eyes of our children or the society that is watching us.

I propose that, without giving up our homeschooling freedoms, we should embrace our local homeschooling laws, carefully abiding by them and being accountable to those whom God has set over us.

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring

⁸³ (I especially love the ideas produced by Doorposts.net, such as the *If-Then Chart*, the *Blessing Chart*, and the book *For Instruction in Righteousness*.)

⁸⁴ Proverbs 19:18, KJV

⁸⁵ Deuteronomy 29:12-14

⁸⁶ Deuteronomy 29:22, 24

judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.”⁸⁷

15. End Your Teaching with Read-Alouds and Singing.

The book of Deuteronomy closes with the theme of “Do not be afraid.”⁸⁸ Don’t be overwhelmed by everything that is required of a teacher. God says,

“YHVH himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”⁸⁹

You have an excellent plan. You are to:

- “Read this law before them in their hearing”
- So they can “listen”
- So they will “learn”
- So they will “follow carefully”⁹⁰

God reminds us that our children “do not know this law,” so that’s why we carefully teach it.

Finally, He tells us that we’ll have days that we fail, and our children will, too. I love that He concludes by asking Moses to write down a song. Music is a useful and highly effective learning tool, to say nothing of fun! Isn’t God great?

⁸⁷ Romans 13:1-7

⁸⁸ Deuteronomy 31-34

⁸⁹ Deuteronomy 31:8

⁹⁰ Deuteronomy 31:10-12

Reading, listening, learning, and singing. These are *biblical homeschooling methods*, given to us by our Creator God. Now don't you have a lot to feel confident about as you plan your next homeschooling steps?

Chapter Eight

How to Homeschool

Okay, so let's talk specifically about *how to homeschool*, using God's Word as our guide. What method should we use?

The Bible makes it clear that we need to start teaching our children from a very young age. Parenting is not a hands-off thing, where we just create a good environment then set our children free to live in this environment and blossom. Yes, we need a good environment! Absolutely! But we are also to be *present* in our children's lives, actively taking a role in instructing them. You can see the role of a mother in instructing her children all through the book of Proverbs, but here is just one example:

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”⁹¹

It takes time and effort to reprove and correct our children. Sometimes I feel too lazy to do that. It's just too much effort, and honestly, yes, sometimes I'm just too tired to care. But note the warning in this verse: “a child left to himself brings his mother to shame.”

I firmly believe that good parenting starts at birth. There are at least three things that need to be taught to your children from an early age, to prepare them for learning, such as:

1. Order in the home
2. Respect for others
3. How to pay attention

All of these things need to be reinforced by the godly example of the mother.⁹²

Once you've prepared children to learn, what do you need to teach them? In what order?

⁹¹ Proverbs 29:15, KJV

⁹² See *The Four Foundations of Lifelong Learning*, by Anne Elliott, for much more detail on these things, at <https://FoundationsPress.com>.

Some people say to start teaching reading, for instance, at a young age. Others say, no, it's better to wait until they're older and more developmentally ready. Same with math. Do you start at a young age? Do you emphasize drill and memorization, or do you emphasize understanding, using lots of hands-on and manipulatives? What about history? Do you teach it chronologically, more world history, or more American? Living books? textbooks? primary sources? Independent reading or one-on-one tutoring? How confusing!

I'm not sure I can get too dogmatic here. The Bible just isn't going to answer our questions in black and white. God doesn't seem interested in multiplying laws out for us, but rather in giving us principles that can be used in any culture, in any time period, in any society.

For instance, He says that all of His laws can be summed up in, love YHVH your God with all your heart, soul, and might, and love your neighbor as yourself. The Bible has *some* specifics that we should pay attention to, but most of it is principle oriented.

So I have some opinions, some principles that I follow, but again, I wouldn't get too dogmatic here. I don't think you should either.

I see a pattern in child training in Scripture. I'm not positive I'm right, but this is what I see.

Subjects to Teach by Age:⁹³

1. Skill
2. Content
3. Communication

Example of age level (for reading, arithmetic, and writing):

Skill Level

- ❑ Phonics instruction
- ❑ Math instruction
- ❑ Handwriting, spelling, copywork

⁹³ Inspired by reading books by author Ruth Beechick

Content Level

- ❑ Read for information
- ❑ More abstract principles
- ❑ Write reports, make outlines, learn about poetry

Communication Level

- ❑ Read to solve a problem
- ❑ Applications to daily life
- ❑ Teach others through writing or speech (essays, arguments & debate, criticism, letters, entrepreneurial skills)

Example of Teaching the Bible by Levels:

- ❑ Skill level – know how to find passages, memorize books of the Bible, memorize much scripture, copywork
- ❑ Content level – know what each section of Bible contains, learn key doctrines, how to have personal devotions, how to use reference materials
- ❑ Communication level – apologetics, share testimony and plan of salvation, learn to teach a Bible lesson (outline, visuals, audience)

The book of James shows us an example of these three levels:

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.

“If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”⁹⁴

First, we have to **hear God’s Word**. For instance, these verses use taking care of orphans and widows as an example. We “hear” that the Bible says to care for the poor and afflicted. So we are learning a skill.

⁹⁴ James 1:22-27

We now know **what to do**, and we might even brainstorm ways in which we can do this. This is more of a content area. We might visit websites and read books that talk about adoption. We might meet people who have adopted orphans.

But until we get to the “communication” level, where we turn around and do what the word says, where we actually “practice” what we’ve learned in a practical way, then we haven’t really learned anything, have we? In fact, many families who’ve adopted will tell you that you might have to adopt several times over before you really learn how to help these children.

So first, we prepare our hearts for learning by adding **skills**, then we add **content** that shows us what to do with our skills, then we **practice** doing.

I’m not sure you can break all this down into neat little categories and curriculum and ages, but you can see that this is the natural progression of true learning.

You can see some examples of this from Scripture, such as Moses or Samuel, two young boys who were separated from their mothers at early ages but had both been taught skills of respecting and obeying God and their parents. They probably learned most of their content in Pharaoh’s household, or for Samuel, in Eli’s wicked household, but because they had solid skills, they were able to thrive.

Yeshua and Paul are other examples. In their culture, they would have been taught the Torah from a very early age, beginning at 3 or 4 and memorizing large sections of the Old Testament. Yeshua was able to debate with the temple leaders at the age of 12, which means that He was now in the communication level of learning. Paul was able to understand not just Jewish culture but Greek culture as well, as we can see from his skillful ability to share the gospel with the people of Athens in Acts 17.

Do you see why it’s so important for us to teach our children solid skills and deep content, so that they can ultimately share the gospel, communicating the Messiah to our lost world as Paul was able to do?

Chapter Nine

Setting Goals

If you've been thinking about homeschooling for any length of time, you've seen books and articles that recommend that you make goals for your children's education. I remember when my oldest son was just a few years old. My husband and I heard this same advice, and we honestly had no idea what goals were worthy. Thinking about the next fifteen years of my child's life seemed an overwhelming proposition, especially to someone who had never even been a mother before! Potty training was about as far in advance as my brain could think.

Now that I have seven children and more experience, as well as an adult child and three currently in high school, I'm still not sure that this is a question most parents can easily answer. Academically, we don't yet know what gifts and abilities God has given to our children. Spiritually, we don't know what their strengths and weaknesses will be. We don't know where we'll live, how much money we'll have, or what extraordinary trials will come into our lives.

How can we set goals?

My solution was to **read broadly from many authors and curriculum suppliers**, making notes of the goals they said we should have. If a goal sounded good to me, I began to adopt it. However, this plan wasn't so good either. During those early years, I tended to switch curriculum often, as I'd find a new goal that sounded worthy or exciting. This lack of consistency certainly caused some problems for my son. It caused a lot of frustration for me!

Another common recommendation was to have parents **brainstorm as many reasons why they're homeschooling** as they can, then mark the top three. These three reasons become their primary goals. Is this a good method? It would be fine if we could trust our hearts to always guide us biblically. It would be fine if we knew our Bibles so well that we could be sure we were following God's goals for our children. It would be fine if we were sure that we weren't bringing things from our own pasts into the discussion, things that might cloud our judgment or cause us to overreact in our own parenting.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”⁹⁵

Even the excellent planning questions, **“What’s not working, why not, and what do you think would help,”** are of no help in goal setting. We won’t know if our goals are “working” until our children are grown, and that’s certainly no time to start asking “why not” and “what would help!”

We need the guidance of Someone who understands us and our children, who knows the future, and who knows “what works.”

“This is the word that came to Jeremiah from YHVH: ‘Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.’ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

“Then the word of YHVH came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?’ declares YHVH. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand...’”⁹⁶

We need to realize that the children we have are simply entrusted to us by the Master Potter. **We are their stewards, but He is their Creator.** He has a plan for their lives, and part of that plan was to place them temporarily into our homes for our care. However, He doesn’t intend that they stay in our homes forever. He wants to *use* them, as a potter uses the pots he has formed.

As stewards, it isn’t up to us to make goals for our children. The Potter makes the goals. We simply carry out the instructions that Potter has given to us.

**“Yet, O YHVH, you are our Father.
We are the clay, you are the potter;
we are all the work of your hand.”⁹⁷**

I think that this relieves a lot of the goal-setting pressure! Goal setting is simply not my job. It might be my job to ensure periodically that we’re on track and that

⁹⁵ Jeremiah 17:9

⁹⁶ Jeremiah 18:1-6

⁹⁷ Isaiah 64:8

we're making progress toward reaching our goals; however, I don't have to make up the goals in the first place.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”⁹⁸

The Master Potter has promised to give us “everything we need” as we train up our children for “life and godliness,” but this promise comes “through our knowledge of him.” God’s Word, the Bible, contains all we need, but it is up to us to read the Instruction Manual.

⁹⁸ 2 Peter 1:3

Chapter Ten

Unschooling?

As I mentioned in the last chapter, many times we homeschoolers are guilty of being sluggish in our thinking, too quickly adopting goals as our own when we haven't compared them against Scripture. Often we make goals by reading popular books or by "going with our gut," even when God's Word says that our hearts can very easily deceive us.⁹⁹

I want to start examining some common (yet questionable) homeschooling goals, to see how well they match up with Scripture.

Goals are important because they help us figure out our methods. In other words, when I've figured out *why* I believe I should be teaching my children at home, I can then figure out *how* to teach them at home.

Many authors will tell you that *how* to teach your children is an individual choice, based upon your individual personality. Of course this is sometimes true. Not always, though.

I've been thinking about it. Choosing a math curriculum, for instance, often comes from my worldview. Do I believe my children will learn better through hands-on discovery or through memorization and drill (or maybe a combination of the two)? My beliefs about method are based on my reasons for homeschooling in the first place.

One of the most aggravating things about homeschooling is choosing curriculum (and paying a lot of money for it), only to discover that it doesn't fit our family. Why doesn't it fit? Sometimes it's just a practical reason (designed for one child while I have seven children, for instance), but more often it's a philosophical reason. It can be very liberating to finally get a handle on *why I do what I do*.

Let's examine some common homeschooling approaches, realizing that these are stereotypes and won't perfectly describe everyone who subscribes to these views.

⁹⁹ Jeremiah 17:9

Unschooling

“Unschooling” usually comes from the writings of John Holt, who wrote *How Children Learn* in 1966. Unschooling can be a dramatic lifestyle where a child is given free rein in all his choices, or it can be tempered with the guidance of loving parents as they help their children make decisions. Variations are sometimes known as delight-based learning, child-led learning, or self-directed learning. Obviously, there is a lot of variety here.

John Holt, for instance, believed that children are born with an incredible capacity for figuring things out for themselves. This is true, and it is true simply because we are created in the image of our Creator.¹⁰⁰ However, John Holt didn’t believe that we are created, so he tended to forget that children are also born with a desire to seek their own satisfaction and even evil desires. In other words, we are all sinners.

In his book, *Teach Your Own*, John Holt quoted from *The Continuum Concept* by Jean Liedloff (another book which blatantly ignores a Creator God) and then said,

As Liedloff shows, children so reared [according to the Continuum Concept, meaning as children have supposedly been "reared in the 'continuum' of the human biological experience, i.e., as 'primitive' mothers bear and rear their babies, and probably always have through all the millions of years of human existence"] very quickly notice what people are doing around them, and want to join in and take part as soon and as far as their powers permit. No one has to do anything in order to “socialize” the children, or make them take part in the life of the group. They are born social, it is their nature... No continuum culture expects children to be bad as a matter of course, to misbehave, to make trouble, to refuse to help, to destroy things, and cause pain to others, and in cultures with long traditions of child-rearing these common (to us) forms of child behavior are virtually unknown...

In short, the problem children of the affluent Western world are as much a product of our culture as our automobiles.¹⁰¹

Do you see what he’s saying? He’s saying that children are basically good and are only corrupted because of their environment. Note that the environment he felt is the worst for a child is an “affluent Western” environment, which is a subtle

¹⁰⁰ Genesis 1:27

¹⁰¹ pp. 81, 82-83

poke at Scripture taught by Christianity, the religion of the Western world, as the Bible teaches that children are born with a sin nature.

There are grains of truth in his words. Children *do* have an incredible capability and desire to learn, which the Bible teaches was placed there by our Creator. Children *do* want to join in with what the people around them are doing, which is vitally important for us to remember as we approve of companions for our children. Children *are* products of their cultures, which is why it's so important for us to provide them with a godly home and rich learning environment. Finally, Western "Christianity" has historically taught as many perversions of the truth of God's Word as evolution has, and it's only honest to admit this.

But the fatal flaw behind John Holt's words is that children are somehow good and capable of amazing potential *if only* they are provided with a good environment. Simply provide your child with a good environment, and he will turn out fine. In fact, he'll turn out more than fine. He'll achieve everything that our species is capable of and possibly even advance our evolution. Sadly, this is in great conflict with what the Bible teaches.

Unschoolers have a reputation for being "rebels against society" and having wild, disorganized homes, never paying attention to time or fitting in well with culture. This doesn't seem fair, does it? I know some families that choose to "unschool," yet the parents are incredibly vested in the positive outcome and best interest of their children. Yet sometimes the criticism is true. The danger is that the *happiness* of the child can become more important than the *holiness* of the child.

Many of the methods that unschoolers use are perfectly legitimate and have their place. I only have argument with the underlying philosophy. I believe that God's Word says that we are born with a sin nature and that it is the parents' responsibility to place certain information—God's Laws—into the hearts of our children.

Delight-based learning often gets lumped in with unschooling, yet I believe it's perfectly fine to allow our children's God-given abilities and personalities to thrive within our homes. If God has given your child a natural affinity for music, for instance, I believe it is good to cultivate that desire for God's kingdom. However, I also believe that sometimes our children just don't naturally delight in anything that is hard work or takes away from play time. Sometimes we mothers have to tell our children what to do, when to do it, and why. I don't think that John Holt would disagree with me, by the way. Again, I don't argue with the some of the methods but rather with the underlying philosophy.

So here's what to watch out for when reading books about education by secular authors.

- Does the author believe we were created by God in six literal days as Genesis 1 teaches, or does the author believe that we evolved from lower forms of animals over millions of years? This is a huge warning sign!
- Does the author believe that children are born good and corrupted by their environment, or does the author believe that children have a sin nature?
- Does the author believe that children will usually make wise choices or that they are naturally “wise in their own eyes”?
- Does the author believe that there is no end to what a human can achieve in his own power?

Some verses to ponder:

“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles... They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.”¹⁰²

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to The Messiah.”¹⁰³

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of YHVH, and on his law he meditates day and night.”¹⁰⁴

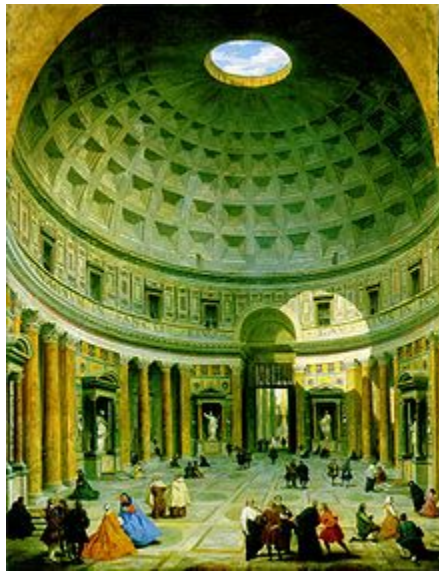
¹⁰² Romans 1:21-23, 25

¹⁰³ 2 Corinthians 10:5

¹⁰⁴ Psalm 1:1-2

Chapter Eleven

Homeschooling in a Modern Pantheon



The interior of the Pantheon in the 18th century, painted by Giovanni Paolo Panini. Courtesy of Wikipedia.

We're deep into the history of Rome here in our homeschool, currently studying the Caesars before Nero, during the spread of the gospel and the lives of the apostles. It's really fascinating stuff!

We recently studied about some of the temples constructed for their gods. In addition, I've been reading Henry Morris' book, *The Long War Against God* (an excellent book).

One of the famous Roman temples is the Pantheon. One website says,

Pantheon means “all of the gods” and the building’s roof represented the dome of the sky, where Romans believed the gods resided. At equinox, the sun is on the celestial equator—where Earth’s equator would lie if projected into space—which was seen as the most stable part of the sky, a perfect eternal home for the gods. [Researcher Robert] Hannah thinks that by marking the equinoxes, the Pantheon was intended to elevate emperors who worshiped there into the realm of the gods. James Evans, a historian of astronomy at the University of Puget Sound in Washington state, is intrigued: “The

architect of the Pantheon would certainly have been aware of the symbolic connections between the cosmos and the empire, and between the sun and the emperor.”¹⁰⁵

As I’ve been pondering more this week about some questionable homeschooling goals, I’ve been thinking a lot about that Pantheon. You see, **pantheism** is the belief that god is in all things, that all things are god, and that god is even in me. It comes from the roots **pan** plus **theism**, meaning “all” and “gods.”

It’s a very nice thought, that a god-like force pervades the universe, the trees, the stars, the ancient gods of every culture—and even me. It’s the thought behind sayings like, “Say a prayer to the universe for me,” or “Wish upon a star,” or “Send good thoughts out there for me, okay?” The idea is that god is in all things, that we can pray to this god, and that this god will move throughout the universe to work things out for my good.

The dangerous thing is that this idea has certainly crept into the homeschooling world. Some people believe we can worship God **and** idols, adding the Bible to a pantheon of idols in our lives.

In the last chapter I wrote about some obviously secular authors, and of course I found fault with them. In this chapter I must be crazy, because I’m going to find fault with some sweet Christian authors.

I’m not doing this to cause trouble! Believe me, you could certainly put *my* life under a microscope and find fault with me, too. Neither am I finding fault with all their methods. In fact, I use many of their ideas in my own homeschooling.

I’m simply finding fault with the possibility of including **all gods** in a pantheon of homeschooling philosophies. I’m finding fault with adding Yeshua to my worldly “god shelf,” with having my worldly cake and eating it, too. It’s a sneaky thing that can happen without our even realizing it, so that’s why I’m bringing it up.

Charlotte Mason

I’ve been a happy Charlotte Mason fan since I first heard about her in the late 1990s. I’ve read all her books and all the books about her. She has certainly been

¹⁰⁵ <http://www.crystalinks.com/romepantheon.html>

a huge influence on my life, and if you peruse my website, you'll easily see her influence in my writing and in my homeschooling downloads.

Sigh.

Don't you hate when you absolutely love and feel comfortable with something... and then you can feel God gently trying to remove it from your life?

Maybe I won't throw out all the Charlotte Mason with the bathwater, but her methods and philosophy are certainly getting a closer examination in my own mind. I'm trying to be honest and fair with you here. I don't have it all figured out yet!

But here are some of my concerns:

- **She was not a creationist.** She believed in theistic evolution. Now I realize that she lived in England during the late 1800s, and in all fairness, there were very few creationists *anywhere* in evangelical churches, in Europe or America. Instead, churches were befuddled by what appeared to be the “facts” of evolution, yet they dearly loved God's Word and defended it. How do you defend a literal creation without appearing to have lost your mind? The only option is to adopt a long-day theory, a gap theory, or other compromises. These theories continue to this day, by the way, as Sonlight's John Holzmann writes.¹⁰⁶ He proposes that we all just get along together. I strongly disagree! I think that we should treat each other kindly, but the more I study my Bible, the more firmly convinced I am that creation is one of the most important doctrines in the Bible, to be preserved, defended, and *passed on to my own children*. So if I firmly believe this, why am I so avidly devouring everything written by Charlotte Mason? Even more importantly, which of her philosophies are based on good, solid, biblical truth—and which have been tainted by theistic evolution? I'm not sure.
- **Charlotte Mason taught that children “are not born either good or bad, but with possibilities for good and for evil.”** In fairness, I want to note that author Tammy Glaser of Ambleside Online says,

“[This principle] should not be understood as a theological position on the doctrine of original sin, but as a belief that even poor children who were previously thought incapable of living honest lives could choose right from wrong

¹⁰⁶ http://www.sonlight.com/young_or_old_earth.html

*if they were taught. Charlotte Mason was a member in good standing of the Anglican Church of England, whose Thirty Nine Articles includes this statement: ‘Original sin stands not in the following of Adam, but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil.’*¹⁰⁷

I understand what Ms. Glaser is saying, but that same Anglican church of the 1800s was teaching higher criticism and theistic evolution.¹⁰⁸ Sorry, but just because she was a “member in good standing” of a church doesn’t mean that she *personally* subscribed to a certain doctrinal statement.

You judge for yourselves. In reading her books, I see the *religious* idea that “children are not born either good or bad” all throughout her writing. I’m seeing major warning flags here!¹⁰⁹

Ambleside Online has nicely summarized 20 of her major principles,¹¹⁰ and I honestly agree with many of them. Short lessons, narration, dictation, good habits, copying to learn to write, and living books rather than “twaddle”—I’ve heard these concepts at every homeschooling conference, in every reputable homeschooling book, and from every homeschooling expert for almost 15 years now. They’ve been drummed into my head so far that I’m not sure how to separate Charlotte Mason’s ideas from my own. I’m certainly planning to examine each and every one of these ideas against Scripture alone, to see if they “make the cut.”

Classical Education

One Charlotte Mason idea that I’ve struggled with for the last couple years is the idea of limiting the amount of direct teaching we give to our children, letting ideas speak to our children from the books we read and the nature we observe instead. She wrote,

“Let [children] get at the books themselves, and do not let them be flooded with [diluted talk] from the lips of their teacher. The teacher’s business is to indicate, stimulate,

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.amblesideonline.org/CM/20Principles.html>

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.gotquestions.org/redaction-higher-criticism.html>

¹⁰⁹ Another author agrees here: <http://www.characterbuildingforfamilies.com/Mason.html>

¹¹⁰ <http://www.amblesideonline.org/CM/20Principles.html>

direct....The less the parents and teachers ‘talk-in’ and expound their rations of knowledge and thought to the children they are education, the better for the children...”

Hmmm.... I’m not sure if I agree with that, for two reasons. First, God’s Word says I’m to actively **teach** his commands to my children (although, yes, in the context of everyday life). Secondly, I now have seven children, and it just **doesn’t seem to work**. Maybe my kids are dumb, or maybe their mother is dumber, but we all seem to have brains made of rocks. We need daily pounding (a.k.a. “drill” and “memory work”) to get things to stick.

That’s one reason I’ve been drawn more and more to classical education, a form of homeschooling that no one talked about when our family first started homeschooling—but it’s incredibly popular now. Popular advocates include Dorothy Sayers,¹¹¹ Susan Wise Bauer,¹¹² Harvey and Laurie Bluedorn,¹¹³ and Christine Miller.¹¹⁴

In my own words, classical education emphasizes memorization and languages (such as Hebrew, Greek and Latin) during the “grammar” stage, logic and thinking skills during the “logic” stage, and communication through writing and speaking during the “rhetoric” stage. Love it!

Except... The reason we’re told to return to a **real** classical education is that we should study the Great Books and have a Great Conversation with the Great Minds that lived before us. (Please note: Not all these authors are in favor of this!) Some even put Scripture to the idea, saying,

“This is what YHVH says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.’”¹¹⁵

Classical education advocates returning to the ancient paths, asking what a good education consisted of throughout history, analyzing *why* it was so effective, and deciding to throw public-school mythologies out the window in favor of this ancient education.

Sounds good, except God’s Word also says,

¹¹¹ <http://www.gbt.org/text/sayers.html>

¹¹² *The Well-Trained Mind*

¹¹³ *Teaching the Trivium*

¹¹⁴ Her book, *All Through the Ages*, and her website, <https://biblicalthomeschooling.org>

¹¹⁵ Jeremiah 6:16

“Yet my people have forgotten me; they burn incense to worthless idols, **which made them stumble in their ways and in the ancient paths.** They made them walk in bypaths and on roads not built up.”¹¹⁶

Many times those “ancient paths” are filled with “worthless idols.” This is easily and quickly seen when you examine a list of the “Great Books” which we’re supposed to be returning to. (Some popular lists are [TheGreatBooksList.com](#), [List 1](#) and [List 2](#) from the *Well-Trained Mind*, and many more, if you’ll Google it.)

God says that if I turn to these “great books,” I could very well cause my own children to forget Him and to stumble in their way. I have a personal dread of causing one of these little ones to stumble in sin,¹¹⁷ and you should, too! This summer, we sat down and threw away a LOT of books from our home library. A few more books might still get thrown. In my mind this is a serious matter.

“...be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.’ You must not worship YHVH your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things YHVH hates.”¹¹⁸

If I am intending to have a “great conversation” with the Greatest Book ever written (God’s Word), then I think it’s fair and good to consider some of the teaching methods proposed by classical education and indeed used to educate some of the finest and godliest believers who have ever lived. Just keep in mind that *some* current authors consider the Bible to just be one great book out of many. It’s very subtle, so be warned.

The Power of Words

I believe that words can have a profound effect on us. God’s Word especially holds this power, as Yeshua the Messiah is the living *logos* or Word.¹¹⁹ His Word is everlasting¹²⁰ and can cut to the deepest parts of our hearts.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Jeremiah 18:15

¹¹⁷ Mark 9:42

¹¹⁸ Deuteronomy 12:30-31

¹¹⁹ John 1:1

¹²⁰ Isaiah 40:8

¹²¹ Hebrews 4:12-13

But it's a very pantheistic idea to assume that *all* man's words have this god-like power. I'm an author, and I really do love books. I also realize that *my* words have power, and I pray that I use this power responsibly. But my power is not equal to God's.

Other authors are aware of their power, too. If nothing else, many times our minds are taken captive by vain and worldly philosophy¹²² that has been planted in our world by the Father of Lies himself.¹²³

As my husband is fond of saying, "In our minds we agree with God, but then our hearts kick in." In other words, it's easy to say in theory that we are basing all our decisions on the Bible, but in reality, it's hard. It's hard to *see* the errors in the first place, but then it's agony to tear them out of our hearts.

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."¹²⁴

¹²² Colossians 2:8

¹²³ John 8:44

¹²⁴Philippians 4:8

Chapter Twelve

Hear, Learn, Keep, Do

When God wants to teach mankind something, He follows a very specific method that I can copy in my homeschooling. For instance, let's look at how God teaches all mankind about His "invisible qualities, his eternal power, and divine nature:"

"The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because **God has made it plain to them**. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."¹²⁵ (Romans 1:18-20).

First, **God clearly presents information**. In this case, He used the things He had created, which can be seen by every person no matter where he lives, to make Himself plain to all people.¹²⁶ The sun, moon, and stars are visible to all. The amazing capabilities of the human body are visible to all. The metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly... the water cycle... the fossil record—these are visible to all.

Once God has presented information, **He expects that I'll have the help of a human teacher** to explain what I'm seeing and hearing.

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"¹²⁷

He then expects me, the "student," to do a few things, which I'm calling the "Hear, Learn, Keep, Do" method.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Romans 1:18-20

¹²⁶ Psalm 8

¹²⁷ Romans 10:14

¹²⁸ From Deuteronomy 5:1

“And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, *Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.*”¹²⁹

1. The student is to “hear.”

To hear doesn’t mean to let sound come into my eardrums; rather, it means to **“listen with intelligence.”** I can look up into the night sky and “see” the stars, but unless I “listen with intelligence,” I won’t relate those stars to a Creator God, to His eternal power and divine nature.

When I was a little girl, my parents would wake us in the middle of the night and take us out into the backyard, where they had laid a blanket on the ground. We would lie on our backs and look at a meteor shower, an eclipse, or an especially bright planet. My dad would pass around the binoculars and telescopes, and he would show us where the constellations were. All the while, he would remind us that ***God created these things***. He helped us “listen with intelligence” to the “words” God had put into the stars.

Today I can go to my bookshelf and read *The Witness of the Stars*, by E. W. Bullinger, to learn how the different constellations point to God as creator and to His promised Redeemer.

All of these things can help me “listen with intelligence” to the God who is trying to teach me about Himself.

2. The student is to “learn.”

The word “to learn” means **“to goad.”** My human teacher helps me learn by “goad” me. A goad is a long stick with a sharp end, used to herd animals like cattle. With me, my human teacher pokes me along, but this isn’t a negative thing. My teacher spurs me into action, reminds me where the path is, and even gives me confidence as I step by encouraging me. In the New Testament, we see the word “exhort” used in a similar way.

If I were a child learning about the constellations, this would be a review lesson, where maybe I would draw maps of the constellations, with overlays of the symbolism of Yeshua the Messiah, filing them away in a notebook. Maybe my father would take me outside on another night and ask me to point to the specific

¹²⁹ KJV

constellations and tell him a little about each one. Maybe I would be required to memorize Scripture verses about each one and recite them at supper. All along, my “teacher” would be goading me, poking me, reminding me that God was the creator of the constellations and that they were placed in the sky by Him so that I would learn about His eternal power and divine nature.

3. The student is to “keep.”



The word “keep” used here means “**to guard.**” My husband and sons love to study about medieval castles, which often had a “keep” inside the walls, where the soldiers could fall back during a siege. It was a place of refuge, heavily guarded and fortified, and filled with ample provisions. Often this was a strong tower. Sometimes the “keep” was a dungeon, where prisoners would be “kept” and guarded.

When God gives us a body of information, He wants us to guard it carefully. All of Scripture contains information about God, but we should not guard it physically so that no one is able to read it, such as often happened during the Middle Ages as Bibles were chained to tables inside cathedrals, to keep thieves from stealing these rare books. In this case, He’s referring to a *mental* guarding of this information, where we replay it over and over so that it doesn’t get lost or misplaced among all the other pieces of information that compete.

For instance, the word “keep” is used 22 times in Psalm 119 alone, as we are instructed to “keep” God’s commands and instructions.

In my illustration of learning the constellations, I would “keep” or guard what I had learned by reviewing it, over and over and over again, so that I would not forget it. God uses the method of writing things down so that mankind doesn’t forget it. In addition, He “schedules” times into His calendar so that we remember

to review what He has taught us.¹³⁰ He has His people “recite” and “repeat” what He has taught them. Finally, He “tests” them on what He has taught, to be sure that they understand and know it well.

4. The student is to “do.”

James 1:22-25 says that when we learn God’s Word, even when we listen to it, our human hearts are very prone to walking away and “immediately forgetting” what we saw. God’s “perfect law” gives freedom, though, to the one who “looks intently” into it and “continues to do” it, “not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it.” God says that man will be “blessed in what he does.”

Learning information is never the end goal. When God placed the stars in the sky, they were there to point us to The Messiah and to bring us to faith in Him. Yeshua is always the reason for everything God has revealed to us.

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto the Messiah, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in the Messiah Yeshua.”¹³¹

“For the Messiah is the end [“result, purpose, goal”] of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.”¹³²

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”¹³³

Going to school isn’t the point. Learning facts isn’t the goal. Learning should bring about a *change in behavior*.

¹³⁰ Leviticus 23

¹³¹ Galatians 3:24-26, KJV

¹³² Romans 10:4, KJV

¹³³ Hebrews 5:11-14

We would be disappointed if we had to homeschool our children for the rest of their lives. No way! We expect them to graduate someday. When they graduate, they will continue to add, subtract, multiply, and divide—but they won't be doing it on math worksheets. They'll be applying math to their everyday lives.

God revealed Yeshua throughout all His Word, not so we could master facts, rules, or commands. He revealed Himself so that, as we continue to obey His instructions each day of our lives, we will be able to hear intelligently that we need a redeemer, we'll be goaded each day by the keeping of His commands, we'll have plenty of review as we continue to walk in His commands, and we'll see our need of a Messiah and turn to Him in faith, so that His righteousness can be given to us. Then we can *grow up*, teaching God's commands to others and helping others come to faith in Him also.

Sounds like what parents do, doesn't it? We learn, we grow up, we have children of our own, and we pass on truth to them.

Chapter Thirteen

The Law of the Teacher

When I was in high school, I had the privilege of taking a “how to teach” class from one of our school’s elementary teachers. I took the class because I was considering majoring in elementary education in college, so I wanted to see if I would like it or not. My teacher was one of those ladies that has a lot of “with-it”-ness in her teaching. She made her classes interesting. Her students loved her. She was in control in the classroom, with a certain degree of strictness, yet she really cared about each student and made sure that they were all learning.

For those of us high school students who took her class, she used as her text the classic book by John Milton Gregory, the *Seven Laws of Teaching*. Lately I was thinking about that book and wishing I could see it, since not only am I a mother of seven but I’m my children’s school teacher as well. How excited I was to find out that the *Seven Laws of Teaching* can be read for free on Google books!

I have a similar book on my shelf by Howard Hendricks, called *The Seven Laws of the Teacher*. I bought this book in college, in a class for educational psychology. I’m not a big fan of ~~psycho-babble~~ psychology, but our professor was one of those teachers who changed my life, probably because he really “got” what Dr. Hendricks was saying in his book.

As homeschooling mothers, are we great teachers? Do we work hard to not only provide our children with good curriculum but also to diligently *teach* our children effectively?

Sometimes when I’m at church, around young children, I’m very careful to smile, to hug, and to be interested in what they’re saying. Yet when I get home around my own kids, I’m too tired to smile, too busy to hug, and too disinterested to listen to their jabbering. God has been convicting me that I need to give the *best* I have to my own children.

“You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”¹³⁴

God is very clear that we are to teach our children diligently. The Hebrew word for “diligently teach” means to pierce, to poke, and to infiltrate. What strategies can we use to be sure that the things we’re teaching our children sink deeply into their hearts?

The first law of the teacher, both Milton and Hendricks agree, is that **a teacher can’t teach what she doesn’t know.**

“The teacher must know that which he would teach.... Imperfect knowing must be reflected in imperfect teaching.” – John Milton Gregory

“If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow.” – Howard Hendricks

Yes, you’re a mother, and that means you have a lot of work in the house to do (dishes, laundry, bills to pay, errands to run), but especially if you’re homeschooling, you have a huge responsibility for the quality of your teaching.

“...Everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”¹³⁵

Isn’t that a convicting thought? My children, when they are grown, will be like me. (Yikes...)

*“I would rather have my students drink from a running stream than a stagnant pool.”
– Howard Hendricks*

¹³⁴ Deuteronomy 6:7, ESV

¹³⁵ Luke 6:40

As you think about your own growth as a learner, here are some things to consider:

1. What am I passionate about? How can I take these passions and relate them to the things I'm teaching?
2. How well do I know the subjects I'm teaching? If I don't know them well, what I am doing to change that?
3. How can my love for learning awaken a love for learning in my students?

Howard Hendricks shares this story of an 86-year-old woman:

The last time I saw her on planet earth was at one of those aseptic Christian parties. We were sitting there on eggshells, looking pious, when she walked in and said, 'Well, Hendricks, I haven't seen you for a long time. What are the five best books you've read in the past year?'

She had a way of changing a group's dynamics. Her philosophy was, 'Let's not bore each other with each other; let's get into a discussion, and if we can't find anything to discuss, let's get into an argument.'

She was eighty-three on her last trip to the Holy Land. She went there with a group of NFL football players. One of my most vivid memories of her is seeing her out front yelling back to them, 'Come on, men, get with it!'

She died in her sleep at her daughter's home in Dallas. Her daughter told me that just before she died, she had written out her goals for the next ten years.

Some "rules" for developing yourself as a teacher, paraphrased from Milton's book are:

1. **Study fresh.** Did you teach phonics two years ago? Take some time to "freshen up" your mind before you teach it again. Has it been 21 years since you took Algebra I? You probably need some review!
2. **Relate the known to the unknown.** What do you already know a lot about? How can you make connections in your brain to the new information?
3. **Study until you can rephrase it clearly.** Knowing something well means that you can put it in your own words.
4. **Find the natural order.** Anything makes more sense when it's in order. When you've got a recipe in order in your mind, you do a better job cooking it, right?

5. **Make it practical.** How have you used fractions in real life? Why did you need to learn geography?
6. **Don't stop trying until you really understand.** Don't give up when you're only halfway. Take the time to make sure you're comprehending completely.
7. **Set aside the time you need for study.** Learning takes time. It doesn't happen by osmosis, by placing books under your pillow. You need time in your life to grow, to read, to reflect. Build some margin for self-education into your schedule.
8. **Use the "six serving men."** That's what one of my teachers called these questions, which you should ask of yourself when learning something new: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?*
9. **Read widely.** Find the best scholars on a topic and read what they've written.
10. **Discuss with others.** Whether by email or in person, you will learn better what you've talked about with others.

Moms, are you still growing? Are you growing intellectually, physically, socially, and spiritually.¹³⁶ Beware of being too tired to care, too busy to invest, and too bored to discover.

¹³⁶ Luke 2:52

Chapter Fourteen

The Law of the Learner

The second “law” we’re going to consider is “The Law of the Learner.” Basically, this law states that **the most important thing you must capture in your children, your “students,” is their interested attention.** Interested attention is a mental attitude that takes effort and exertion on the part of your children.

There are two ways you can capture the interest and attention of your children.

1. **You can compel it.** Require it. Force it. Sometimes this is necessary. Yes, obedience is an important skill to teach. However, compelled interest, as Gregory states, is “easily exhausted.” True learning can never stop here.
2. **You can attract it.** When you have attracted the attention of a child, his attention can endure.

Have you ever read a book that was incredibly boring? You can force your mind to pay attention for a short while, but will you be able to recall what you read later?

Have you ever read a book that you couldn’t put down? Did anyone have to set a timer and require you to read for 30 minutes? (More likely, you had to force yourself to put it away so you could start dinner!)

As a mother, sometimes you just have to start by **gently compelling** your children to pay attention. With young children, you might do this by requiring them to look you in the eye or repeat back to you what you said. However, as soon as you can, try to help them make the change to attraction and *interested* attention.

According to Gregory, there are many **sources of interest** to a student. Try to think how you learn best, as well as your children:

1. **Your five senses** — How many senses can you involve in a lesson? Hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting will be more effective than just hearing alone.

2. **Variety** — How can you attract attention by changing things? Vanilla ice cream is delicious, unless that's the only flavor you ever eat. How can you add excitement through variety?
3. **Startling Questions** — Ask questions that require thought to answer, rather than simple repetition of facts or a “yes” or “no.” Hendricks says, “Spend more time questioning answers than answering questions.”
4. **Connections to Life** — Show your children how the lesson relates to something else in their lives that they're interested in. My daughter has a natural interest in horses; how can I catch her interest in history by relating it to horses?

Gregory notes that attention span naturally increases as a child ages. Did you know that you can help the process along by nurturing longer attention spans? Can your child focus on something for 20 minutes? Could you work toward an attention span of 25 minutes? (What skills would help in this? Eye contact? Something to do with her hands?)

Attention spans are naturally longer when an appeal is made to the learner's strongest sense. For instance, I am a visual learner, so I can pay attention longer when a book has pictures or I can highlight in the text. For my husband, who is an auditory learner, he pays attention longer when there is music playing in the background.

Gregory points out that the two hindrances to interested attention are apathy and distraction. What can you do to eliminate distractions? How are these two things an indicator of an undisciplined mind?

Some rules Gregory says to keep in mind:

1. Don't begin until you have their attention!
2. Pause if you lose their attention (and figure out how to get it back again).
3. Stop *before* their attention (or bodies) are exhausted.
4. Fit the lesson to the child's abilities.
5. Arouse attention, but avoid distraction.
6. Kindle interest in the subject itself.
7. Know your child!

Howard Hendricks adds some brilliant points.

“Tell the learner nothing—and do nothing for him—that he can learn or do for himself.”

As you think of ways to attract your children’s attention, ask yourself what your objectives in teaching them are. Hendricks says that his **three top objectives** are to teach the student:

1. How to think
2. How to learn
3. How to work

I think those are exactly what mine would be, too! He then notes that there are **four basic skills** which will help you accomplish those objectives:

1. Reading
2. Writing
3. Listening
4. Speaking

Hendricks writes,

“One day I said to one of my classes in seminary, ‘The problem with the average guy coming out of the university is that he can’t read, he can’t write, and he can’t think. And if you can’t read, write, or think, what can you do?’”

“‘Watch television,’ someone answered.”

So in conclusion, how can you capture the interested attention of your children so that you can teach them to think, learn, and work? At what age would you start? Is this really an academic subject—or **is the ability to pay attention a skill that your children will need for everything else in life?**¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Read *The Four Foundations of Lifelong Learning*, by Anne Elliott, for practical ways to increase the attention span of children; <https://foundationspress.com>

Chapter Fifteen

Motivation for Learning

How can we motivate our children to learn?

I absolutely love homeschooling and have no desire to educate my children in any other way, but admittedly, one of the biggest drawbacks to homeschooling is the lack of competition and the give-and-take that *can* happen in a good classroom. I've personally found this is difficult to replicate at home.

So how can I motivate my children to become lifelong, self-motivated learners?

Make learning easier through practice.

The basics are really important! My children just don't want to write an essay when they haven't mastered cursive handwriting. They'd rather avoid algebraic equations and chemistry when they never mastered their times tables. They'd prefer not to use a dictionary if they still struggle with alphabetic order. They'll stick with television until their reading is as easy as breathing. The same goes for typing... spelling... the books of the Bible...

So let's get back to the basics in our homeschools, giving our children plenty of practice to not just know *about* something but to do it easily and painlessly.

Tell them why.

My two-year-old doesn't always need to know *why* I want her to obey. But my older children *need* to know why—badly!

Learning why helps my children internalize what they are learning, wrestle with it, and then—the best part—make it their own.

Even God usually tells us why. (For instance, check out Philippians 2:14-16 for why God tells us not to grumble.)

So when your children ask the age-old question, “Why do I have to learn this?” be sure to thoughtfully stop what you're doing to give them answers. Start a

discussion with them. Take them on a field trip. Visit an elderly person who can tell stories about *why*.

Give them an audience.

When I was in 3rd grade, my teacher filled our math class with games and friendly competition at the chalkboard. However, I find it difficult to play many games with my little, alone 3rd grader.

Yet games, science fair projects, reports, and school newspapers all give our children an audience. Sorry, Mom, but sometimes you're a boring audience for your budding little genius. How can you help your developing scientists learn to present their knowledge to an audience larger than your home can provide?

The hardest part about this step is that it requires me to schedule something different outside of my normal homeschooling days. That complicates everything for us mothers, doesn't it? Yet we have so many opportunities, including webinars and YouTube here online. Allow some occasional interruptions to put the spark of an audience back into your school days.

Let them see the world from God's perspective.

Why are we teaching our children anyway? Isn't it so that we can train ambassadors who will travel with God's good news into a dying world? As Andrew Pudewa says, we're raising "competent communicators"—but we have the greatest message of freedom and eternal life and peace to communicate!

I appreciate my parents having late night/early morning discussions with me during my teenage years. They lost some sleep but showed great love, answering my deep questions and equipping me to be able to discuss spiritual things with others later.

My father also took me with him on his pastoral calls, allowing me to hear discussions he had with others. On our way home, he'd ask my opinion and point me back to Scripture.

Bedtime and long car rides, sitting on a blanket at the park—these are all times to turn the discussion to eternity and to the eternal needs of lost people all around you. *How can you reach them?*

**“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?
And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not**

heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”¹³⁸ (Romans 10:14-15).

So in summary, it seems that God has the wisest advice on how to motivate your children to be lifelong learners. It’s all about interaction with real people, not just with books or computers.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”¹³⁹ (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

¹³⁸ Romans 10:14-15

¹³⁹ Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Chapter Sixteen

Christian Education in the Home

The following is a quote from the introduction to a wonderful book, *Celebrate the Feasts of the Old Testament in Your Own Home or Church*, by Martha Zimmerman. I thought it was very good...

“Hey, Mom! You’re right! Habakkuk is in the Bible.”

Sure that I was hearing things, I called back to our twelve-year-old son, “What did you say?” His response was a surprise.

“Well, the other day I heard you talking about some book in the Bible called Habakkuk, and I just found it.”

My response still shocks me; the words are burned into my memory! “Richard, haven’t ‘they’ taught you the books of the Bible yet in Sunday School?”

God prepares us in amazing ways for His new lessons. His timing is perfect. I had just finished writing a paper for one of my seminary courses on Deuteronomy 6:1-9 which says, “And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your children....” I knew it didn’t say “Sunday school teachers” or “fellowship leaders” or “the great staff at our church” (all of those people are glad to help)—but the command is to parents. You shall teach them. If God gives us something to do, He will enable us to do it!

At that moment I didn’t know where the next step would take us; but I knew from experience that when His instructions are followed, the end for which they are given will be accomplished. The results are God’s business. He was calling me to be faithful.

Many questions followed, such as: How? When? Are you sure?—Me, God? We talked about it as a family. The children’s suggestions were helpful and encouraging. It was obvious they were eager and ready to begin a new adventure.

When I started looking for materials to teach “Christian Education in the Home,” my search led to the best possible source! Since God said “do it” in the Bible, I reasoned the Bible would tell us what to do. And it did!

[Celebrate the Feasts] has been growing ever since. We have learned a lot, known God’s blessing, and had many fun and funny times together! We want to share our adventures, not as a model to copy but as guidelines to encourage you in creatively teaching the marvelous truths of the Old Testament with New Testament understanding....

Habakkuk is in the Bible. So is Leviticus. Chapter 23 is where we started. It was our outline for the family times presented on the following pages....

I highly recommend this book!

Chapter Seventeen

Tidbits of Truth

God's Word has all we need.

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”¹⁴⁰

Keep your mind on God, not on your problems.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”¹⁴¹

Seek God for wisdom.

“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’”¹⁴²

Be careful of distractions and too much multi-tasking.

“...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Messiah Yeshua.”¹⁴³

I can't teach what I don't know.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon *your* hearts.”¹⁴⁴

Use teachable moments.

¹⁴⁰ 2 Peter 1:3

¹⁴¹ Isaiah 26:3, KJV

¹⁴² Isaiah 30:21

¹⁴³ Philippians 3:13-14, KJV

¹⁴⁴ Deuteronomy 6:6, emphasis mine.

“Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”¹⁴⁵

Delegate freely.

“She provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.”¹⁴⁶

Helping your husband is the top priority, even over the kids.

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”¹⁴⁷

Husbands need our respect.

“Now as the church submits to the Messiah, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything... and the wife must respect her husband.”¹⁴⁸

The home needs an atmosphere of peace and order.

“God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”¹⁴⁹

Don't expect what you won't inspect.

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 6:7-9

¹⁴⁶ Proverbs 31:15

¹⁴⁷ Genesis 2:18

¹⁴⁸ Ephesians 5:24, 33

¹⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:33

¹⁵⁰ Proverbs 29:15

God's Word should be our primary curriculum.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”¹⁵¹

History is completely in God's hands and should be taught from His perspective.

“But I trust in you, O YHVH; I say, ‘You are my God.’ My times are in your hands...”¹⁵²

God is revealed to us through science.

“...What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made.”¹⁵³

We learn to care for God's creation through the application of science.

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’”¹⁵⁴

We learn to read so we can have faith in God.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? ...So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁵² Psalm 31:14-15, KJV

¹⁵³ Romans 1:19-20

¹⁵⁴ Genesis 1:26

¹⁵⁵ Romans 10:14, 17, KJV

We learn to communicate so we can share God with others.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!’”¹⁵⁶

We do our best at everything we do, so God receives all the glory.

“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Master Yeshua, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Romans 10:14-15, KJV

¹⁵⁷ Colossians 3:17

Part Three

Biblical Curriculum

Chapter Eighteen

Who's in Charge?

God's precious Spirit would never guide you down any path that contradicts what He has commanded in His Word. We know that the Bible says wives are to be in submission to their husbands "in everything,"¹⁵⁸ which obviously must include the way we teach our children.

Sometimes the command to submit to my husband frustrates me. After all, he is away at work for most of each day and cannot see how our household runs minute-by-minute. I often feel that he doesn't understand the problems my son is having in phonics, the hassles I face when trying to teach algebra while preschoolers are getting into trouble, or the difficulties of trying to finish laundry while reading chapter books aloud.

Why should my husband get to be the "principal" of our school when he is rarely on school property during the school day?

Yet God's Word stands. His commands endure. If I want the daily help and guidance of the Spirit of God, I must walk in obedience to the Word of God.

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever."¹⁵⁹

The key to a successful "working relationship" between principal and teacher in your homeschool is communication. In fact, the key to a happy marriage is communication as well! Your husband is not likely trying to make you mad with his opinions and decrees; rather, he simply wants to know how his children are being taught and that they're learning what they'll need for life.

¹⁵⁸ Ephesians 5:22-24

¹⁵⁹ John 14:15-16

This is part of God’s will. God says to fathers, “**Bring [your children] up in the training and instruction of YHVH.**”¹⁶⁰ The man in your house is directly accountable to God himself for the training and instruction of his children.

God says that children must obey their fathers and mothers,¹⁶¹ yet mothers need to remember that fathers have the primary responsibility of being sure that the children do!

Mom, your job is to find out how God’s Spirit is working in your husband’s heart, and then help him carry it out in your home. You are his helper, his completer, and his companion.¹⁶² You can “strengthen, encourage, and comfort”¹⁶³ your husband by staying within the role that God created for you.

1. Strengthen him.

To strengthen and build up your husband in your home, in front of your children, the in-laws, and the community, you must first discover his wishes and desires. Remember, God’s Spirit is just as active in others’ hearts as He is in yours. How has the Spirit been leading your husband?

I suggest that you have a meeting with your husband. Schedule several hours away with your husband (get a babysitter), and make a point of writing down your husband’s wishes.

Ask him:

- What are his likes and dislikes about homeschooling?
- What goals does he have for each of your children?
- What are his homeschooling style preferences?
- Does he have any specific curriculum suggestions?
- In what areas would he like to see the homemaking improve? (Ouch!)
- What are his spiritual goals for your family?
- How does he think your daily routine could improve?
- What discipline issues concern him, and how would he prefer that you address those?
- What are his frustrations?

¹⁶⁰ Ephesians 6:4

¹⁶¹ Ephesians 6:1-3

¹⁶² Genesis 2:18

¹⁶³ 1 Corinthians 14:3

- ❑ What are his priorities for your marriage, your home, and your children?

Take careful notes, then schedule a time where you can get alone with God and this list. Ask God to show you how to strengthen your husband's leadership in your home by implementing his ideas. Ask God to make your heart humble and submissive. Ask God for creative ideas!

Return to your husband with your ideas and be sure that you've heard him correctly. Check that the lines of communication are open and clear.

Finally, begin to communicate your husband's wishes to your children. Strengthen his leadership by showing great respect to his words, his wishes, and his will.

2. Encourage him.

As the school year progresses, you will be a huge encouragement to your husband by simply doing what he asks.

- ❑ Each week, have the kids show their tests, their notebooking pages, and their projects to their father. When I was a child, I had to take my tests home in the evening for my parents' signature. In the same way, be sure that your children are showing their work to their father.
- ❑ Schedule at minimum a monthly time where you can privately report on each child's progress and on the goals that Dad set up.
- ❑ When Dad makes a comment about the progress (or lack of progress) of your children, be humble and open to suggestions. Don't take his opinions personally. Remember that he is simply acting like someone who is directly accountable to the God of the universe!
- ❑ Speak glowingly about your husband's leadership to his parents and yours, to the neighbors, and to others at your church. Build his image in front of others by bragging about what a great father he is. Even if it's difficult to find something positive to say, surely you can find at least one good point about which to praise him.

3. Comfort him.

God has given each of your children a free will and choice. Sometimes our children make bad decisions and deliberately choose to obey both God and us. At these times, fathers can get discouraged. They can even get angry and in their frustration, go on to exasperate their children.

As a mother, we are often more sensitive to the atmosphere in our homes than men are. At these times of frustration, you can comfort your husband in several ways:

- ❑ Always display unity with your husband in front of your children—even when you disagree with him! Children long for the security of a stable marriage. Of course they realize that you and Dad are two different people with often differing opinions! Even in your differences, however, they need to see that you are “one flesh” and determined to stay that way.
- ❑ Wait until the tense situation has passed before speaking privately with your husband about your opinion. Ask God to help you speak softly and wisely. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).
- ❑ The “sandwich method” works well in disagreements. Comfort your husband by telling him one way that you agreed with him, followed by one thing you would have done differently, followed yet again with something positive. Your encouraging comments will help take the sting out of your criticism and make his heart more receptive to you.

I have noticed repeatedly that a strong marriage makes for a strong homeschool, yet a dysfunctional marriage tears apart children and homes. “The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down” (Proverbs 14:1). Be sure that your homeschooling foundation is secure before bothering to organize binders and crayons.

Chapter Nineteen

Why Parenting Preschoolers Isn't Easy

Homeschooling when you have little toddlers or preschoolers around is a challenge, to say the least. One of the most challenging parts of being a mom, in fact, is learning how to juggle the multitude of responsibilities that faces you in a day, from parenting various ages of children to handling all the different aspects of a home, sometimes while also maintaining a job or ministry. Sometimes I wonder if one of the reasons God asks me to “be fruitful and multiply” is so that I’ll learn valuable “have dominion over the earth” skills (Genesis 1:28). What kingdom responsibilities will He give me in eternity? How is today a preparation for then? How unprepared would I have been if He had not blessed me with all these little ones?¹⁶⁴

Your children also need to learn eternal lessons. **One of the lessons they need to learn at your knee is obedience to authority.** Just as Yeshua submitted to His heavenly Father, we must also teach our children to submit to our God-given authority. The Bible says that we are to teach them in “the nurture and admonition of YHVH”¹⁶⁵—but teach them we must! The Bible says this is best done when “you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”¹⁶⁶ It also says you are to teach them “diligently,” which means constantly, attentively, persistently, and with persevering attention.

Another eternal lesson your children need you to teach them is what their heavenly Father is like. Just this week, someone remarked that one of the reasons she loved God so much was “because I know He cares and loves me even with the most horriblest things.” Yes, He does, but He also disciplines those He loves so that they won’t continue doing those “horriblest” things and reaping the deadly consequences.¹⁶⁷ So to be an accurate picture of our Heavenly Father, we must put up with the unlovely things that a preschooler is prone to do, while

¹⁶⁴ See also Titus 2:4-5.

¹⁶⁵ Ephesians 6:4

¹⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 6:7

¹⁶⁷ Proverbs 13:24, Hebrews 12:6

never neglecting the *diligent* training that will spare him from a lifetime of evil consequences.

Finally, both you and your children all need to learn how to **“love your neighbor as yourself.”**¹⁶⁸ True love for God is *always* manifested in love for others. What better place is there to learn this than at home? If you’re anything like me, you find it easy to love the world and difficult to love a brood of loud children. Never forget that God is working on your heart, and that you’re in eternal training yourself. However, this does not negate the importance of training your children how to love each other, even when it’s a lesson you’re still learning yourself.

Dominion and management of the home, order in the home, submission to authority, loving the unlovely, sharing, diligent training. These words all describe the goals of the mother of toddlers and preschoolers. Why not write down the ones you especially need to focus on this year?

¹⁶⁸ Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31

Chapter Twenty

The Multi-Aged Homeschool

One of the toughest things about homeschooling is managing multiple ages at once. Since I believe that my job as a mother is to be *with* my children while they're learning,¹⁶⁹ I have to figure out how to be *with* seven different children at once. How can I teach the various ages effectively?

Babies and Toddlers

My youngest baby is crawling and almost walking. He loves to play near me on the floor—yet if I lose track of him, he also loves to crawl over to the bookshelf and pull every book off the bottom shelf. Our school room is in our basement, and he also enjoys crawling over to the laundry and splashing in a little puddle that comes out from under my washer. Furthermore, he enjoys pushing the on and off buttons on our computer and printer, playing in the kitty litter, and chewing on CDs from my CD player.

My house is not very big, especially when you consider that nine of us live here together. I only have 2-3 feet of space on each side of our “school table,” so there isn't much room for a toddler there. I have crates, shelves, dressers, and cupboards full of school supplies and other not-very-baby-proofed items everywhere, especially if I start working with, say, a third grader on her multiplication—and forget all about the baby!

So here are some things that help.

1. **I have a playpen down here.** I move this just out of my eyesight, place a handful of toys plus his favorite blanket in it, and give him 20-30 minutes of time in it each morning. It's good for his concentration and attention skills, and this is just enough time for me to tutor another child.
2. **Older children babysit.** My school-age children *love* having a 15-minute break from their math to go play with their cute little brother. They stay where I can see and hear, especially for those still learning safety rules. This

¹⁶⁹ See Deuteronomy 6:7 and Proverbs 29:15

- is an excellent chance for them to practice their babysitting skills, and it again gives me tutoring time.
3. **Give him a nap.** He'll outgrow this soon, but until 18-22 months or so, my children still seem to enjoy a morning nap. They get most sleepy about 2 hours after they wake up in the morning, so the rest of us have to be hopping through our chores and breakfast so we're ready for school before Baby's nap. Our goal is to have our "together" school during his nap. When we stay on schedule, it works quite well.
 4. **Let him play next to me.** When all else fails, Baby stays with us. He might be on a blanket right next to my feet, on my lap, in a highchair right next to me, or on someone else's lap. It's a little distracting for all of us, yes. But it works. I keep a plastic container of toys by the school table that's just for him.

Preschoolers

I also have a 3-year-old daughter. As she has gradually outgrown the techniques I use for younger babies, she has developed an interest in what we're all doing at the table. She's also the one who is potty training and who needs the most attention from Mommy in character training. In other words, if I ignore her, it will show in disobedience, whining, and other sinful attitudes. Or... she could wander off and enjoy coloring on walls with markers for a while.

Each of my children has done these things at one point or another in their preschool years, so to avoid it, I repeat Proverbs 29:15 to myself many times each morning: **"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."**

1. **I keep her close to me, so that I can immediately correct any wrong behavior or attitudes.** Sometimes this is very distracting to the older ones, but hey! *"A school classroom can get distracting, too,"* as I often remind them. *"Learn to pay attention to your math anyway!"*
2. **I start my morning by spending time with her individually,** usually reading a few books together and sometimes learning something simple. I do this as soon as breakfast is over, while the older children are cleaning up the kitchen or watching the baby.
3. **During our "together school," she often plays** with Duplos, looks at a book, or quietly colors on paper.
4. **She has her own "school crate,"** with crayons, paper, coloring books and other things that feel like "big kid" schoolwork to her. "Her" chair is right next to mine.

5. **I have small activities for her to do**, such as matching games, stringing large beads on shoelaces, and play dough.
6. **Her older siblings take a 15-minute rotation time of playing with her also.** We tend to take out one set of toys each day (such as Fisher-Price Little People), which I place for her on a large area rug. When it's her siblings' turn to play with her, their renewed excitement for those toys helps her maintain her interest, too. Most mornings, anyway. This is within earshot of me, so I can again correct any wrong behavior (such as, "*Hey, that's mine...*").
7. **I use a timer to help me remember to change her activity** (or help her remember to use the potty). Otherwise, I have been known to completely forget about her. That's never good....
8. Toward lunchtime, it gets harder. I am not above giving her some **apple slices and letting her watch a DVD**. Fun music helps, too. However, I don't do these very often, simply because our house is too small, and soon, my 5th and 6th graders are watching Sesame Street instead of science.
9. Sometimes, if she's just super fussy and nothing is helping, I'll have her lie down for a **brief nap**, too. She doesn't always sleep, but we at least all get a short break.

I think this is the hardest age! Take heart! It's difficult for mothers all over the world today, as they attempt to homeschool their older children, too. All I can figure is that heart training is more important than math training, that learning to wait for young children and to care for their needs is part of our curriculum, and that before I know it, she'll have grown up and I'll wish for a little one in the house again.

Children Learning to Read

This year, I have a daughter who is just learning to read. This age presents some unique challenges. She is truly one of my "middle" children and can be in danger of getting ignored as I concentrate on babies and preschoolers, or on the weighty discussions of a teenager at the other end.

Most children at this age are eager to learn to read and do math, to study about bugs and God's creation, and to soak up just about anything. Yet most mothers of children this age are quite tired, overwhelmed, and thinking more about what to serve for lunch than learning phonics and taking nature walks.

1. **This daughter gets top priority of my tutoring time.** I have more "teaching equipment" for her than for some of the others, so I keep it all

- together in a pile. We start with a little bit of reading together (lest I procrastinate and never do it), then we get out a white board with our alphabet magnets and phonics flash cards. Next she gets out her phonics worksheets. Finally, we do math and handwriting together, some of which she can do on her own after I've read the instructions. This works fairly well, with regular interruptions from both younger and older siblings.
2. During "together school," which is still just a little bit over her head most days, **she often colors** at the table or **sits in her seat and plays** with Littlest Pet Shops or Polly Pockets. I like to keep her close because she's learning much more than we give her credit for. For instance, during Bible time, she easily learns memory verses. When I read aloud, she often remembers details that are missed by everyone else.
 3. **When her schoolwork is done, she goes off to play.** She might play on the main floor, or with another sister. Again, I try to keep her within earshot, because my job as a mother is to correct any wrong attitudes or words.

Elementary-Age Children

I have three children who are able to read independently and work relatively independently. This year, they are in the 3rd, 5th and 6th grades. Their school day starts with chores, then it's usually time for our "together school" (depending on little ones, as I mentioned above).

1. **I love this age, and I wish "together school" could be three times as long.** This is where I need to learn to teach my children *all day long*, as I work in the kitchen, sit at my computer, or drive with them to run errands.
2. **Like all elementary children, they get the giggles easily,** wiggle a lot, tip their chairs while they're working, need to sharpen pencils, and daydream. Sometimes I get tired of having to keep order. Yup, I'm reciting Proverbs 29:15 again... "A rod and reproof." Giving "reproof" is just part of a mother's day. Whew! (At this age, a "rod" most often consists of loss of privileges, extra division problems, or other natural consequences.)
3. **To give these children added responsibility, I use checklists and homework journals.** I want them to learn to plan out assignments and to complete their work diligently. They place completed work in a designated spot, which I check later.
4. **I sit at the table and am available to answer questions,** give help, and carry on conversations. However, I don't have a formal tutoring time with each of these children. After our "together school" time, they work independently.

5. **When their schoolwork is done, they have projects they enjoy working on.** If they say they are “bored,” I have chores I’m happy to share with them. Otherwise, my bookshelves and craft cupboards are well stocked for exploration, scientific pursuits, or just a quiet book snuggled in a corner of the house. This is when “delight-based learning” kicks in at our house.

Teenagers

I have several children doing high-school work. This is a little intimidating to me, in all honesty! I also feel a heavy weight of responsibility, realizing that we have a very short amount of time before they will be adults. Are they prepared? For my son,

1. Since I’m terribly busy and he’s got more time than he’ll ever have again at any time of his life, **I emphasize reading for him.** He has *many* reading assignments each day, from lengthy Bible passages, to non-fiction (how-to-live books), to classic literature and fun fiction of his own choice. (Sometimes I look at him with his nose in a book and would love to trade places with him!) He reads nearby, so we often get into conversations about what he’s reading.
2. **Some high school subjects require as much parental involvement as my kindergartner’s subjects.** For instance, geometry... Hebrew... biology lab experiments... I *really* struggle with these! I’ve been able to have some help from my husband, but otherwise, we’re finding that a couple hours of extended one-on-one time just once or twice a week does the trick. It’s not perfect, but it works.
3. Again, I am learning that **educational discussions** (the *heart* of homeschooling at this age, don’t you think?) should not be confined to my morning at the school table. “School” can take place in the evening after supper, while making snacks in the kitchen, and as we take a walk, too! Before bed seems to be an especially good talking time for us, since the other children are in bed, Dad is home and can participate, and it’s finally quiet.

As I said at the beginning, I find myself repeating Proverbs 19:15 all day long! That verse means so much to me.

“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

I have to discipline, use words to teach, and stay physically with them. That pretty well sums it up. Also, I have to remember that we're a family, in a home, and that education is only a very small piece of our priorities. Some days, we just have to put the lessons aside and concentrate on whatever lesson God is trying to teach us instead. That's not easy for me, but I'm sure that He knows what He's doing!

Chapter Twenty-One

Why Use Curriculum?

Here's a practical question: *Why even buy curriculum? Do I need it?*

One of my goals is to teach every single subject using the Bible as my primary textbook. Even though I will lay out some practical ways to do that in the next few chapters, it's still a very difficult proposition. I don't find much curriculum on the market that has this exact goal. So much of my time this past year has been spent trying to "reinvent the wheel," making up a lot as I go—and it's been a lot of work! On many mornings, I've woken up with no plan whatsoever—and that's rather disconcerting.

No, I don't need to buy packaged curriculum. I can just use my Bible as the "spine" for all subjects, then use books and resources I own to supplement and add variety.

But practically speaking, when Monday morning comes around, sometimes I am very unsure what to do that day with my children. I honestly wish I had a full curriculum laid out for me, so I could just pick it up and use it. I'm not trying to be lazy! I'm just trying to be practical, as the busy (and sometimes worn out) mother of seven children.

So, while some mothers might not need a packaged curriculum, I decided to list some reasons why I like having one.

Because I don't know everything—and sometimes I don't even know I don't know it!

I did pretty well in school, and I love to learn and read. But come on... I slept through my share of history classes, and I stink at geography. I can't remember all my algebra (not even *close*). Geometry makes no more sense to me this time through than it did... uh... two decades ago. I still can't spell. I still goof up time zones. Phonics frustrates me when it gives me no good reason "why." I often forget how to make capital Qs. And I *love* the Word of God, but I can't honestly

remember what the book of Zephaniah is about at this exact second because it's been awhile since I read it.

Curriculum authors are very familiar with their particular subjects. And as a curriculum author myself, I know that these real human beings are “very familiar with their particular subjects” only on the exact date that they wrote that exact lesson plan... and even they struggle with all the trivial details later.

Because we are humans made in the image of God yet without His perfection, God gives us language and words because *we forget things*. Writing things down and reading them later *helps us remember important truths*.

Do I have to teach *everything* to my children? No, that would be impossible. I do have opinions about specific things that must be taught, though, so I'm glad for curriculum. It will help me keep my good intentions, and it will instruct me in my own weak areas as it does.

Because I want to be intentional in my parenting, not emotional.

I find that my emotions can reign supreme in two areas in my homeschooling.

First, a crying child can get my emotions going a little too much some days. **“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying”** (Proverbs 19:18, KJV). When my child is struggling with learning his times tables, some days I'm too easy on him. **“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged”** (Colossians 3:21, KJV). On other days, I'm grumpy and way too hard on him.

Secondly, over the course of a month, a school year, or even several years, I change my mind *too* many times. I'm very easily influenced, and my moods play more of a part in this than I care to admit. Curriculum, however, is usually written with a strong purpose behind it (or why would the author have gone to so much trouble?). At least for this particular school year (or until my mood convinces me to chuck it and buy something else completely), the daily lesson plans will keep us headed toward the goals that we set with much prayer and thought at an earlier time.

I like curriculum because it lays things out for me, keeping me thoughtful and intentional in my teaching methods, rather than driven by my emotions for that day. No, I'm not saying that I need to “X” every box or do every activity suggested. However, I am realizing that most curriculum authors put those activities there for a very good reason, and I would do well to at least pay attention

and try to figure out why the activity is there. More often than not, I've found that when I actually do what the author suggests, my children learn their stuff thoroughly! My emotions might not feel like "doing school" today, but my curriculum pushes me to have self-discipline of my own.

Because I need some accountability.

No, I don't need an official curriculum in order to be accountable to others, but it helps.

First of all, I really need to be accountable (a.k.a. "submissive") to my own husband. These are his children, and he is primarily accountable to God for their upbringing and education. I am his "suitable helper" (Genesis 2:18). It would be wrong of me to tell him that I'm planning to teach our children specific things—then just never get around to it. Curriculum really helps me with this!

I am also accountable to my country. I might not like it, but Romans 13:1-7 makes it extremely clear that I must submit to my local "governing authorities" in matters of homeschooling law. I don't have to do *more* than they require, but I must at least do the minimum. I am welcome to take part in our democratic process (here in the United States) to make changes to bad laws, but in the meantime, I must **"give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor"** (Romans 13:7), and if a quarterly report card (when we lived in Minnesota), then a quarterly report card. Curriculum really helps me with this.

Because the Bible makes it clear that I need to review, to test, and to give rewards and consequences.

Yup, as I was learning from Deuteronomy 8 and 28,¹⁷⁰ part of my responsibility as a parent is to review with my children often, to actually test them to see if they're learning, and then to give rewards and consequences afterward. Without a curriculum, I personally am quite weak in this area.

Review? Ugh. It's fun to discuss or read aloud or do projects. But doing flashcards? Drilling spelling words? Chanting timelines? Reciting helping verbs? (Yawn...) Having a curriculum to nag me helps.

¹⁷⁰ <http://anneelliott.com/2011/02/biblical-homeschooling-methods/>

Tests? Who likes making up tests? I don't! What a pain! And it's tough to do in some of the harder subjects that my older children are in. (How do I test in Spanish or Latin when I can't remember any of it myself?)

And rewards or consequences? Sorry, but I'm not that creative... day after day after day after day....

Because I want to use the “Read, Listen, Learn, Follow” method of homeschooling.

Deuteronomy 5 and 31:10-13 tell us about this method, as we read in a previous chapter.

1. Basically, I start by reading to my children (or otherwise giving them information).
2. They are to “listen,” which means to hear intelligently. This part includes the discussion that we are to have together, so I can check for understanding of the topic.
3. Next, they are to “learn,” which comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to goad” or “instruct.” This is the review... the gentle poking and goading I must do over many days, being sure that head knowledge becomes deeply ingrained in their brains.
4. Finally, they are to “follow,” which comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to hedge, to guard, and to protect.” This is checking for long-term retention, and it must occur over the course of an entire year, and even over several years and a lifetime of growing up in our home.

Honestly, this is a lot for me as a mom to remember to do. A curriculum author can lay out an entire school year, placing each of these components at their proper places. (Of course, this implies that I'm using a curriculum that actually agrees with these biblical goals I have.)

Because I need to use a variety of teaching methods, even those that don't fit my own personality and learning styles.

Again, a curriculum author has gone to great care to reach a variety of audiences, learning styles, personalities, and methods. If I had my way, I'd choose the path of least personal resistance, but with seven children, I'm quite sure my own "path of least resistance" is probably nothing like the way some of them learn best. God is so creative, but even with the best of intentions, I am often lazy (or tired or very busy). A curriculum can really help me with this!

Because I need to be realistic and practical. I still have a lot of other things to accomplish, besides homeschooling, in my days.

I am a curriculum author myself. I have lots of plans and big ideas about all the amazing books I'm going to write and publish... someday! (Oh, if only you could see them all, as they exist in amazing high-gloss beauty, at least in my head... LOL!)

But realistically, I still have to sleep sometime. I still have to change diapers (for a few more years, at least). I still have to go grocery shopping, make supper, hang up clean laundry, take meals to sick friends from church, do my income taxes, and answer the phone occasionally. I have to let the dog out, feed the baby, remind my son to vacuum the living room, send thank-you notes, and practice the flute with my daughter. I have doctors' appointments, dry cleaning to pick up, friends to have coffee with, and meat to take out of the freezer for supper. There are *occasional* days when I don't have time to write amazing curriculum... or even make lesson plans for my own kids. (Or even review spelling words... shh, don't tell...)

So, the top reason I love having curriculum is because... I'm just a normal mom like you are. Hooray for all those who have made homeschooling possible for me! It's the best life possible, but it probably wouldn't be possible for *me* without curriculum authors.

Chapter Twenty-Two

One Way to Teach Math?

Recently on my Facebook page, Hilary asked:

Does the Bible influence which math curriculum? That's one I cannot figure out—which one to use or how the Bible can direct my choosing.

It's a fair question! I have made the bold statement that we should use the Bible as our primary textbook for all subjects. But is there only one “Biblical” way to teach math?

What the Bible Tells Us about Math

1. **Arithmetic teaches children that God is orderly and that His laws govern all of His creation.** Did you realize that some math curriculum will teach “fuzzy” math, a math that says there are no absolutes, and that it's more important to encourage self-esteem than correct answers? To me, this is obviously against God's Word.
2. **Children also learn to be precise, exact, neat, and disciplined in their work.** In the book of Proverbs, this is called “diligence.” Do a word search of the Bible and see the importance God places on this quality.
3. **Some math curriculum de-emphasize memorization and drill.** However, the Bible places a premium on memorization. Learning math facts is one way to improve our children's memory.
4. **I prefer math curriculum that continually review, rather than those that teach in units.** I'm not sure if I can be too dogmatic about this, but it seems to me that we learn better when we constantly bring things to our remembrance. A unit might teach a concept, but then that concept might not be seen again until the next school year.¹⁷¹

What the Bible Won't Tell Us about Math

1. Exactly what these principles look like in *our* family.
2. How to apply these principles if our children have special learning needs.

¹⁷¹ Some verses to consider: Isaiah 28:10 and do a biblical word search on “remember.”

3. Whether we should have colored or black-and-white illustrations, and other curriculum specifics.
4. How many minutes a day we should spend on math.
5. How young or old a child should be when we start teaching math.
6. How advanced a specific child's math instruction needs to be.
7. Whether the same math curriculum will work for each child in the same family.

As You Choose a Math Curriculum

It doesn't appear that there is only one way to teach math. I think God blesses authors with creativity that matches all the different kinds of minds in our world. As long as we honor the basic principles of God's Word, we are free to choose from many good choices. Thankfully, there are several publishers who offer math curriculum that agrees with God's Word. Try this:

1. Using a math curriculum that emphasizes these principles.
2. Drilling your children so that they can memorize and recall math facts quickly. This will enable more than just math understanding; in addition, your children will learn to work with excellence.
3. Doing studies of Bible characters who excelled at math, and learning why God chose to use them for His purposes.
4. Working a weekly "story problem" from the Bible, such as the size and mass of Noah's ark, the dimensions of the tabernacle or temple, timelines and dates, the size of people groups, money, weights and measurements, distances between locations, and more.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Teaching History

How can we teach history while using the Bible as our primary textbook? Here are a few pointers, in case you're thinking about what to look for in a history program that is firmly based on God's Word.

- I believe that history is simply the unfolding of "His Story." History (as well as the future) is all in God's view, and everything that has happened and will happen is for His glory.
- I believe that from Genesis to Revelation, God tells us about His Kingdom, why He created us, why sin is so destructive, and His amazing plan of redemption. (For more information on this, I highly recommend Myles Munroe's *Rediscovering the Kingdom*.)
- I believe that all of history (past, present and future) has been revealed in His Word. When we study prophecy in Scripture with our children, and as we see how God is *always* faithful to his Word, our faith and trust in Him is confirmed. This is a great reason to study history!

My goal is to present history not just as another subject in school but as another opportunity for us to be thrilled and amazed by God's Word. There are many good history curriculum on the market, so no matter which one you use, keep these things in mind.

- The accounts of creation and the centuries before the flood in Genesis are *accurate history*. They should be taught to your children as literal, factual, and important.
- The details of the spread of civilization recorded in Genesis 10 are *accurate history*. Show your children how there are really just two religions: the worship of the Creator and the worship of the creation.¹⁷² From Genesis 10-11, you can teach all world cultures, geography, world religions, and more.
- Studying the Old Testament should be a priority over all other sources of ancient history. When dates disagree with God's Word, dig in and find

¹⁷² Genesis 11:1-9, Romans 1:18-25

out why. Show your children tangible evidence why the Bible can be trusted.

- God revealed much history to the prophet Daniel. Daniel 4 tells about four great empires (Babylon, Media Persia, Greece and Rome). These empires, and the details revealed about them¹⁷³ are worthy of much study.
- One interpretation of the book of Revelation is that God revealed history from the time of the apostle John until the return of Yeshua the Messiah, which of course includes the last 2,000 years of history. While this is obviously not the only interpretation of Revelation (or even the most popular view), it is worthwhile to consider it when teaching history to our children. For a more detailed explanation of this view, see Christine Miller's book, *Revelation Revealed*.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ See also Daniel 7-12

¹⁷⁴ <https://RevelationRevealed.online>

Chapter Twenty-Four

More Curriculum Ideas

Teaching Bible

It might seem obvious that the Bible should be the primary textbook for teaching the Bible, but so often, curriculum, character studies, and good story books become our main tools. Instead, consider...

1. Reading directly from the Bible with your children *every* day. (A logical place to start is at the beginning!)
2. Teaching your children to use their own Bibles (finding passages in their Bibles, reading it with expression).
3. Discussing the Bible with your children as you read it together.
4. Memorizing portions of the Bible with your children.
5. Journaling/notebooking about what you've read.

Teaching Reading

The Bible contains a wealth of reading material, and mothers have been using the family Bible for centuries to teach their children how to read. Consider...

1. Spending half an hour with your beginning reader each day, reading WITH and TO them from God's Word. Follow this with a few minutes of direct phonics instruction.
2. If your child doesn't know a word or can't sound something out, help him. Make reading fun, not stressful.
3. Daily practice is best. Make consistency a priority in your day.

Teaching Handwriting

If you think about it, you don't really need an expensive handwriting curriculum. Learning to write is simply a matter of figuring out technique then getting lots of practice. Consider...

1. Teach proper handwriting technique first by letters, then by phonograms (letter combinations such as *sh, th, ing*), then by words and sentences.

2. Once technique is learned, graduate to copying verses and paragraphs from the Bible. Have your student add favorite passages to his personal notebook.
3. Remember that kings were told to copy God's Law and keep this copy with them.¹⁷⁵ This is an excellent idea for training little princes and princesses, too!

Teaching Grammar

Learning proper grammar is really just as simple as analyzing a sentence or two from your Bible each day. Use these 5 steps...

1. Identify prepositions and prepositional phrases (marking them with parenthesis).
2. Identify sentence patterns.
3. Find complements (such as adjectives and adverbs).
4. Find subordinate clauses and identify their functions.
5. Diagram the sentence.

Teaching Spelling and Vocabulary

The Bible is rich in vocabulary, as well as challenging spelling words. As your students encounter difficult words (in their journaling and other writing), add these to an alphabetized list in their notebooks. Consider...

1. Teaching spelling with phonics instruction first.
2. Teaching common spelling rules.
3. Teaching roots, prefixes and suffixes so students can use these to figure out the meaning and spelling of unfamiliar words.

Teaching Writing

If you think about it, writing is just learning to talk slowly. If you can teach your kids to talk, then you can teach them to write. Also, writing improves when you study the writing techniques of good writers. Again, the Bible contains the best examples of writing! Consider...

1. Discussing what you read together from the Bible. (Again, writing is just slow talking.)

¹⁷⁵ Deuteronomy 17:18

2. Having your children tell back to you (“narrate”) what they are learning from the Bible. As they talk, Mom should write (or type) their words onto paper.
3. Learn how a Bible passage is put together by outlining it together. Try to “put it back together again” in written form by looking at the outline.

Teaching Math

Arithmetic teaches children that God is orderly and that His laws govern all of His creation. They also learn to be precise, exact, neat, and disciplined in their work. Consider...

1. Using a math curriculum that emphasizes these values.
2. Drilling your children so that they can memorize and recall math facts quickly. This will enable more than just math understanding; in addition, your children will learn to work with excellence.
3. Doing studies of Bible characters who excelled at math and learning why God chose to use them for His purposes.
4. Working a weekly “story problem” from the Bible, such as the size and mass of Noah’s ark, the dimensions of the tabernacle or temple, timelines and dates, the size of people groups, money, weights and measurements, distances between locations, and more.

Teaching History

The Bible is rich in historical topics, but we should also remember that it contains the only record of history from God’s perspective (“His story”). It is possible to teach all of the world’s history using the Bible, from ancient to modern, from geography to all of the world’s people groups.¹⁷⁶ Some resources:

- <http://foundationspress.com/>
- <http://www.classical-homeschooling.org/curriculum/history-grammar.html>
- <http://www.nothingnewpress.com/>
- <http://www.mottmedia.com/pages/publications.asp?Pub=beeckick>

¹⁷⁶ See Genesis 10

Teaching Science

Science should always be viewed from the perspective that there is a Creator and that He is in charge of His creation. Consider...

1. Beginning with creation for younger children. Cement creationism as a fact in their minds.
2. Teaching children the tricks evolutionists use in their arguments, and showing your children the principles of logic so that these tricks can be refuted.
3. Help your students apply good science to what they're learning by doing a yearly science project inspired from their Bible reading.

How May I Help You?

I first wrote this book in 2011, and since that time, YHVH directed our family to open our own curriculum company. Using the Bible as our primary textbook, we produce a family-centered homeschooling curriculum for preschool to high school, with support materials and Bible studies to encourage parents and promote strong homes.

We now have curriculum for Bible, history, Hebrew, music, phonics, grammar, preschool, electives—and even more!

I invite you to check it out now at <https://foundationspress.com>.



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