

THANK YOU!



**20 HOMESCHOOL GRADS TIP THEIR HATS  
TO HOMESCHOOLING PARENTS**

Compiled by Amy Puetz

# Introduction

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Greetings Homeschool Parent,

It is my sincere wish that you will find encouragement and inspiration in the following pages. The articles included in this e-book have been compiled in the hope that they will motivate you to continue educating your children at home. So many people begin the homeschool journey with optimism, only to quickly burn out. Hang in there!

In this e-book, 20 graduates share how thankful they are for the opportunity to be homeschooled, and they want to pass on their gratitude to you. Each chapter is full of motivational stories that will encourage you to continue the journey of home education. This inspiring e-book is a must for every homeschooling parent! If you need a little motivation, let 20 homeschool grads come into your home and say, “Thank you!”

Many of the homeschool graduates featured in this e-book also have thriving businesses. Please be sure to check out their websites! There are some very talented grads in this book, and I know you will enjoy their resources.

Pilgrim on a journey,  
Amy Puetz  
[www.AmyPuetz.com](http://www.AmyPuetz.com)



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# The Things My Father Taught Me

by Kevin Swanson

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I am 43 years old this year. I was homeschooled from 1969 to 1981, taking one year off at a private Christian School during the 5th grade. As with just about anybody who goes through the canned curriculum programs, I cannot recall all that much I learned over those twelve years. But there are a few things I will never forget. They are the things my father taught me. As it is with most homeschoolers, my father was less involved with the formal schooling—but he always had some extracurricular piece of wisdom he wanted to pass along to us.

Ironically, in later years it was always the things my father taught me that stuck, and stood me in good stead in some of the most important moments of my life. When I was called into the president's office of a large automotive corporation for high level meetings with General Motors or Ford management concerning important business issues, it was always the wisdom of my father that came back to me. "Take responsibility for your own decisions." His words would ring in my head, "Speak up, speak clearly, and speak honestly, my son!"

The day I debated then Governor Roy Romer in 1994 during the Colorado Gubernatorial race down in Colorado Springs, the words seem to come easily for me. Sure, I was a little nervous going into it. But the courage, conviction, and faith I had absorbed from my father over 18 years in his home became the natural default position by which I delivered a clear message to Colorado voters.

I made it a policy never to ask for a raise wherever I worked, and never to talk down management. During the first few years in corporate life, I was shocked at the almost wholesale absence of honor that prevails in the American corporation. For me honor was simple, natural, and just a way of life, because above all things, my father had taught me honor for father and mother in the home. It was natural then to show honor to management in the corporation or to elders and pastors in the church. Next to honor came the character lessons of hard work and self discipline. To this day I can still remember the schedule. Out of bed at 5:45 am, finished with personal devotions by 6:20 am, on to breakfast, early morning chores, and family devotions from 7:20 am to 8:00 am. These are the character traits that stood me in good stead in the work world of the corporation. Even as a corporate manager, I never fired anybody for being ignorant. It was the slothful, the tardy, and those who "couldn't get along with others in the sand box," that always seemed to get the ax first.

If there was anything my father did not allow in our home, it was complaining. We learned to be grateful for everything that God gave us. "Be content with what you have, and don't whine for more. If God wants to give it to you, He'll give it to you."

He also taught us frugality. "Look after your pennies, and your dollars will look after themselves," he would say. Even during the years my father's missions support was cut to almost half, he found a way



to buy bread crusts for almost nothing from Japanese bakeries (the Japanese usually do not eat the ends of the bread loaf.)

My father taught me to be a man. I can remember him hauling us out of bed early in the morning to cut several cords of wood to keep the wood stove going through the cold winter months that we lived in Grants Pass, Oregon. It may not have been fun, but we learned that hard work could be invigorating. And it was a good thing to become a man. I thank God my father was there to challenge me to “buck up, big boy. Be a man!” When I was 22 years old, my father told me, “If you ever lose everything, don’t you worry about it. You have the character to go build it back again, and nobody can take that away from you.”

On a fairly regular basis, my father would come up with new ideas to supplement our education. He taught us Greek and the Westminster Confession of Faith. He had me hand type some of the books that he published. One summer, he built an organ for the church in our home from a kit, and he had my sister and I assemble the transistors and resistors into the circuit boards. He gave us a course on economics and home repair. During the presidential election of 1980, he set up a chalkboard listing all the states and we marked off the electoral votes Ronald Reagan took in his landslide victory over Carter. Our ears were glued to the AM radio signal crackling over the American Forces Korea Network to that island out in the Pacific Ocean where we lived—another little lesson I’ll never forget. Politics do matter.

Then, he came up with the idea to have us read the best books ever written in Christian history. What a concept! Instead of wasting time reading stuff written by pagans or schlock literature that will last as long as it will take to come up with the next edition of academic curriculum, why not read the best books ever written—the stuff that stood the test of time? So he created a list of the greatest books written by great men in history—John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Augustine’s *Confessions*, Luther’s *Bondage of the Will*, Calvin’s *Institutes*, George Whitfield’s *Journals*, Jonathan Edward’s *Surprising Conversions*, Alleine’s *Alarm*, etc. This was all extracurricular material, of course.

In terms of the Christian faith, my father authored a book called “The Bible and Modern Science,” where he laid down a basic epistemological commitment—use the Word of God to interpret rock layers, before you use rock layers to interpret the Word of God. He insisted that God must be absolutely sovereign over truth, ethics, and reality. Nothing and nobody trumps God when it comes to defining what is true and right, when it comes to what happens for good or evil.

By his own example, my father taught me humility. He always frowned on bragging and was careful not to talk up his own family. Several years ago, I asked him if I could interview him for a series on my radio program called “Will the Circle be Unbroken.” It was a series on parents who had raised their children in the 60s and 70s and all of their children serving God to this day. My father laughed and suggested that I interview some of the experts who have written books and speak on the topic. Finally he agreed to do the interview and he provided some terrific wisdom for the program.

As the years go by, I think about all of the courses I’ve studied that I’ve since forgotten, and I wonder how much of it was a waste of time. To tell the truth, I really don’t remember much about the capitol of Zimbabwe, Germany’s 30-year-war, and how pynocetic vesicles function in an amoeba. But it’s so hard to forget the things my father taught me. My father was out to visit us this last week and again I was reminded of the great legacy that I carry on from my father and my grandfather. What we

receive from our fathers are basic lessons. Nothing complicated. Just basic lessons of orthodox and orthopraxic value.

I didn't learn everything from my father, but the things that I learned from my father, I learned well, and this gave me a heritage upon which I could grow. Standing on the shoulders of my 5'8" father puts me roughly 11'6" off the ground. A generational legacy provides generational leverage. You can take a vision much further if you have hearts of fathers turning to sons, and sons turning to fathers, and I have seen this in my own experience.

Now, my own son is 16 years old and he is sitting beside me as I write this. I wonder what I am teaching him today that will stand him in good stead through the years of his life. I wonder what will be the lessons his father taught him—the lessons he will never forget.

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### **About the Author**

Kevin Swanson is a homeschool father and hosts the daily Generations Radio program heard around the world at [www.generationsradio.com](http://www.generationsradio.com). For more information, books, and articles by Kevin, go to [www.GenerationsWithVision.com](http://www.GenerationsWithVision.com).

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# A Lasting Inheritance

by Amy Puetz

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“When I go to school, I’m overwhelmed,” an outgoing high school girl said to me one Sunday. “Usually I’m okay, but sometimes it just hits me how much garbage I see and hear every day.” I looked at her sympathetically. This conversation took place after church, when I welcomed a young lady who was visiting. She looked at least twenty years old, so I was surprised when she told me she was a junior in high school. Within a few moments of talking, this sweet girl had tears in her eyes as she shared the story of what life was like at school. Words like *battleground* and *attacks* kept coming up as she explained how her faith was undermined by her peers. She and I hit it off immediately, and I tried to encourage her to keep the faith.

How many people, including adults, could go through 7-8 hours of brain washing everyday for 12 years and come out unscathed? Put on top of all that the influences of peers who shape a student’s perspective of the world and of themselves. How my heart aches for these precious children who are thrown into a battle that they are not equipped to fight.

Many parents have chosen to homeschool their children rather than send them into the halls of ungodly schools. The blessings of homeschooling are many. Unfortunately, the blessings do not come easily, and as homeschool parents will testify, it is hard work. Most homeschools are taught by the mom, and there are days when she will be overwhelmed, frustrated, and irritable. Hang in there! Mothers are probably the most overworked, under-appreciated people in the world. With love and kindness, they cook, clean, organize, run errands, teach, advise, supervise, and juggle a hundred different jobs.

As a single gal, I love to watch my friends move into the role of motherhood. Seeing my friends struggle with the feeling of being overwhelmed, I’ve realized for the first time how difficult being a mother is. I want to take a few minutes to say “thank you” to all the wonderful mothers out there. You may be running low on energy and feeling inadequate, but I want you to know that what you are doing is important, and someday your children will appreciate the sacrifices you are making. I am so grateful to my mother, for the love and time she invested in my life. Your children will have the same kind of gratitude towards you someday, too. Please know that even if you are not getting the pats on the back that a “career” woman might get, God sees what you are doing, and the way you are giving yourself to your family. He will reward you with greater gifts than any human accolade.

May God bless you, dear mothers! You are impacting the world in ways you may never know. Please do not grow faint hearted. As a homeschool graduate I want to say “keep pressing on!” I’m so glad my mom didn’t give up when my sisters and I were far from angelic. When Mom was really stressed, we always knew it because she would wear a T-shirt that had a picture of a frazzled smiley face with large eyes, and the word “stressed” written under it in big letters. Children cannot comprehend the huge responsibility of parenting. Someday they will understand, but for now, please keep up the good work. You are important, and you are fulfilling a meaningful job.

Although you know you are doing valuable work, there will be days when you must feel overwhelmed. It would be silly for me to offer some practical advice about how to overcome the feeling of inadequacy. I've never been there, but I do know that relying on God to fill in our deficiencies is critical. "Where God guides, He provides" is an old saying that rings true. Since God has led you on the journey of homeschooling, He will provide the strength and wisdom to get you through.

There are many blessings that result from a family's faithfulness in teaching their children the ways of the Lord at home. Strong family bonds would be at the top of my list. When my family began homeschooling I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and we immediately began to experience a closeness that we had never known before. It was amazing to spend time with my sisters and mom.

During this time I discovered that my mom could be fun! One time while we were preparing to do a history lesson, we gathered around Mom on the couch. My older sister asked, "Mom, what are we going to study today?"

"We are going to study about Napoleon and his defeat at Waterloo," she replied. We could not stay on task, and began to talk with each other before the class even began. To get our attention, Mom lifted her feet in the air and said, "Napoleon faced de feet!" Laughing, my sisters and I settled down to begin our lesson.

Homeschooling also offers a flexibility that adapts to difficult situations. During my last years of high school, I began experiencing severe health problems, which made study difficult. At times I could not even comprehend simple math problems that had always been easy before. Since we homeschooled, I was able to work at my own pace and rest when I needed a break.

Another blessing is the spiritual growth that a family enjoys. A homeschool family does not have to deal with the negative influences that are so prevalent in traditional schools, and they are free to spend more time growing spiritually. Character development and Bible study can easily become part of the daily curriculum. This course of study will have a lasting impact on students and determine their path through life.

Homeschooling is hard, which is why I personally want to encourage you to stay the course. As a homeschool graduate, I'm so thankful that my parents taught me at home. The education I received at the feet of my parents has given me a stronger relationship with God and my family. It has also provided the foundation on which to build a meaningful life. Your experiences will be different from mine, but God will always be the same. When a family homeschoools, they are making an investment that will be a lasting inheritance to their children—and, in a bigger scope, to the world.

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## About the Author

Amy Puetz (pronounced Pitts) is a homeschool graduate, a self-taught historian, and a servant of Jesus Christ. History has been a passion for her since childhood. Years of in-depth study (both in modern and old sources) have equipped her to write history-related books. Amy Puetz is the author of *Uncover Exciting History: Revealing America's Christian Heritage in Short, Easy-to-Read Nuggets*. As a columnist for Home School Enrichment Magazine she shares stories about historical events from a Christian worldview. She especially loves to dig for little-known stories that show God's providential hand. Because of a chronic illness (fibromyalgia) that limits what she can do, the Lord led her to start an online business which she can do from home.

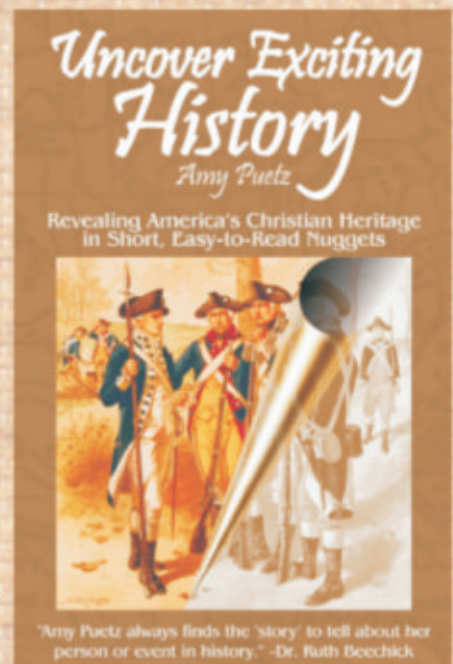
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# Schooled at Home

by Rachel Starr Thomson

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**T**abithah is 5 years old, small for her age, and just over her baby lisp. She could carry a tune before she was 2 and count to a hundred before she was 3 and a half. She wears Sunday dresses nearly every day of the week. Mom lets her, because what are pretty clothes for if not to wear them?

A few days ago she busied herself rearranging bright plastic letters on the fridge door and pronouncing the resulting words. Mom called down from upstairs, “Taba, what are you doing?”

Without turning around, she shouted, “I’m teaching myself to read!”

Tabithah’s announcement made us all laugh. She’s only one in a long list: One sister is teaching herself algebra and biology, I’m teaching myself English Lit, my brother is teaching himself computer programming. Another sister is in a massage therapy program and comes home spreading anatomy and physiognomy facts like fairy dust; they are, she tells us, very enriching.

I bear the unusual distinction of being a homeschool graduate. While homeschoolers are more and more common, grads are still a reasonably rare breed. By virtue of my upbringing, I probably get into more discussions on education and childrearing than most single women in their 20s, but I don’t object. I hope I have something unique to add to the conversation.

I loved being homeschooled. Now that I’ve graduated, I’m all the more grateful for my parents’ decision to keep us home for our education. Homeschooling has had more impact on me than any other parental decision except remaining open to children. Thanks to that second choice, my life is blessed with 11 truly wonderful siblings. To the first choice, homeschooling, I owe nearly all of my perspective on life.

And to *that*, I owe nearly everything I am and do today.

But the word “homeschooling” is misleading, and I’m not especially fond of it. Homeschooling is not primarily about school at all. Homeschooling is a lifestyle. It encompasses nearly every aspect of life and family, and its influence is far greater than anything found in the pages of Saxon math or Charlotte Mason-approved novels. It’s that lifestyle I have loved, its foundations I am so grateful for, its inherent ideas about life I’m still living out. If I have children, I mean to homeschool them.

## **Sheltered at Home**

Homeschooling is sharply distinct from the lifestyles of those who “go to” school, first because homeschooled kids don’t “go” anywhere. They stay home. What does that mean to a child? It means shelter, security and greater ability to be children in a world that wants people to grow up too fast.

It's curious that "sheltering" is a charge often leveled at homeschool parents as though it's a bad thing. Of course children can't stay sheltered forever, but they won't stay *children* forever.

Many homeschool parents like to use the greenhouse analogy. A plant that is tenderly nurtured in a greenhouse, protected from predators and the elements, can later be transplanted to live a healthy, thriving life. One that is always outside may simply be eaten, or stunted and destroyed by wind, sun and snow it's not ready to encounter.

I like to say that a puppy thrown to the wolves will either be eaten or learn to be a wolf. A fully grown dog stands a fighting chance.

Our home was sheltered. I remember realizing at a very young age that many of my friends were scarred and jaded by their experiences at school—and I'm talking about children under the age of 10! They were already cynical, already hurt, already worldly-wise.

In many ways my siblings and I were naïve and innocent, and we knew it—and were glad of it. We did encounter evil. We learned about sin and consequences, hell and heaven, cold hard reality and the need for grace. But we didn't learn about these things by falling prey, nor were we left to figure things out for ourselves. We learned by our parents' side.

In the process, we grew into a unique and close bunch of people who tackled life together. Every family is a community, and they form cultures of their own. Homeschooling families seem to do this in heightened measure. My family culture is a wild and wonderful one, and it has grown from our household atmosphere of shelter, discipleship and creativity.

### **Discipled at Home**

Recent NCES statistics show that 83 percent of homeschool parents have chosen this lifestyle because of "a desire to provide religious or moral instruction." For most homeschooling families, discipleship is a top priority.

My parents took 2 Peter 1:5 as their homeschool verse: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge." Mom and Dad wanted us to grow up with a solid knowledge of Scripture, a strong understanding of the gospel and a virtuous character.

It's interesting that Scripture so often presents these very topics in the language of parent to child—in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Psalms and even the Epistles. God designed the home to be a primary place of discipleship. He commanded the Israelites to keep God and Scripture constantly at the forefront of their home lives, discussing the commandments of God constantly with their children:

And 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. (Deut. 6:6-7)

Many homeschooling parents choose to bring their children home because they believe it is their God-given responsibility to disciple them.

Discipleship extends beyond spiritual concerns to character and life training. My mom practiced discipleship when she spent hours teaching us to scrub a bathtub properly, to cook a pot of spaghetti sauce from scratch and to wash our socks with homemade soap. We learned practical and business skills at home from our parents. We spent serious time with them, watching them in action, gleaned from their character and experience. And we learned how all these things related to who we were in God.

Can children be disciplined while they're going to school? To some degree, yes. But most homeschool parents don't feel they can properly disciple children who spend eight hours a day away from them, five days a week, for 13 of the most foundational years of their lives.

Homeschooling offers parents something unbelievably precious. It offers the same gift to children. That gift is *time*.

### **Learning at Home**

My father was a public school teacher who had the usual problems with public schools—rampant immorality, poor discipline and ungodly worldviews taught as truth. But he also disliked modern education itself. Dad was never a typical thinker, and he wanted our education to be natural, interested and largely independent.

I often joke that I got my education because my parents taught me to read and said, “There’s the library.” It’s a joke, but it’s not far off the mark.

Academics at our house have always been an unusual mix of painful self-discipline and wild adventure. I remember falling asleep over multiple math books, but I also remember pulling off the road in the mountains at 2 in the morning so Dad could point out the constellations, or stopping to watch purple lightning and talking about what makes a storm.

We never really had “favorite subjects,” because learning wasn’t divided into little boxes like that. We learned at every opportunity. We pursued our passions. We probably missed a lot of things—yes, we have “gaps” in our education—but then again, we learned how to learn. Gaps can always be filled when needed.

Education in a homeschool family can take many forms. Some people buy whole 12-year curriculums and stick with them. Others go the unschooling route, tossing out curriculum altogether. In between are a thousand variations on education, all bound together by the single idea that God made us to learn and to teach each other, and with love and creativity we can do it. Homeschooling is education emancipated!

### **Sent from Home**

An adult now, I grow more aware all the time of homeschooling’s fingerprints on my life. In some ways, it’s made me different. I come from a different cultural background, a different set of peer and family relationships, and a very different approach to education. But I’m grateful for the differences.

There’s a biblical word we don’t use much anymore. The word is “consecration.” It simply means to be set apart for some purpose. (My father used to illustrate consecration by saying that even a



garbage can is consecrated: it's consecrated to hold garbage.) My parents set out to consecrate their children for the purpose of serving God and living life to the fullest. A homeschooling lifestyle was key to doing that.

I still remember the day, freshly out of kindergarten, when my father announced that next year I would not go to school. Did he sound slightly anxious? Did I suspect that he was trying over-hard to assure me—a child who had not liked school and was not worried about leaving it behind—that everything would work out well? Perhaps he did. Perhaps, back then, homeschooling made us nervous.

It doesn't anymore. I am a deeply grateful homeschool graduate, aware that homeschooling as a system is not perfect any more than public schooling is, but equally aware that homeschooling as a lifestyle is one of my parents' greatest gifts to me. These days, my friends are getting married and having children. And every time another child is born, I bite my tongue and wish the parents would ask—"So how did you like homeschooling?"

Usually, they do. And it's all I can do to keep from saying, "Please, please homeschool your children." Instead, I stay calm and share why I loved it. Why I would homeschool my own, absolutely, yes. Why it worked—not just as a form of academic education, but as an enricher of childhood, as a builder of family and character, and as preparation for life.

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### About the Author

Rachel Starr Thomson is a writer, indie publisher, editor, and writing coach. She's a homeschool graduate, a dweller in southern Canada, a lover of long walks, good books, hot tea, and rich fellowship, and a counter-cultural revolutionary who thinks we'd all be much better off if we pitched our television sets out the nearest window. Rachel's published books include the Seventh World Trilogy, classic fantasy that readers have called "captivating" and "riveting storytelling": *Worlds Unseen*, *Burning Light*, and *The Advent*. She's also the author of *Tales of the Heartily Homeschooled*, *Pieces of Grace (And What They Mean)*, *Heart to Heart: Meeting With God in the Lord's Prayer* and *Letters to a Samuel Generation*.

Rachel can be found online at [www.rachelstarrthomson.com](http://www.rachelstarrthomson.com), and she blogs about books, faith, and writing at [www.rachelstarrthomson.com/inklings/](http://www.rachelstarrthomson.com/inklings/)

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# A Homeschool Graduate Looking Back

by Candace Allgood

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**A**s I sit here surrounded by the children the Lord has place in my care, my mind begins to play a question and answer game.

- What if my parents had not chosen to homeschool me during those crucial middle and high school years?
- What if I had been surrounded, not with Godly influences, but with many of the negative peer influences of public school?
- What if I never had the opportunity to memorize and study God's Word as I did being homeschooled?
- What if I never had the chance to minister to others—young mothers, church, food ministries, senior citizen ministries—should I not have had the freedom that I had with homeschooling?

I realize that there have been countless blessings in my life because of the choice my parents made years ago, the choice to pull their children out of public school and bring them home.

I am grateful beyond words for the sacrifices they made. I feel as if I have been spared from so many of the pressures, hurt, and scarring that could've easily been a part of my life had I been in a different environment.

There's a familiar allegory about the frog that is sitting in a pot of cold water. As the heat is turned up slowly, he adapts to the temperature change. Without realizing the danger of the warming water that once was cool, it's now boiling hot and his life slips away.

I feel this relates well to the public school vs. homeschool choice. Little children are so innocent, with so much love and trust in their hearts. Their parents will place them somewhere—but is it the cool pond, or the cool pot of water on the stove?

So much responsibility of training them to know and love the Lord; God has given parents such an amazing task—tending to His little flock!



Some will make the choice to place their children in public schools, never realizing the danger. As the temptations of the world slowly begin to arise, these little children adapt to what they see and hear. Year by year, the “heat” is turned up, the temptations and peer pressure get hotter and hotter. One day, it will be too late for some.

This is where I would love to offer a word of encouragement for homeschooling parents. I have been in public schools, and have been homeschooled. I believe my life has taken a course that has brought me closer to the Lord than I ever would have been, had I not been at home. For starters, the year I was brought home was the first year that I would’ve been in a class with a pregnant classmate (7<sup>th</sup> grade).

### **Looking Beyond the Present**

As a former homeschool student, and now a mother embarking on homeschooling with my own children, I can say that I believe this is one of the most important decisions a parent will make regarding their children.

There are times that are difficult, I won’t sugar coat the facts. There were days that we would yawn and try to fall back asleep on our poor mother! But at the end of the journey, there’s no other place I would rather be. Homeschool doesn’t just change the present for your child, but you are making an impact on their future.

The lessons you are able to teach your child during these years will direct their paths throughout life. Proverbs 22:6 tells us, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it.” How many schools do you know of that DAILY teach your children to walk in the way they should go, based on God’s way of teaching?

Homeschooling doesn’t mean your child won’t make mistakes, but rather it can better equip them as they face decisions. When you take the time and effort to teach them God’s principles, the lessons they face will only make them stronger.

With a Godly foundation, many possible pitfalls are avoided. Children learn character, and something else that I feel is important, they have opportunities to minister to others in a broader capacity.

### **A Godly Foundation**

Not all homeschool families are Christian, but such was the case with my parents, and is true for me. Each day offers countless opportunities to share the Lord with our children, which in turn leads children to share the Lord and His love to others.

What a blessing to see the Lord working in the lives of children! Children that learn and demonstrate Godly character—and sometimes this character is learned by watching God teach it to their parents.

As a child, I learned many lessons by watching my own parents struggle. I saw them cry out to the Lord—whether in times of financial need, in sickness, and in desperation of not knowing what to do.

God’s Word was the main focus in our homeschooling, and from that I learned to see Him first in everything. Memorizing passages of Scripture might not have been a lot of fun for me then, but I can’t tell you how many times God has brought these verses back to my mind and heart over the years.

Life isn't easy, but oh, how much more I learned about 'real' life by living it with my parents and brother. There were plenty of lessons on settling disagreements! Again, what a blessing that my parents gave me by teaching us the Bible, as I could face these lessons with the faith of drawing closer to the Lord.

### **Who Is Really Socialized?**

This will always be a popular debate—socialism. Parents, don't allow others to make you question homeschooling for one minute with the argument that you are depriving your child of being socialized!

Who are your children really socialized by in a public school setting? They are surrounded by a handful of teachers and the rest of 'the world' to them is a group of peers of the same age.

I like to think of it this way. God tells us that there are many parts of one body, and every part has its own purpose or design. Should every part be the same, you can't experience 'the body' fully. But when many different parts that do different things are put together, there are more opportunities to do more things.

Can we look at school this way? A group of children the same age can learn things from one another, but they are all on the same general level. They learn to interact and form their 'groups' around those their age. Often times, others that are different are excluded.

Now let's look into a homeschool family. Many times, there are older and younger siblings. There are older and younger friends of the family—that often times all work and play together. These children learn how to interact with people of various ages.

Older children become positive role models for the younger, they learn how to take care of the younger vs. taunting or excluding them. Younger children look up to their older siblings. While issues will still present themselves, I can say that the homeschool families in my life have a closer family bond.

But let me also say that I believe a homeschool family shouldn't go it alone if at all possible. That is, don't be hermits in your home! Homeschool groups offer support for parents and children.

Moms can often teach subjects to groups of children, teaching the more difficult subjects. Children can still have play dates, science experiments, choral groups, and field trips with one another. You do see people!

Find a local food shelter to volunteer in, or an elderly widow to help. Children will then see two things—how blessed they are, and how to be a blessing to those in need. Jesus tells us to feed those that are hungry, clothe the naked, minister to the widows.

As our children become older, what a blessing to other young mothers they can become. I remember how excited I was to SERVE other families as a preteen / teenager. I can now see from a mother's perspective how appreciative they were for that help.

\*\*\*Turn 'jobs' into learning experiences for your child. Instead of receiving money, receive the lesson learned.\*\*\*

Another thing that I'm learning is that the homeschooled child isn't the only one learning. God provides lessons time and time again for parents, and how sweet it is as each lesson is learned! I say this not only from my own life, but seeing it in my parents' lives.

Okay, now we can clearly see that the homeschool child isn't sitting all alone in their home, but they are surrounded by people of all ages—babies, children, adults, and seniors! You can't get more socialized than that.

### **Run the Race**

*In closing, I'd like to share that there are days when you will not only feel like crying or pulling your hair out—but you might actually do it! Would you like to know something else though? You're not alone and you will make it through!*

You are making an impact on your child's life that you might never fully realize. You are making an impact on your children's children. Don't focus on today and its trials, but look to the future!

I'd even encourage you to look to the day when you stand before the Lord God Almighty. What will He say? The verse that comes to mind that I pray is true for myself as a mother is—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

You are serving the Lord as you train up HIS children, for HIS glory. What an awesome responsibility and privilege the Lord has entrusted you with. Live each day knowing that you are serving the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in all you do!

May you be blessed and richly rewarded for your efforts, and begin to see those little things in your child's life which say "Thank You!" for all that you are doing for them.

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### **About the Author**

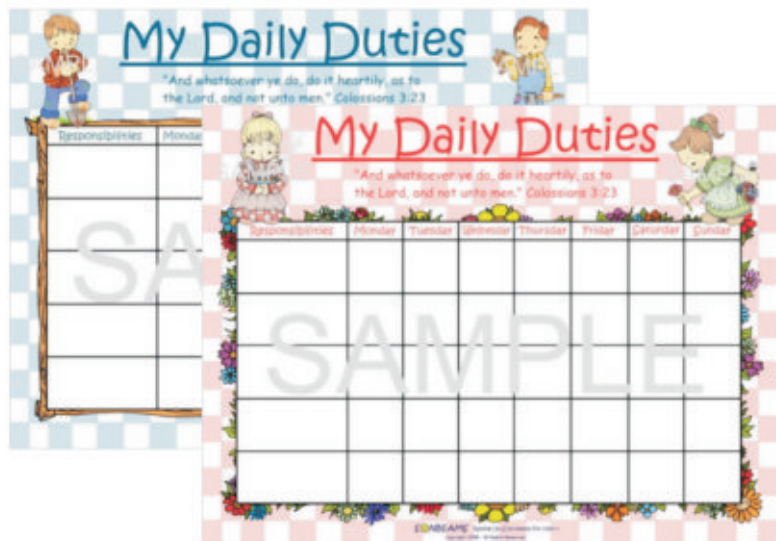
Candace is a homeschool graduate, wife, and mother to 4 blessings here / 1 in Heaven. "Post homeschool" experiences include: preschool teacher, nanny, Children's Choir director, and piano teacher. Candace now uses her experiences homeschooling her own children. She also manages a home business / ministry website, Sonbeams, where she is called "Mrs. Candace" once again.

Sonbeams offers Christian parenting resources for children of all ages, with the homeschool portion focusing primarily on preschool and early elementary age. Realizing how hard it can be to start the home school journey, Mrs. Candace offers products that assist parents, teach children Godly principles, and also fit into the one income family budget.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:19-20

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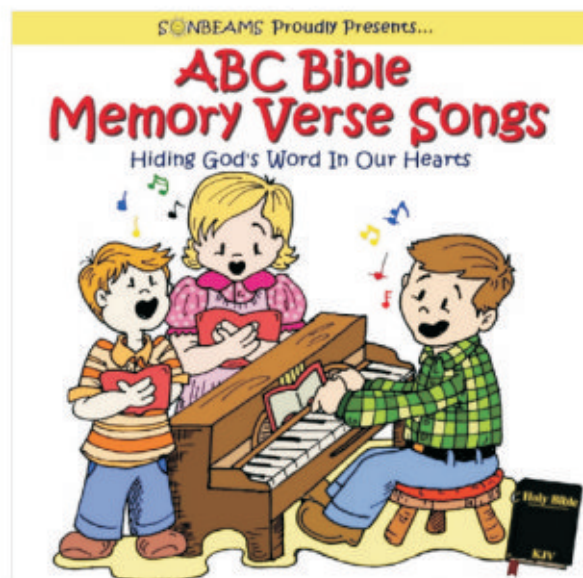
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From teaching responsibility and service to the Lord, to encouraging Scripture memorization, Sonbeams is excited about equipping parents and teachers to train up children for the Lord!

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<http://www.Sonbeams.com!>



*Thank you Candace! I love that responsibility chart~ so adorable!! ~Holly D.*

*... it warms my heart to hear my two boys singing the songs. Thank you so much for offering this CD! - Lindsey*

*We're on week 14 and loving preschool! - Laura*

*Once I got into the files, wow! I am really excited to begin some of these things! - Holly S.*







# Kingdom Work

by John Notgrass

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**E**dward Bok moved as a boy from the Netherlands to Brooklyn. After his father died, Edward applied himself to caring for his mother and cultivating his talents. At age 26, he became editor of *The Ladies' Home Journal*. For 30 years (1889-1919), Bok promoted goodness and beauty to a national audience. In his delightful autobiography, *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, he described his journey.

Before Edward's birth, his grandparents had set the stage for his success. As their thirteen children grew up, Mrs. Bok encouraged each of them, "Make you the world a bit more beautiful and better because you have been in it".<sup>1</sup> The children accepted the challenge and became leaders and servants in several countries, passing the vision on to their children.

Just like that Dutch couple, you have a responsibility to equip and prepare your children for active service in God's kingdom. You have made an important decision by choosing to train your children at home. Homeschooling is difficult and often thankless work. When you get discouraged, remember that you are making a difference for eternity through your investment in the lives of your children.

My parents, Ray and Charlene Notgrass, are successful parents. From infancy, they taught me the Scriptures which were able to make me wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. They gave me a vision for using my life to bring glory to God. Everything hasn't been smooth; we have had ups and downs in our family journey. However, my parents are successful because they had a goal and they pursued it.

Now God has given me a wife, Audra. She is my helper, companion, cheerleader, and best friend. Our goal is to train any children God entrusts to our care to serve him, too. Home-based family discipleship (Aksel. homeschooling) is the most effective method I've seen for accomplishing this task. Any school can give your children information, but information is not what your children need most.

Don't worry about whether or not you can cover everything by grade 12. You can't! Focus on equipping your children with tools for learning, training them to be diligent, and demonstrating for them the heart of a servant. The most important thing you can give your children is a chance to see you living out the faith in Jesus you profess.

## **A Learning Lifestyle**

When Harvard president Charles Eliot compiled the *Harvard Classics* in 1909-1910, he wanted to

create a personal library that would, according to his introduction, “give in the course of years a good substitute for a liberal education in youth to any one who would read them with devotion, even if he could spare but fifteen minutes a day for reading.” Modern technology has made information even more available to those who want to learn. In 2002 professors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology began making their course materials available on the Internet. Dozens of universities around the world now offer course materials online for public use. Google Books gives anyone the opportunity to search the full text of a huge library of books, old and new.

In order to process the avalanche of information available to us, your child must learn one foundational lesson: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 1:7, NASB). Your child may score off the charts on standardized tests, win every academic bee available, and get a full scholarship to a prestigious Ivy League school. But if your child does not know the only true God and Jesus Christ the Lord, then he will be a failure. No academic credentials can earn him eternal life.

Show your children how to learn, and they will be able to pick up the specific information they need when they need it. Set an example for your children by being interested in life. Talk to them about history, about current events, and about what is going on in your walk of faith. Listen to what is going on in their minds and hearts. Encourage them to pursue areas of study that interest them. Give them opportunities to use their knowledge in practical ways.

Plenty of information is available, some good, some bad. Equip your children to filter what they learn through the lens of God’s word as revealed in Scripture. Help them avoid being conformed to this world, and help them to be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:2). Show them how to learn.

### **Work and Responsibility**

As Edward Bok was growing up, he got the idea that obtaining success in the world of business would be difficult. He assumed that since so many young men were competing for relatively few positions, his task would be difficult. However, his experience showed him that, “For every young man, earnest, eager to serve, willing to do more than he was paid for, he found ten trying to solve the problem of how little they could actually do for the pay received.”<sup>2</sup>

Instead of finding the pathway to success crowded, Bok found it “just a trifle lonely.” So he determined to apply himself diligently:

When others played, he worked, fully convinced that his play-time would come later. Where others shirked, he assumed. Where others lagged, he accelerated his pace. Where others were indifferent to things around them, he observed and put away the results for possible use later. He did not make of himself a pack-horse; what he undertook he did from interest in it, and that made it a pleasure to him when to others it was a burden. He instinctively reasoned it out that an unpleasant task is never accomplished by stepping aside from it, but that, unerringly, it will return later to be met and done.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever kind of work your children pursue, each of them needs to learn that work is not a curse and that the way we work reflects our attitude toward the Lord Jesus. Jesus is the Boss, whether we work for another person or not. “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for

men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve” (Eph. 6:23-24).

Set an example for your children by doing your work cheerfully and well. Give them opportunities to do productive work for you and for other people. Help them learn to discipline their appetite for entertainment. Show them how to work.

### **Serving From the Heart**

My father’s father, Wesley Notgrass, moved into our home in 1999 after becoming a widower for the second time. As his body got older and weaker, Granddaddy needed more and more attention. We had help from home health caregivers, but my parents led the way, putting their religion into practice by serving Granddaddy in multiple ways. They prepared his food, cleaned his clothes and bedding, and took him to medical appointments. I also had the opportunity to get my hands dirty (literally) in serving an elderly man. After a brief illness, Granddaddy Wes fell asleep in Jesus in 2007.

My wife also had the opportunity to care for a grandparent. When she was a young child, her mother’s mother lived with her family. Later on, Grandma Wolinski lived with an aunt and then an uncle, and Audra continued to visit her. After Audra graduated from high school, Grandma had a difficult stay in the hospital, and her mental capacity started going down quickly. For several years, Audra often spent 1-2 days per week helping to care for Grandma and giving her uncle a break.

My wife’s experience helped her learn that life isn’t about her. It’s about serving others. She saw that God doesn’t always need us to do “big” things in order to bring him glory. We can change the world by changing ourselves and being willing to do the little things that other people don’t want to do. Little things matter. Little things make a big difference.

Helping take care of Granddaddy Wes was better for me than getting a college degree. It was great preparation for being a son ready to take care of my father if the need arises. It was great preparation for being a husband willing to serve my precious wife (can you say, “morning sickness”?). It was great preparation for being a parent by having a dependent, someone who needed special attention.

Looking after parents and grandparents is a divine obligation (1 Tim. 5), but it is more than an obligation. Serving others is a blessing. If your parents don’t have special needs right now, then you and your child can find plenty of opportunities to serve other people in your community. Set an example for your children by making time in your schedule to serve as a family. Be willing to serve when unexpected, inconvenient opportunities arise, too. Help your children learn to see Jesus in people who have needs (Matt. 25:14-30). Show them how to serve.

### **Success**

Success is easy to define in worldly terms. We can say that he who dies with the most toys wins, or that stronger, faster, and smarter are always better. Even in homeschooling, we can define success in worldly terms. Getting into a prestigious college, landing a lucrative job, rising to a position of prominence—these goals can cause us to spend too much time on what does not really matter.

Before my wife conceived our daughter Melody Hope, we told God that if he gave us a child, our child would belong to him. Little did we know that he would welcome our child into his arms so

soon. Melody was stillborn at 22 weeks. Her life on earth was short, but Melody accomplished the purpose God had for her. Her life was a success because she blessed us, and she blessed others. Melody got to skip all of the challenges that come with growing up. If God gives us another child to bring up, our goal will be to for that child to become a mature, responsible adult who loves God and loves people. That is how we define success.

Your decision to homeschool shows that you are taking seriously the role God has given you as a parent. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid. Do not give up. The Lord goes with you, and he has an ample supply of the wisdom, courage, and strength you need for your task. You are doing kingdom work. Thank you.

Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, Copyright © 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Bok, Edward. *The Americanization of Edward Bok*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924, p. xxiii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

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## About the Author

John Notgrass is a disciple of Jesus Christ. He and his wife Audra live in Middle Tennessee. John works as a business manager, musician, speaker, and historical actor. He is the author of *Make It Your Ambition* and *Shoot Your Kid!* (due 2011) and has produced *One Soldier's Story*, a DVD of his grandfather's World War II experiences and photographs. Visit [www.JohnNotgrass.com](http://www.JohnNotgrass.com) for information on John's live presentations and visit [www.notgrass.com](http://www.notgrass.com) or call 1-800-211-8793 for homeschool curriculum and other resources that teach the heart, soul, and mind.

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# John Notgrass

Author, Musician, Speaker, and Historical Actor

John Notgrass has been speaking, singing, and performing since 2000. He is available to present for homeschool groups, churches, schools, and community organizations. John is the business manager for Notgrass Company, a homeschool curriculum publishing business. John and his wife, Audra, both homeschool graduates, live in Middle Tennessee.

"His presentations are biblical, clear and sincere. What I appreciate most about John is his commitment to Christ and his solid Christian worldview."

*John Thrower, President, The Family Vision Library, St. Charles, Missouri*

"Our church is so grateful that you came and shared your music ministry with us. Everyone commented on what a great event it was! We were blessed by the content and delivery of the messages that were woven within your songs. Your thoughts displayed maturity, deep insight, discernment, and humor. You kept our minds sharp and our souls entertained."

*Roy DePolitte, Pastor, Cornerstone Christian Church, Livingston, Tennessee*

"What a blessing [*One Soldier's Story*] was! . . . Thanks for stepping out in faith and for all the work that you put into interviewing your grandfather and preparing your presentation. I enjoyed it, was inspired to keep going and learned some new history. Thanks for your boldness in proclaiming the Lord and may He open up many doors for you to share."

*Attendee, IAHE Home Educators Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana*

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# I Know Better

## The View from Both Ends of Home Education

by Lea Ann Garfias

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**I** never wanted to homeschool my children. When my husband first mentioned the possibility to me, I told him he was nuts. He persisted, and I resisted. I wanted no part of home education, with its work, routine, and lifestyle. I knew exactly why I didn't want to homeschool my children, too. I am a homeschool graduate.

**I know how much work** my parents put into my education. I saw the long hours my mother spent, bent over textbooks and resource materials, preparing for the courses she would ensure I mastered. Late nights, long after everyone was in bed, she was still bent over the desk in the basement, pouring over *U.S. Government*, *World History*, or *English Art and Literature* so that my irreverent questions would never go unanswered. I have seen the stacks of papers to grade, the reports that need guidance, the projects that need materials, the book lists that need researched. I know the work involved in home education.

**I know how much time** it takes to train the children. My mother would not answer the phone during study time. She couldn't go to "coffee with the girls" or "meet at the mall" anymore, since she was "tied down" at home. Outside goals and interests must be set aside for this all-encompassing work.

**I know the marital pressure** home education puts on a marriage. The focused attention on their offspring brings to the surface the true priorities and goals of each partner in the union. Husband and wife either work together better as a team or begin going separate ways before the children. Inside the home, each member can clearly see the spiritual and emotional true selves, and relationships may blossom or strain.

**I have seen the loneliness** that a homeschool mother may feel, in spite of the many academic, spiritual, and social advantages of home education. I watched my mother's sense of isolation when friends did not understand her goals or motivation, when other homeschoolers differed in "style" or criticized her on technique. The label "homeschooler" still has a stigma, a mental image of a nerd, a non-conformist, or a weirdo. I was ready to shake it off.

**Then, I tried it from the other side.**

Now, the homeschool grad is a homeschool mother. I have been teaching my children for over eight years, and I could never imagine life any other way. After that first year my husband asked me to try it, I have been hooked, completely convinced that life in my home with my children is God's plan for me. Everything I thought I knew, God turned upside down.

Yes, **home education is hard work**. But it is the work I most enjoy doing: reading and studying! I



spend many hours with my children reading God's Word, great literature, and histories, and discussing their impact on our lives. I am continuing to grow, myself, and I pray that the Lord is changing my children into His likeness, too.

**I'm not tied down, but rather "free" to learn, love, and explore with my children.** We are not on a schedule or yearly calendar, but can follow our family's needs and goals for learning and growth. I am giggling with them over *Winnie the Pooh*, wandering with them through the nature trail, and admiring their scientific discoveries. Today's studies included my oldest son's self-made volcano in the back yard, violin lessons played blissfully in the front yard for the neighbors, and a sewing lesson during the quiet of the afternoon. I enjoy my daughter's brownies, my son's photography, and my toddler's pranks. They are beautiful, and life with them is beautiful.

**My home has become a haven, a refuge from the world's hectic pace and raucous noise.** There are times I freely set aside a pursuit to spend more time here, caring for the ones I love and enjoying the rest God has given us here. Watching "the Lord build our house" has been a wonder and a delight to each of us.

**The shared commitment of rearing our children ourselves has strengthened our marriage.** Praying together for our children's faith and relationship with God has deepened our spiritual bond. Discussing their future spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental growth in regards to their education gives countless hours of stimulating conversation, and sometimes even humorous entertainment. We have grown to know one another deeply as we draw on each other's strengths. I have developed increased respect for my husband's leadership as he firmly directs each child's way toward godliness. Rearing our children together at home has been wonderful for our marriage and home life.

**My greatest fear—that my own relationship with my children would become strained after continuous contact—has proven unfounded.** Instead, the Lord has enabled a loving, trusting bond to be formed between each of my children and myself by His grace. With much prayer, my husband and I have maintained a loving, forgiving attitude within our home within the bounds of Scriptural obedience and respect. We are reaping rewards of open communication, respect, and delightful service already. Home educated children are no less sinners than any others, but I praise God that a discipling relationship can be maintained within our home for Him.

**Nor am I lonely and isolated, as I feared would be the case.** Rather, I am forging lasting friendships with other likeminded mothers all over the country. The commitment to rear our children for God is a huge testimony to hold in common. At once, we find we can encourage one another, pray for one another, and uplift one another. Knowing I have such godly women—true heroes in skirts—to uplift me in prayer at a moment's notice has eased my burden many times. They remind me "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

**Daily, I become more grateful to my parents for their sacrifice for me.** I was thankful then, but hardly could I comprehend what they were doing for me. Each day I rise up to train my growing sons and daughter, I am increasingly awed at the task their grandparents accomplished a generation ago. When we were young, the resources were harder to find, the support group was far away, and there was no internet. In our state, homeschoolers were persecuted and "in hiding" in many areas for fear



of government intervention or Child Services investigations. My parents willingly became pioneers and went against the tide of political, social, and even church opinion to do what they believed right for their family. I can never thank Mom and Dad for teaching me.

**I admire the millions of parents who step out in faith** to educate their children at home. You face the criticism of in-laws, the alienation of friends, the loss of Mom's income, weary days, and short nights. Your expendable income is spent in biographies, foreign language software, microscope slides, and math manipulatives. Your free time is dwindling rapidly with your available bookshelf space.

**Thank you** for being a homeschool mom. Thank you for taking the time to read the Bible to little ones and teach them of a God who knows and loves them. Thank you for teaching little boys to read and love great books so they will understand the Word for themselves. Thank you for teaching little girls to count and appreciate the order and routine in God's works. Thank you for teaching them God's working through men in history. Thank you for training them to have dominion over creation through science. Thank you for teaching them to write beautiful words, to think orderly thoughts.

**Thank you** for having the faith to look beyond the cost toward the legacy you leave behind. Going against the culture in which you live, you are willing to give up your days, your energy, your time, your talents to serve the Lord with your children and your life. The lasting legacy of the generations to come will prove the investment you now make. And even greater, one day your Lord will recompense your effort when the just stewards are rewarded greatly.

**Thank you** for continuing on for those who continue after you. The homeschool mother at the library who noticed you, the friend at church, the mom in support group, they all benefit from your shining testimony. You give hope by showing forth "it can be done!" by living, simply, the life of faith God gave you each day.

I am no longer ashamed to say, "I am a homeschooler." I don't care what mental picture others may have. I only see a beautiful home, a lasting legacy, a reward that fadeth not away.

I am a homeschool grad, and now I am a homeschool mom.

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## About the Author

Lea Ann Garfias is a homeschool graduate and classically trained pianist and violinist in the Dallas area. Together with her husband of 13 years, she is teaching their four children at home and encouraging young families to raise their godly heritage for God's glory. You can read more of Mrs. Garfias' writings in *Home School Enrichment Magazine* and contact her at [facebook.com/HomeEducation](https://facebook.com/HomeEducation).

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# Encouragement for Home Educators

FIND HELP AND HOPE

*[www.facebook.com/HomeEducation](http://www.facebook.com/HomeEducation)*



Training your children is the most important task of your life. At times it can become the most overwhelming.

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- 📖 Articles of interest in the home education community.

## *A Friend Who Understands*

Lea Ann Garfias is a homeschool graduate, married over 13 years and teaching her own four children in the Dallas area. Lea Ann is passionate about mentoring and encouraging mothers in teaching their own children. You can read more from her in *Home School Enrichment Magazine* and on [whateverstate.wordpress.com](http://whateverstate.wordpress.com). Join her at [twitter.com/whateverstate](http://twitter.com/whateverstate).



*The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom (Proverbs 15)*





# A Time to Cherish

by Jana Kornfeld

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**I** have an old home movie of when I learned to tell time. It poignantly captures my fond memories of a typical day of homeschooling.

I'm about eight years old. There's a cardboard clock propped against the microwave. I'm draped over a kitchen chair in front of it, across the kitchen from my Mom. Half-eaten burritos, our daily lunch staple, are scattered on the table. Dirty dishes are piled in the sink. Every few minutes my brothers come into the kitchen to tattle on each other. The baby fusses at my Mom's feet. The toddler is suspiciously absent and quiet.

And all the while I whine, moan, groan, and cry over that cardboard clock as if the time of my departure was at hand.

Looking back now, I can see I knew exactly where the minute hand needed to go. But at the time, I just felt more like punishing my Mom for making me learn such stupid, useless things as telling time. And then to video my misery rather than help me—even though I didn't really want to be helped!

Much time has passed since then. As depressing as this video may seem, it remains one of my family's favorites for a good laugh. We're all so glad Mom just gave up trying so hard to be the perfect homeschooling Mom and just captured life as it was. Even at a time when it was at its worst.

There were a lot of days life was at its worst. In fact, my Mom would say there were probably more horrible homeschooling days than there were idyllic ones. But my memories of those bad days are few and far between, and we laugh about them now. Looking back as a homeschool graduate, what I remember most are the good days.

I remember laughing and drawing goofy pictures with my siblings while we did art . . . I mean, math . . . on the couch in front of the fireplace.

I remember the impromptu arguments . . . I mean, debates . . . that taught me to think about what I believed and to always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in me.

I remember playing outside all morning . . . I mean, afternoon . . . soaking up the sunshine, jumping on the trampoline for hours at a time, riding bikes, climbing trees, building rafts to float down the creek, and leading my siblings on adventures.



I remember spending hours sitting at the kitchen table after lunch, telling stories and discussing politics and Biblical mysteries.

I remember hours upon hours more of laughter and fun with my siblings, who were always my best and truest friends, even when we were fighting.

I remember helping my Dad turn a muddy field into a homestead and building the house we live in together.

I remember helping teach my little brother to read while I typed up a term paper for an online college class.

I have these memories and so many more because school wasn't my life. It didn't dictate my every agenda for every moment. It never dominated my days. Instead, it was a seamless part of my life. My parents gave me an incredible gift when they gave me *time*.

They gave me time to play. Time to talk and to laugh. Time to learn—not just things in books but things in and about life. Time to just live life in the moment.

I'm ashamed to say I didn't always recognize this gift of time while it was being given to me, day in and day out. It wasn't until I had the opportunity to observe what life could have been like that I really and truly began to understand how great this gift of time really was.

A year after I graduated, I became a para for a special-needs child in a local school. For the first time in my life, I set foot in a traditional classroom. If I ever had any doubts about homeschooling, that year in the school setting cured me forever. It was an excellent school, and I am thankful for the lessons I learned during my time there. But I never want to go back.

I came to realize during that time that homeschooling is not perfect. But I became convinced it is about as close as you can get. I wouldn't trade all my years of homeschooling for anything. Here are a few reasons why, when compared to a year's experience observing a traditional school:

First, it was never disputed that the children's absolute authority was their parents. But at school, where the children spent the vast majority of the day, the teacher was also obviously the absolute authority. So, who was the real boss? I never could figure it out. The kids never seemed to be able to figure it out either, and they acted out in accordance.

I had the same problem on a smaller scale when it came to the little girl I tutored. She had no lack for a support group, in parents, teachers, outside evaluators, assistants, consultants, and me. In fact, there were so many people pulling for this little girl's success I felt like she almost got lost in the shuffle sometimes. I wanted to respect all these authorities in her life, but I knew I couldn't please the whole village. Nor could I ignore my own instincts—after all, I was the one that spent more time with her than anyone else. I never could find a way to explain to the parents of this little girl that I was essentially homeschooling her at school. And that they were footing a gigantic, unnecessary bill.

Second, for the families that attended this school, life revolved around school, homework, and school events. School was life and life was school. To me it seemed to dominate life more than the family, the church, or anything else.

Third, the students wasted so much *time*! They were always waiting. Waiting in line. Waiting for the slowest student. Waiting to start. Waiting to leave. They couldn't take breaks when they needed to, or work when they didn't need a break. When they got home, there was homework, extra projects, and extracurricular activities. Homework and projects that their busy parents had to help them complete. Extracurricular activities that their parents had to drive them to.

In fact, from what I observed, parents who sent their children to school spent just as much time being involved in their children's education as my parents did. Not only that, most of these parents had to work during the day so they could afford to send their kids to school. The only time they spent together was school time. Weekends didn't even offer much quality time. The kids were either doing more homework or getting together with their school friends.

There were other issues. But those three were enough to convince me. Convince me that I was a very privileged young lady. And that I was the world's most ungrateful privileged young lady.

Every day when I came home I loved home and homeschooling more. All I could think about was how much time I had wasted complaining and fighting against the gift my parents had given me. How I had daily rebelled against having to be under my parents' authority *all* the time.

It's no wonder my parents wanted to give up many times. I know they would have if not for the firm conviction that God had given them the responsibility and privilege to teach and train their own children. This confidence in His leading gave them the courage and endurance to persevere.

This faith and perseverance was the greatest lesson my parents ever taught me. They modeled it daily. And now, looking back, those endless days of perseverance seem so short. My parents can't believe how fast the time went. They wouldn't have traded one moment of time with their children. Not even those moments when we were driving each other crazy.

Time on this earth is so short in the grand scheme of things. It's short. Finite. It's cardboard-clock time.

Not so with God.

The wisest man on earth wrote, "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end." (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

God has put eternity in the heart of every person. By my parents' willingness to invest their time in me, they invested in something that would last much longer than this cardboard-clock life. They invested in eternity.

God *will* make everything beautiful in its time. He'll use us, however feeble we feel our efforts may be. In fact, the weaker we are, the stronger He proves Himself. It is He who does the work. He has placed eternity in our children's hearts. No one can figure out how He changes a person the way He does.

I know He changed mine. And He used two ordinary parents who decided to train and educate me at home.

I wish I could thank them enough. But I know I can't. No words are enough and I can't repay them for all they went through to spend all their time with me. I'm just thankful that at the end of time they'll spend eternity enjoying their well-deserved reward. It'll be the most blissful recess ever. And I know we'll all want nothing more than to enjoy it together. Forever.

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### **About the Author**

Jana Kornfeld is a homeschool and college graduate who enjoys writing on a variety of subjects. She coaches homeschool students in general, creative, and essay writing skills at <http://www.atime2write.com>.

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Do you have a child who loves to write?  
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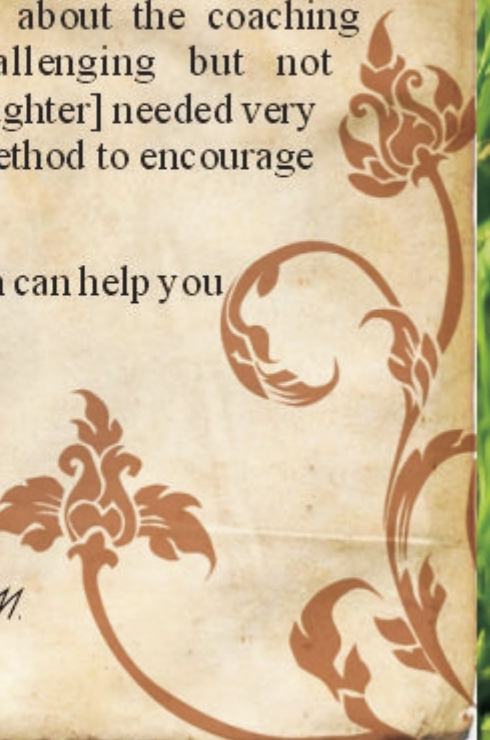
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# Thank You, Mom

A Tribute to Homeschooling Moms Everywhere  
from a Grateful Homeschool Graduate  
by Jonathan Lewis

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**I**'m a homeschool graduate. That means I have a slightly different perspective on homeschooling than most of you. I've experienced home education from the other side of the desk, so to speak, witnessing the blessings it brings from a different angle. And I've seen that those blessings don't come without sacrifice on the part of homeschooling moms.

I have a confession to make: I didn't always make homeschooling easy for my mother. It's true. Despite the fact that I've grown up to become a homeschool editor, writer, and speaker, the disgraceful fact is this: I wasn't a perfect little student. I'm sure my long-suffering mother owes some of her gray hairs to her days of trying to teach Yours Truly the wonders of photosynthesis and the art of diagramming sentences.

Imparting knowledge isn't always easy. Chiseling out character can be even harder. Raising the next generation with a sense of purpose and vision requires diligence and perseverance.

The way I see it, homeschooling moms are heroes. You haven't fought on the beaches of Iwo Jima and Normandy, but you have fought the good fight of instilling faith and knowledge in the ignorant little sinners known as your children.

My mother began this battle nine weeks before the end of my first grade year. She continued to fight it through to my high school graduation (in reality, the battle began at birth and continued well beyond the day she handed me my diploma; however, it was during that span of time she could officially label herself as a homeschooling mom). If I could nominate her for a medal for bravery and valor, I would. Since I can't, I'll content myself with sharing my sincere and heartfelt thanks—not only to my own mother, but also to the rest of you brave souls still carrying on the fight.

Thank you for being willing to go against the flow for something you believed in. I know it wasn't always easy standing against the pressure and criticism from others. Not everyone appreciated your dedication. Some even felt condemned by it, despite the fact that you never spoke a critical word to them. I know it wasn't easy at family reunions when others spoke loftily of everything their children were accomplishing and all the opportunities they were enjoying at public school. I know you didn't always feel competent or confident. I know it wasn't easy when acquaintances at church used the tired old argument that we should be salt and light at school instead of being trained and nurtured in the ways of God at home. Thank you for being willing to stand against the tide of peer pressure and do what you believed was right regardless of public opinion.

Your convictions were never up for grabs. They were never negotiable, never for sale to the highest bidder. Let others say what they would; it didn't matter. You had chosen your course, and you

followed it with conviction from the first step to the last. You began well, and you completed the task you set out to accomplish. Starting is admirable; finishing is vital. Thank you for staying the course.

Thank you for being willing to give up the hours of your days to oversee our education even though there were a thousand other things you could have been doing with your time. After we had finished our assignments for the day and were happily riding bikes and playing basketball in the fresh air, you were still indoors finishing the details of the day. When we, as oblivious children, never gave a moment's thought to the sacrifices you were making, you kept making them anyway. It didn't matter if anyone noticed or not. You had a job to do, and you did it well. Thank you.

Thank you for being willing to give up your own life for the sake of your children. Thank you for putting your own plans on hold while we were growing up. Thank you for being willing to lay aside whatever other ambitions or hopes you may have had. Thank you for being willing to see raising children as your life and passion instead of as a drudge and inconvenience. Thank you for being willing to reshape your entire life to fulfill the sacred duties of motherhood. For you it wasn't a part-time job. It was a mission—a calling.

I know you weren't perfect. I know you wish today you had done some things differently yesterday. But you did so many things right. You held yourself to a high standard. There might have been stumbles along the way, but failure wasn't an option. When you made the commitment to begin homeschooling, you knew in your heart it was a commitment for life. We wouldn't be going back. You wouldn't be giving up. And you knew you had to succeed. Failure was never a choice.

Your conviction produced motivation. The door was closed on the past. Going back to the school we left behind was never considered. You were responsible for our education now, and if you made a mess, there was no one else to clean it up. There was no one else to pick up the pieces and put things back together. The responsibility was yours. You didn't run from it. You didn't flinch. You embraced it. You greeted it with inflexible determination and an unwavering drive to succeed. Thank you.

Thank you for creating a rich learning environment in which we could thrive. Thank you for providing us with the tools we needed to learn. I know we didn't have much money in those days, but you did what you could, and it was enough.

Thank you for not always giving us all the answers when we asked for help. Thank you for making us think. Thank you for helping us learn to figure things out for ourselves. I know how to learn, and because of that, I can be as well-educated in my lifetime as I have the drive to become.

Thank you for being an involved mother. Thank you for being willing to act excited about frogs and tadpoles and bones and bugs even though I'm sure you were feeling anything but excited on the inside. Thank you for being willing to enter the world of your little boys and become interested in things that held no fascination for you except that they were exciting to us.

Thank you for your diligence and hard work, ceaseless and untiring. I know you faced health challenges and often didn't feel well, but you kept on as if there wasn't a thing wrong in the world. Regardless of the challenge, regardless of the difficulty, you put on a brave face and went forward. We never knew—and I'm sure still don't—the many sacrifices you made and the hardships you endured. Thank you.



Not every day was wonderful. Not every day was filled with sparkling wonder and unabated delight in the joys of learning. Most days were ordinary. Average. But I'm thankful I was able to spend all those average days at home instead of in a classroom somewhere.

There were times we all got on each other's nerves and responded with impatience and frustration instead of love and kindness. I'm glad we were able to move past those times and enjoy the journey despite the bumps along the way.

Thank you for your toleration as we screeched and scratched our way through Bach, Beethoven, and Handel, striving for musical mastery during our violin lessons. Perhaps no other segment of our day was as tumultuous as our daily practice time, yet you persevered and kept us at it all those years. Today I appreciate beautiful music thanks in no small part to that early experience of trying to make music of my own.

My memory fails me in trying to recollect everything we did and all the wonderful times we had during our homeschooling journey. If I could remember them all, I'm sure I would call to mind a thousand more things for which to be thankful.

Our family has emerged on the other side of homeschooling. Matthew and I are now grown, moving on, and getting settled in life. For those yet in the trenches, still surrounded by the daily challenges of homeschooling, it might be tempting to look at our family and think we must have been perfect—that we had all the answers.

Oh, how I wish they could see how utterly human we were and are! (On second thought, maybe I don't; it would be too embarrassing.) Mom, I remember things I'm sure you wish I could forget. And undoubtedly you remember things about me I wish you could forget. We weren't perfect. We never were; we never will be, this side of eternity.

It's not about perfection; it's about perseverance. It's not about being above human frailty, but pressing on in spite of it. It's about faithfulness in the calling God has given us. Despite all the ups and downs along the way, you kept going. You weren't perfect. You didn't have to be. It was your perseverance—with the blessing of God—that made the difference. Thank you.

I also share a sincere thank-you to all the other Christian homeschool moms scattered across the globe. Thank you for making a difference in our world by raising up a generation God can use to accomplish great things for His kingdom. Thank you for investing in the lives of your children. Thank you for loving them enough to give up your other plans and ambitions, devoting the best years of your life to nurturing their hearts. Eternity alone will reveal the rewards your faithfulness has won.

Thank you for pressing on through the challenges. Thank you for your diligence. Thank you for striving against all odds to accomplish something far greater than you ever envisioned. Like the small, hearty Pilgrim band of old, who planted the seeds of a mighty nation on these shores, your dedication and vision today will reverberate through history and make an impact far greater than you can imagine.

Thank you for standing strong against the critics. Many have been the voices saying you would fail—that homeschooling could never work. Thank you for proving them wrong. Thank you for demonstrating to a watching world that God's ways are best. In the midst of the success God has

granted us, however, may we remain ever humble, recognizing that our blessings come from Him and not from our own hands. “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.”

For a thousand unnamed sacrifices, for quietly carrying the burden many others have shunned, for walking in the way that few others are willing to follow, for making a difference in the hearts of your children, thank you. Thank you.

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### **About the Author**

Jonathan Lewis, 27, is a homeschool graduate, and glad of it! In 2002, he helped start Home School Enrichment Magazine with his family, and now enjoys writing and speaking from his perspective as a homeschool graduate. If you would be interested in having Jonathan speak to your group (or to get in touch with him for any other reason), drop him a note at [jonathan@HomeSchoolEnrichment.com](mailto:jonathan@HomeSchoolEnrichment.com). He would love to hear from you!

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# Sufficient... Here???

by Katherine Loop

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**A**re you facing a situation in which it seems impossible to homeschool? Perhaps your children seem determined to do everything *but* what you tell them. Or perhaps your house resembles a hospital more than a schoolroom. Maybe you are struggling with your marriage...or wondering how to teach a school subject you hardly understood yourself. Or maybe one difficulty has followed another like a stack of dominoes. For whatever reason, you have thrown up your hands and cried, “Oh, Lord, I cannot do this *here!*”

We all face days where we feel like giving up! I’d like to briefly share just a few recollections of some of the challenges I watched my mom face while homeschooling my brother and I—including inadequacy, rebellion, and sickness—and how I saw God prove Himself sufficient to teach us and bless us in each one.

## **Inadequacy**

Have you ever felt inadequate to teach your children? Perhaps there’s a particular subject you struggle with...or maybe the thought of teaching high school scares you.

When my mom first started homeschooling me, she felt scared to death. She could not even read well—how could she possibly teach me?

In the midst of her fears, God gave my mom a special verse that later became her homeschool life verse. “All your sons will be taught by the LORD, and great will be your children’s peace” Isaiah 54:13 (NIV).

Through this verse, God encouraged my mom that He would be my teacher. What better teacher could I have than God Himself? He knows everything there is to know and He knows and loves me perfectly.

Over the years, I have watched God fulfill His promise to teach me. I remember one particular English lesson. The teacher’s key said that I had gotten a sentence wrong, but I did not understand why my answer wasn’t acceptable. I asked my mom, but she did not understand the correction either. After puzzling over it for a few minutes, my mom abruptly bowed her head and began praying.

“Oh Lord, I do not know the answer, but you do. Please teach Katie what she needs to know.”

As my mom finished praying, I glanced back at the sentence and suddenly understood what the teacher’s key meant. My mom still did not understand, but God had taught me what I needed to know.

This sort of thing happened many times. Sometimes I would understand immediately after we prayed; other times I would finally grasp the concept a few weeks or even a month later. Still other times God would bring someone to help me with the concept. But one way or another God *always* taught me what I needed to know.

I marvel now over God's sense of humor. English, my mom's weakest subject, has become my strength. God taught me English, not through my mom's knowledge or ability, but through her weakness.

Better still, God used my mom's weaknesses to teach me dependency on Him. Watching my mom humbly ask God to teach me what she could not has left a lasting impact on my heart. When I'm faced with situations now I don't understand or know what to do, I know I can run to the Source of all wisdom and knowledge—God Himself.

God continued to teach me as we approached the dreaded high school years. Although Mom did not know a lot of the material I needed to learn, God continued to find a way to help me learn it. We discovered God knows high school subjects just as well as He does grade school ones!

If you're feeling overwhelmed by your own inadequacy, know it's true: you are inadequate. But God Himself wants to teach your children if you'll let Him—and no one teaches like God!

### **Rebellion - And Pressure from Family**

Rebellion—even the word itself is ugly sounding. Yet, like it or not, we all go through periods of rebellion. I was certainly no exception.

I remember one particular day in first grade. My mom told me to read a book—a book I really wanted to read. I refused...and refused...and refused. It took several hours of discipline before my mom eventually won the stand off and I read the book.

Why the fight over reading a book I wanted to read in the first place? In my little heart, I knew if I read the book, I would be acknowledging my mom's right to tell me what to do, and I did not want to acknowledge that!

How glad I am now my mom did not just avoid the controversy and let me do something else that afternoon. I needed to learn about authority—a lot more was at stake that afternoon than reading a book!

At the time, my mom had no idea what was going on in my little mind. But she knew she needed to discipline and train me. And I'm grateful she took the hard road and, day after day, loved me in the way I really needed it, even though I was a very strong-willed child and challenged her at every turn.

There were other periods of my life when I thought I wanted to go to public school. I was curious about what the world had to offer, and thought somehow I was missing out. But my mom, though tempted at times to give up, kept homeschooling me. I came to realize she felt God had called her to raise me at home, and she had to obey God, whether or not it was popular with me.

I shudder now to think what would have happened had she given in to me instead! I would not be the person I am today if it wasn't for her obedience to God's call, even when unpopular with me.

I was not the only person who wanted my mom to give up at times. For many years, my dad did not know the Lord. Over and over again, he threatened to send us to public school. It would have been easy for my mom to assist him in sending us to school, but she knew she couldn't. Instead, she kept on her knees, asking God to make a way for her to continue to raise us for Him. And over and over again, He did.

I watched God move my dad's heart—first with a three month “trial” to begin our homeschooling, then with another year at a time. Just before I entered high school (the age at which he said for sure I had to go to public school), he became a Christian and a strong advocate for homeschooling.

While those we love do not always come around and change like my dad did, we always have the choice to let God use the opposition to bless and work in us! I watched God use my dad's opposition for years to keep us on our knees—and to show us His amazing provision. There's no better place to be than following the Lord!

### **Sickness**

During my senior year, our family struggled with various sicknesses. My dad and brother were both battling health issues, and I was struggling to walk or move at all and could hardly get out of bed. The doctors weren't quite sure exactly what I had or what would happen next.

As you can imagine, my school plans had to adjust significantly, as I could hardly stay awake to read my history. My senior year was certainly not going according to my mom's plan—but God knew *exactly* what He was doing.

He knew I needed to simply rest in His arms—to be His little girl and let all my plans and worries rest upon Him. As I had to depend upon Him for the strength to get to the kitchen table, I got to experience the realization of just how much I need Him. Although incredibly difficult at the time, I would not trade that period of time for anything. It's a precious time I look back on now and remember that God's strength is there no matter what.

If you're facing a hard time—be it sickness or something else—know God knows exactly what He's doing with you too! His curriculum plan is infinitely better than yours. We have a Shepherd who loves us perfectly, knows exactly what is going on, and has the strength for us to live victoriously in it.

*But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Job 23:10 (KJV)*

### **Conclusion**

I'd like to end by sharing a verse my mom referred to many times while homeschooling us: “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Corinthians 12:9 KJV). Over and over again, I have seen God's grace prove sufficient. My mom did not do it all right—she made many, many mistakes. But God used her as a broken vessel to point me to Him. Each year, I



grow more grateful for the example she set in admitting her inability and clinging to God's faithfulness, then letting Him lead.

I know sometimes homeschooling is not easy. Some days it may feel like a waste of your life. You might feel your life has been consumed with dishes, diapers, and lessons.

But your labor in the Lord is NOT in vain! I can't promise you your children will grow up thankful for homeschooling—each of them has a choice too. But I do know whatever happens or whatever path those around you choose, there are eternal rewards for laboring in the Lord to raise your children for Him.

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*  
*1 Corinthians 15:58 (KJV)*

As the concerns and pressures of life come—and they do come—know the Lord can bear each new care. He cares for you!

*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. 1 Peter 5:7 (KJV)*

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## About the Author

Katherine Loop is the author of various resources for homeschoolers, including two books on teaching math biblically and several holiday devotionals. After graduating in 2003, she founded Christian Perspective, an online ministry to homeschoolers. Sign up for Christian Perspective's free monthly e-newsletters (containing a short thought, story, homeschool tip, and more) at [www.christianperspective.net](http://www.christianperspective.net).

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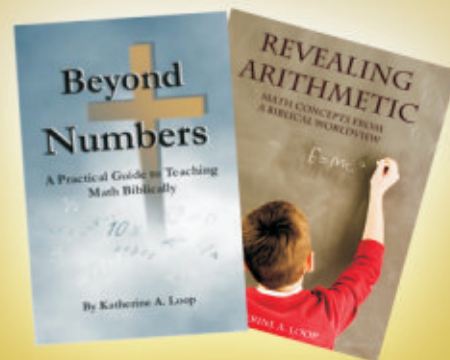
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# When Your Child Hates Homeschooling

by Rachel Ramey

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I was homeschooled for the final seven of my school years, and I hated it. I can remember standing at the top of our stairs, screaming that I hated my mother (I didn't really), I hated homeschooling (I really did), and I was "never going to do this" to my own children.

"Wait!" I can hear you thinking. "I thought this was supposed to be *encouraging*." I think it is. See, here I am at thirty, in our third official year of homeschooling my own two little girls who do not know any other way of life, and so grateful my parents persisted.

The things I learned during my high school years shaped my life. I read things I never would have read in a public—or even private—school that, in hindsight, were fundamental to the development of my current worldview. They enabled me to form a set of beliefs on my own, independent of my parents. Although these beliefs are ultimately very similar to those of my parents, they are solidly *mine*, and this firm foundation has served me well.

The time I had at home helped restore relationships that might otherwise have remained broken to this day. My parents loved me very much—I always knew that—but they did not have my heart; my peers did. Their commitment to me, and the sheer amount of time we spent together was, I believe, essential to the restoration of these relationships. Yes, there was conflict, and plenty of it! But it was a necessary conflict. As a result of working through difficulties then, I have very close relationships with my parents now.

Thanks to my parents' example, I learned that the right thing is not always the easy thing; it is still right, and it is still worth it. This has certainly been an important lesson! This past decade has been chock-full of difficult decisions, but I am still standing. If Mom and Dad had given in to me as a teenager, I do not know whether I would have learned the strength of dedication necessary to be able to say that today.

Some of you have children like me. As I did, they hate homeschooling and cannot understand why you would "do this to" them. You may be afraid that they will resent you for the rest of your life. Not likely. Perhaps you have been heard to say, "Someday you will thank me." Someday they will. In the meantime, let me do it in their stead.

Thank you. Thank you for your willingness to swim upstream. Thank you for having the courage to be counter-cultural. Thank you for being willing to do a hard thing. Maybe you have family or friends who don't "get it," who question your decisions and try to persuade you to give up and "be normal." You persist anyway. Thank you for that persistence. Thank you for setting an example of doing what is right, even when it is painful.



Thank you for investing in your children—in their lives, their character, their futures. Homeschooling takes effort. It takes time. Although it offers tremendous flexibility and other wonderful benefits, it is also often a sacrifice. Some of you have given up careers, activities, hobbies, or even just “me time” to be there with your children all day, every day. Thank you for valuing your children above your own time, comfort, or preferences.

Some of you may just feel that you are “not cut out for this,” that all of the other homeschool moms you know are better qualified and you lack the skills to do the job well. Let me assure you that, when they are grown, your children will not remember your skill. They will remember *you*. They will remember that you were present. They will remember that you chose *them* over anything else.

Thank you for recognizing that “socialization” is overrated, and that the relationships children need most are those within their families. Friendships are often fleeting, but families are forever. The building of those relationships will offer benefits for decades to come.

Thank you for your dogged determination to keep your children close so your relationships may be maintained or restored. Those with whom our children spend the most time, have some of the greatest parts of their hearts. Thank you for making sure your children have enough of your time to give you their hearts. (If this is slow in coming, be patient. Your investment will not be in vain. The returns may be delayed, but there will be returns.)

Thank you for your commitment to excellence. Whatever your homeschooling “style,” you have chosen it because you believe it to be the best: best for your family and best for your child. It is the course you believe will best prepare your child for whatever comes next in his life. You pursue this course faithfully, even when it is necessary to do so above his objections. Thank you for valuing his needs over his comfort. Someday, maturity will recognize the wisdom of that. (Perhaps that very decision will even help to produce the maturity necessary for recognizing wisdom.)

Thank you for producing an independent learner. This will serve him well in college, if he attends, and throughout his adult life. The ability to continue learning, even when no one is teaching, is a tremendous blessing.

Thank you for giving of yourself. Your time, your energy, your presence are not in vain.

“But I make so many mistakes.” Of course; we all do. Sometimes you say the wrong thing. You push too hard, or not hard enough. You choose the wrong curriculum. But in the end, your children will not remember the parts; they will remember the whole. The individual day-to-day details will be forgotten in the blur of the past. Your lifestyle, however, will be remembered. Your children will remember that you chose them over anything else to which you could have devoted your time and *yourself*. And they will say, “Thank you.”

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## About the Author

Rachel Ramey is a stay-at-home wife, and homeschooling mama of two. She has written/created several resources for homemakers and homeschoolers. Rachel is also the author of the Titus 2 Homemaker blog, which emphasizes our constant growth as Titus 2 women.  
<http://www.titus2homemaker.com/>

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# Does Homeschooling Work?

by Daniel Mills

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**A** very common question both within the homeschool movement and outside of it is, “Does homeschooling work?” I believe that this question can be answered in three ways: yes, no and maybe. The answer depends on how you define success.

If success is defined by turning out students exactly like the public school system does in the areas of education, worldview, relationships and attitudes, homeschooling will most likely not be successful and so my answer would be *no*. Now in reality, I think that few, if any, homeschoolers desire this outcome, because if they do, there is no reason for them to homeschool in the first place. If instead, success is defined by standardized test scores or future earning potential, homeschooling is probably just as successful as public schooling. I think that most homeschoolers are hoping that by achieving academic success, their children will be able to get a good job and achieve financial success, and I believe that this is the most common definition of homeschooling success. We should remember though, that financial success is never guaranteed in life, even with a good education, and so my answer would be *maybe*. Finally, if success is defined as raising up children in the way that God intended, homeschooling almost certainly cannot fail and so my answer would be *yes*, homeschooling will be a success.

If that final answer sounds a little too confident, please allow me to explain. My answer is based on one simple premise: home education works because God invented it, and by “works,” I mean that it accomplishes the purposes for which God designed it. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and He called them good (Genesis 1). As part of His creation, God chose to bring new people into the world through families. In Deuteronomy 6, God instructs the fathers and mothers of the nation of Israel to instruct their children in the ways of the Lord throughout the day. This sounds a lot like homeschooling to me. In I Corinthians 1:25, Paul talks about how even the “foolishness” of God is wiser than man’s ideas. In the context Paul is talking about God’s plan for salvation, but I believe that the principle can be extended to all areas of our lives. God designed the world, and even though our sin has messed things up, our lives will always work better the closer we come to the way that He designed them.

It is important for each one of us to remember that none of us can learn everything that there is to know about even one area of life, let alone every area of it. When success is defined through education in facts, we are fighting a losing battle because we can never know everything. This is not to say that education is unimportant, just that it is not an end unto itself. Contrary to what our society may tell us, life isn’t about getting a good education and then a good job. It is about learning and growing in our knowledge of our Creator and Savior. King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, made this observation, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment,



with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) According to Solomon, our whole duty in life centers around our Creator, and so He should be at the center of our education. What better place could there be for a child to do that, than the place where God put them, in their own family? As we saw from the passage in Deuteronomy, this is exactly what God commanded.

Unlike my younger brothers and sisters, I attended a private pre-school and then public school for kindergarten and first grade. I could not be more grateful that, beginning with second grade, my parents made the decision to teach me at home. Although my parents may not have had a fully developed vision when they began homeschooling, they soon began to base our studies on the Word of God and a principle given in Matthew 6. Here, Jesus warns about the dangers of trying to serve two masters. He concludes, “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:31-34)

Many people think that their primary responsibility in life is to provide for themselves. In contrast, our lives should demonstrate a focus on our Creator and a desire to glorify Him. God knows that each one of us has physical needs since He created us with those needs, but He also promises to provide for them. As following Christ became our goal, our family has been freed from the pressure to spend all our time focusing on academics in an effort to achieve success. Instead we have been able to focus on the things that God defines as success beginning with fearing Him and seeking His wisdom for every area of our lives. When our goal is to learn and grow in our fear of God there is no end to our education. Although I am now a homeschool graduate, I have continued to learn and grow and I expect that to continue for the rest of my life.

It is often quite easy to think that we are striving for one definition of success when in reality our actions are aiming for one of the others. Looking back, I can certainly see times where I made choices that were more in line with what I now consider wrong definitions of success, but I think that they have been the exception. Things have not always turned out in my life like I expected, but I find that these “disappointments” often come when I slip back into using a definition of success that does not start with God and His will for my life. As our family has sought to follow Him, God has been very faithful in guiding us along and helping us to find a different way to live our lives. Ultimately, parents cannot control the outcome of their children’s lives, but they can make their homeschooling a success by doing it in obedience to the Lord’s clear commands and leaving the results to Him.

I am always encouraged as I remember God’s promise that as we seek His kingdom, He will provide for all of our needs. I am firmly convinced that allowing your children to learn and grow within the home where God placed them, with a Biblical definition of success, is the best gift that you could ever give to them and I am so grateful that my parents chose to give it to me!

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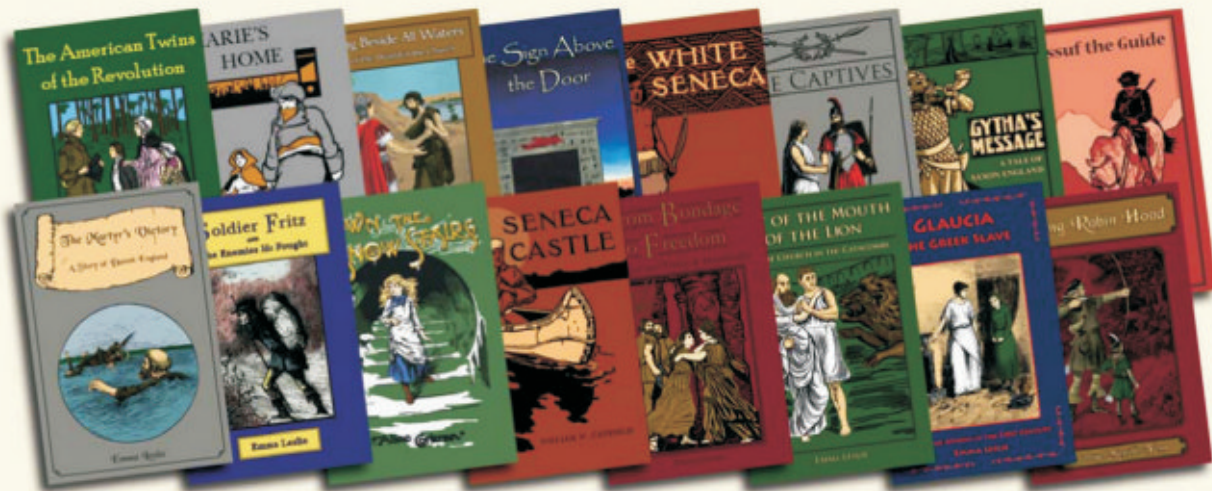
## About the Author

Daniel Mills is a homeschool graduate who lives with his parents and seven younger siblings in eastern Pennsylvania. He founded Salem Ridge Press in 2005 to republish some of the best children’s books from the 1800’s and early 1900’s, with the goal of helping parents provide wholesome books for their families. Daniel’s interests include history, gardening, reading and teaching.

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# Fulfilling Dreams

by Mary Evelyn McCurdy

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**A**ll parents have a wonderful, God-given opportunity before them. They have the opportunity to shape the minds and hearts of the future. They have the awesome responsibility of preparing souls for their journey on this earth and for eternity. God has placed within their care precious people whom He created in His image for His glory.

God is the God of creativity. He holds the plan of the universe in the palm of His hand. Each child is created in His image—created with the capacity to think and learn, created with the capacity to dream. Children have ideas. They have desires. They have dreams. How sad to think of a child sitting in a classroom full of other children with people trying to press and squeeze him into a mold that is just not his size. His thinking is different. He doesn't want to dream what they tell him he should dream. He wants to dream the dreams that are uniquely his.

One thing that was important to my parents as we were homeschooling was to help my siblings and me fulfill our dreams. This was much more attainable in a homeschool lifestyle than it would have been if we had been in public school. They were able to give us time to focus on things that were important to us. My participation in a large annual Bible competition was very important to me. Each year, Bible study was the main focus of my school time until after the September competition. Because of the time I was able to devote to preparing for these competitions, I succeeded and received first place among hundreds of participants each year I was in high school. My parents knew this was important to me, and they helped me fulfill my dream.

I was very shy when I was a young girl, but as I grew up I came to love drama. I had several opportunities to be in church plays, and my parents allowed me to participate in one community theatre production. The church plays were good, but the community theatre lacked the purpose and standards we were seeking after in our family. When I was fifteen, I decided I would like to write and direct my own production. My parents supported me in this, and they gave me the time I needed to make this dream a reality. I put on my first play in 1999, and since then I have written and directed eleven historical musical productions. My parents have been two of my biggest supporters and have helped this dream become a reality.

I had other goals, desires, and dreams that my parents helped me fulfill. They believed in me and wanted to help me succeed. Because my time was not being dictated by the local school board, my parents were able to give me opportunities to pursue things that were important to me. Math and history and spelling and geography are important, too, and they made sure I had time for those; but they also made sure I had time for other pursuits—pursuits that were uniquely mine. Because my dreams were important to my parents, they helped facilitate the fulfillment of those dreams.



What dreams do your children have? What ideas are floating around in their heads? Encourage them to reach for the stars. Be their cheerleaders. Be their biggest fans. As long as their dreams are worthwhile and God-honoring, give them time to pursue them. Help their dreams come true. The dreams of today's children—of your children—are going to become the realities of tomorrow.

Choosing to educate your children at home is choosing a beautiful path. Sure, the briars are going to get in the way sometimes, and baskets of laundry are going to fall from the trees, and everyone is going to have days when it seems that each time they take a step they trip on another root; but it's still a beautiful path. One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Psalm 119:32, which says, "I run in the path of Your commands, for you have set my heart free" (NIV). God's commands don't bog us down—they set us free! Don't let the daily grind of homeschooling bog you or your children down—let it set you free! Run on the path, reaching for the stars, and let the dreams be fulfilled!

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### **About the Author**

Mary Evelyn McCurdy works with her family in Notgrass Company ([www.notgrass.com](http://www.notgrass.com)), writing and publishing materials for homeschooling families. In addition to writing, designing, traveling, and working in the Notgrass Company office, Mary Evelyn directs the Homeschool Dramatic Society, a group made up of homeschooled children from across Middle Tennessee.

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Through folk songs, traditional dances, and original musical numbers and choreography The Homeschool Dramatic Society bring these dramatic stories to life for the whole family. Available for \$14.95 each at [www.ChristianMusicalTheatre.com](http://www.ChristianMusicalTheatre.com)



### Sign of Love

This production tells the true story of Thomas Gallaudet (1787-1851) and his work to establish the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1817. Thomas' goal in educating the deaf was not only to teach them how to read and write and communicate; he wanted them to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ. *89 minutes.*



### I Am Dreaming of America

As a group of immigrants from across Europe sails to America in 1908, they learn to appreciate each other and the different cultures from which they come. They come from a variety of backgrounds, but they share a common dream of a better life and a brighter future in the New World. *84 minutes.*

### Yellow Star

In a Nazi-occupied French village in 1943, all who live there—the Nazis, the villagers, and the children who have been sent there for safety—are in desperate need of the peace that is found only in Jesus Christ. The star that shone above the Child so long ago can illumine all of their war-torn hearts, but the light will not penetrate their darkness unless they let it shine through. *88 minutes.*



### The Cross Behind the Curtain

The Kozlov family and their fellow believers know that in the U.S.S.R. in 1964, taking up your cross and following Jesus comes with a great cost. Persecution at school, at work, and even at home are expected. They also know, however, that the risk is worth it. Jesus gave His all for them, so how can they give anything less? *108 minutes.*



For more information about the Homeschool Dramatic Society and for tips on directing drama with children, visit

[www.ChristianMusicalTheatre.com](http://www.ChristianMusicalTheatre.com)



# My Mom, and Why I'm Grateful To Her

by Matthew Lewis

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**W**hen I think about all the things I have to be thankful for in life, being homeschooled is near the top of the list. While both my parents definitely deserve a lot of credit, this time I'd like to focus on the ways my Mom used homeschooling to enrich my life.

To start with, Mom taught me the value of conviction and commitment. Quitting homeschooling was never an option for my Mom; she knew from the beginning that she was in it until my brother and I graduated from high school. And she did indeed stick to it. I know I didn't always make it easy for her; in fact, I'm not sure I *ever* made it easy for her. But Mom knew why she was homeschooling, she knew from the beginning that she wasn't going to give up, and she didn't. I value her example.

But not only was Mom committed to finishing homeschooling, she was committed to excellence along the way. Just as quitting was never an option in my Mom's mind, neither was doing a mediocre job. Mom and Dad didn't have much money—our homeschool budget was about \$60 per year, total, for two students. But what she didn't have in financial resources, Mom made up for with dedication and effort. She was always striving to do the very best she possibly could.

I also appreciate that Mom required *my* best, too. A half-hearted effort was never enough for her. Mom firmly believes that everyone can do almost anything well, if they're willing to put in the necessary effort. "Then try harder," was her usual reply to "I can't."

That's one reason she never gave us the answers to test questions; in fact, why she rarely answered our questions at all. Instead, she'd ask *us* questions in order to help us find the answers ourselves. These weren't leading questions, to which the answers were obvious, but thought-provoking questions that forced us to think and ferret out information—information we often already knew but had forgotten, or, in other cases, totally new details that we might never have come across otherwise. Looking back, Mom truly empowered my brother and me to be lifelong learners, not dependent on others to tell us what we can find out for ourselves.

That was probably the same trait that helped Mom develop character in us, too. Mom never accepted the argument of "that's just the way I am." Her answer was that if what you are isn't right, then you've got to change what you are, whether it's easy or not.

Perhaps most valuable of all was Mom's ability to draw these other traits together into a package of love. Actually, that's probably backwards; more accurately would be that she allowed her love for us to develop these other traits in her. While requiring a high standard, not only for herself but also for my brother and I, we knew full well that Mom was not choosing the easy way out, and that what she did, she did for us. She cared enough to be hard on herself, and diligent with us, to help make sure we turned out well.



Mom wasn't *all* about improving oneself and doing difficult things; she knew how to make things fun, too. The attitude she developed toward fun for herself, and subsequently inculcated in us, was a big part of this. Since anything that cost money was out of the question, the usual "fun" things, whether amusement parks, or even many museums and other educational attractions, weren't an option for us. So, Mom would often pick out free parks, historical markers, and other similar venues for us to visit. Often she would build up the trip itself by having us study and research the topic for days or weeks beforehand to add interest once we got there.

Nor was Mom's fun-loving side relegated to going places. She could make a special occasion out of many seemingly-mundane accomplishments. She could turn an everyday meal into a celebration just by adding a special twist here and a different flair there. She was always the one who could make anything pretty and nice, no matter how ugly or ordinary it started out.

Mom really knew how to find pleasure where she found it. Interesting bugs, birds, flowers, clouds, sunsets, and many other aspects of God's creation never ceased to hold wonder for her and be worth pointing out to us. We would all join in observing different details, and often Mom would simply marvel aloud at the intricacies or beauty of whatever it is we were looking at. I'm always reminded of how Mom would make even these fun family times opportunities to increase our knowledge, thinking skills, and powers of observation.

Additionally, Mom knew how to enter into the life of active, excited little boys. She allowed us plenty of time and opportunity to explore the woods behind our apartment, building things, and making discoveries. While believing that "cleanliness is next to Godliness," Mom understood that dirtiness also had its place in a little boy's life and never minded if we got dirty out playing—provided we stayed clean at the times she asked us to! She could always get excited about the latest creepy-crawly we brought in to show her, although I've since found out that her stomach was often turning in revulsion! And while all the "archeological" discoveries we found and showed her undoubtedly held no great fascination for her, she was always willing to look at them with us and speculate on what they might indicate about the past.

Drawing all this together, my Mom used homeschooling as a vehicle to constantly show my brother and me how to work hard, to improve our character, and to see and appreciate the work of others. She showed us how to live creatively, how to find fun and pleasure even in unlikely places, and so much more. In short, Mom has enriched my life in so many ways that will be valuable to me for the rest of my life—and it was all made possible because she cared enough to homeschool, and to do it with excellence.

The best way I know to say "thank-you" is to do as much of the same for my own children someday as I possibly can. Mom, thank you so much for being a good example, for living what you taught, and for spending the time and effort to help us grow into a happy, fulfilling adulthood!

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## About the Author

Matthew Lewis is a homeschool graduate who believes home education is the best way of life for Christian families, and wants to help other families experience the best God has for them in the homeschool lifestyle! Matthew, his brother, and their parents operate *Home School Enrichment Magazine*, which seeks to encourage and equip families to homeschool with joy and excellence. Matthew was recently married to Lisa, another homeschool graduate. Together, they also plan to homeschool when God blesses them with children of their own.



# Did I Ever Tell You You're My Hero?

by Abby Kelly

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I'm not a parent. I'm not a teacher. But I am both a daughter and a homeschool graduate. As the beneficiary of my parents' sacrifice and devotion, I consider it a great honor, in fact, a responsibility, to thank all parents who make the choice to educate their children at home.

Parents now of their own children, many of my peers are considering homeschooling. I encourage them that it is the best thing they can do for their children. Yes, it will be hard and time intensive. There will be days when they doubt that they are doing any good. But I am a living testimony—it is absolutely worth it.

There never seems to be the perfect moment to tell my parents how grateful I am. Face to face, the words often don't come out just right. But a letter memorializes the truth. It can be read again and again when doubt arises. A letter is lasting proof of what was said and felt. The page often reflects the heart more perfectly than spoken words. I fondly reflected on my own homeschool experience and wrote my parents a thank you letter.

Dear Mom and Dad,

It all started on a horizontal, white door. The door rested on top of two cheap, ply-board cabinets. Neatly and responsibly, it waited near the wall of the 'formal' dining room. Three stubby blue chairs were shoved underneath one side of the makeshift desk. Morning after morning at eight-thirty sharp, the plastic seats warmed under at least one studious rear-end. School's in session. The first class of the day is Bible.

Do you remember, Mom? Do you remember when that long, makeshift desk retired and was replaced by three, identical white desks? The grown-up desks had cool tops that lifted so I could store my books inside. Do you remember four small faces, each with features so like your own, looking expectantly to you for each day's assignments?

I remember vividly. I wish there was some way to tell you with a limited vocabulary how grateful I am for all that you sacrificed in order to teach your four daughters at home. As the oldest, I was aware enough to observe 'behind the scenes' footage in your classroom. That was the most influential place of my life. In that dining room, at that desk, is where I began, where I grew and what made me what I have become.

The greatest gift that I ever received, I unwrapped in that room. There I discovered invaluable relationships. You introduced me to Jesus there. You said, the primary reason you taught me at home, was so that you could be sure that Christ was the center of my education. Every day you diligently hid the Word in my heart.

You threaded His story into history and taught biology through creation. Every mathematical equation proved His principles. Because of your obedience to God to personally train your children, I have come to love the Lord and to know Him intimately. I look for Him in every facet of life.

There were other students in your classroom—my sisters. We were blessed to spend our days together, not split up and planted into surrogate families of our peers. In your classroom I learned to teach as well as to be taught. I cultivated patience and creativity helping Kelsey learn to read. I learned honesty and responsibility by checking my own math homework.

Mom, you taught me that learning doesn't end when I step across the carpeted threshold of the classroom. Jennifer, Kelsey, Rachelle, and I accidentally absorbed knowledge under your tutelage. The kitchen became the proving ground for math problems and measurements; or, the disaster area after a science experiment. You disguised physical education with bike rides, horseback riding, swim lessons, softball, and comical attempts at step aerobics. I even got an introduction to medicine as together we learned to care for our accident-prone horses.

Mom, the greatest treasure that I received in your classroom becomes more evident with each passing year. You are my best friend and my hero. In high school, I watched as so many of my peers merely tolerated their parents. I had no greater advocate than my mother.

Our relationship changed as I grew up and married. Now, I confidently seek your counsel about everything from marriage to kitchen wisdom. I trust your objective, Biblical advice. Today, my heart soars when you call me to ask for prayer. I am ecstatic that I can play a roll of blessing in your life. Mom, there are no words. This essay merely unveils the shadow of the monument you erected in my life.

Daddy, don't think I've forgotten you! As the father of four girls you faced unusual challenges. Thank you for playing your part. In so many ways you enacted the role of my Heavenly Father, here on earth. You gave His mercy, joy, provision and, yes, wrath, two strong arms that carried me through my youth.

You taught each daughter how special she was, all on her own. Every week you took one of us on a date during your lunch hour. My turn came around once a month. We met at my choice of restaurant, often Cattle Baron's, with their famous buffalo burger. Sometimes that sacred hour was crowned with a piece of banana cream pie.

Playing hard and working diligently were your areas of expertise. Your classroom was the backyard and your props were dusty softball gloves and a shrunken basketball court in the driveway. There we learned to compete, to win and to lose.

Dad, with you, the sky is the limit. You knew something about everything! I learned to snow ski, water ski, horseback ride, drive a boat, a car and a tractor, fish, garden, and shoot a gun. Your classes were not limited to recreation. We also took shop class with you. I think you had to explain an oil change at least a hundred times. Together you and I built two fences, insulated the attic and put a metal roof on the barn. Indoors, you explained how to balance a checkbook and pay taxes. Our relationship matured when you gave me away to an Army officer. My husband and I moved across the country. Still, you are never more than a phone call away. We sought your wise counsel when we bought our first home. Your advice always seems to shrink the mountains we face.



Mom, Dad, someday you will face Jesus, accountable for the children He entrusted to you. My heart will thrill to hear Him say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant(s).” (Matthew 5:21)

Love,  
Abby

I know there will be days when you think the best thing you can do for your children is to just give up. I know there will be nights when you are too exhausted to pray. But please, stay the course. One day your children will struggle to put into words the blessings they received in your classroom.

“Her children will rise up and call her blessed.” (Proverbs 31:28) Continue to train your children with your own hand and heart. It’s what God has done for you. And your Heavenly Father will keep His word.

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

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### About the Author

I’m a 30-year-old Christian woman, married to a deployed Army officer. That’s me in a nutshell. On the inside. . . My husband and I are currently stationed at Fort Lewis, WA. In the past 7 years, we have lived on both coasts, but never near our families who still reside in Kansas and Oklahoma where we grew up. I have been writing for as long as I can remember. I used to stay awake until my sisters fell asleep and then sneak into the bathroom, turn the lights on low and scribble poems and stories in my journal. My creativity only blossoms on the page. In college, I nurtured my love of writing, vacillating between English and journalism degrees, finally settling on journalism with an emphasis in public relations. Now, I write mainly from Biblical inspiration. Usually, ideas come to me as I pray and read God’s word in the morning. I have composed numerous devotionals and inspirational articles. I have also written for local newspapers and couple of magazines. I pray that God chooses to use my writing to further His kingdom, to encourage His church and to bring Him glory.

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# Standing on Shoulders

by Natalie Wickham

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**T**he other day I was talking with a homeschool mom. Her four oldest children have all become teachers in some capacity, and I commented that she must have been their inspiration. Like most homeschool moms I know, she quickly lamented her own shortcomings as a teacher. She said that she was sure her children would do things differently, and would be better teachers than she was. My own mother has said the same thing on numerous occasions. I think they are right. I hope they are right. You see, few of these moms grew up with aspirations of being teachers, let alone of teaching their own children. They didn't have the training for it, the patience for it, in some cases even the desire for it. But out of obedience to what they and their husbands believed God had called them to do, they took a monumental step of faith.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1. They hoped their children would receive a good education. They hoped their children would become well-adjusted adults. They hoped their children would be successful. But they wouldn't see the results for many years. They were taking one day at a time...by faith. And it is that faith that has left a legacy for their children—the second generation of homeschoolers.

We will do some things differently than our parents. Hopefully we will be better teachers than they were. By God's grace, we will be better parents to our children. Not in spite of what our parents have done, but *because of it*. We who have been trained in the ways of the Lord from a young age; we who have been spared the bombardment of humanistic philosophies that permeate our government education system; we who have seen the example of obedience and faithfulness in our parents; we who have been given much—much will be required of us (see Luke 12:48).

I am excited about the future, and about the great things God has in store. And we who will make up the second generation of homeschool families are well-poised to make a huge impact on the world. Why? Because we are "standing on the shoulders" of our parents.

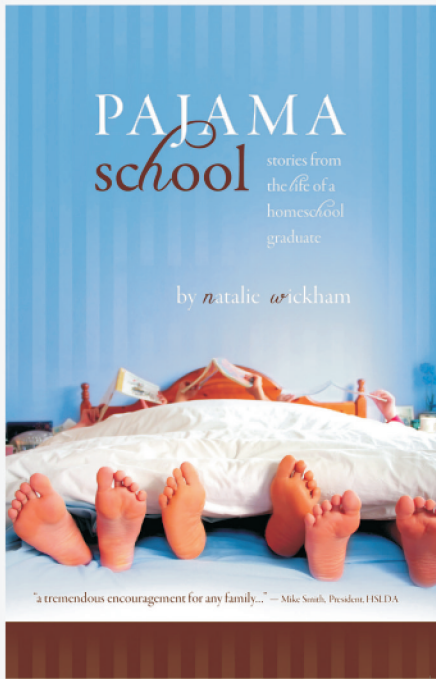
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## About the Author

Natalie counts it a tremendous blessing to have been raised by parents who love the Lord. She is the oldest of six children, so there is never a dull moment around the house! When Natalie was going into fourth grade, her parents made the decision to begin homeschooling. In spite of the challenges and tears of the first several years, she wouldn't trade her homeschooling experience now for anything. In fact, stories from those early days on up through her college years have made their way into her newly released book, *Pajama School—stories from the life of a homeschool graduate*.

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"I enjoyed the honest, inside look at a homeschooling family navigating through the turbulent waters of modern day life. But beyond the humor is Natalie's heart for living for the Lord as an adult. This is a welcome addition to all the books on homeschooling!"

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Natalie Wickham was homeschooled through college alongside her five siblings. She has a passion for challenging and equipping upcoming generations of homeschoolers to be godly leaders. Natalie owns and operates a successful piano studio and music educator's blog and is the current Director of Adventures in Character.



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# Thankful for Being Homeschooled

by Eleonore Kappenman

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**A**s a successful 20-year old entrepreneur who had the blessing of being homeschooled, I can indeed look back and say, “Thank you.” As many homeschooled graduates can attest, there is a wide variety of things for which to be thankful.

Personally, I am thankful for the ability to have been taught at home and to have had the privilege of developing a close bond between my mom and my siblings. It is by spending time around the table together, reading, doing art projects, playing games, and correcting papers that we drew closer. After school was over, the table was cleared for games or drawing, or having friends and family over for dinner.

What a blessing to have parents who are willing to sacrifice when it comes to their children’s education. Most homeschooling families must have one parent who chooses to stay home. That means one parent is choosing not to pursue a career. One parent is putting aside their personal goals in order to achieve something greater and far more important—their investment in the next generation.

Children crave time with their parents. I think this is a big reason children that attend public schools behave poorly. They are desperately trying to gain the attention of their parents. Children in the public system leave between 7:30 and 8:00 in the morning and don’t get home until 3:30 or later, especially for high school. This doesn’t leave much in the way of family time or bonding with parents. Homeschoolers have all day and all night to talk, learn, bond, and live together. I am thankful I have always had a close relationship with my parents and I think it has to do with all the time we spent together when I was young, doing school together.

Many do not realize the temptations that enter into the mind of a struggling homeschool parent. “Am I teaching them enough?” “Are they learning on an equivalent level to their peers?” “Could they pass the same tests as the public school children?” How much easier it would be to just toss it all and enroll them in the public system. Then mom and dad could both be earning money, the children would be receiving an education, everything would be so easy. But homeschooling parents must reject these thoughts and focus on the goal: the personal education of their child, given to them by God, to raise and nurture to the best of their ability, including their education.

I am thankful my mom chose to stay home and did not put us in the public school system. We were able to learn the history of the world without the babble of evolution. We were free to study God and His Word without fear of mocking and criticism. The home educated child is free to respect and care for themselves and others without harmful peer pressure from fellow students. My parents did not have to worry about what reading material or movie material we were subjected to away from home,

because all we read or saw was approved by my mom first. These are just a few ways homeschool parents choose to protect their children from negative influences.

Homeschooling is open to such variety in teaching! Dedicated parents take the time to go on field trips. We went to zoos, police stations, fire-departments, pick-your-own farms, and historical sites. Children can come home and do reports on what they've seen and heard, describing their learning experience for others to learn from as well.

Co-schooling is a great option that many parents, like mine, choose to try. We would join other families to study a particular country, drawing maps, doing reports, dressing like the culture, and eating a meal of the country together as a final project. What a fun way to learn! I plan to do this with my own children one day. It's like having a classroom experience, by learning and working with other children, but it is protected and safe from anti-Scriptural teachings and negative peer pressure.

Parents who keep their children at home may be criticized for not preparing their children for real life. But this is fallacy. Most home-educated adults I know have been very well prepared for life, having had a wide variety of opportunities while being homeschooled. Their parents took the time to get their children involved in many activities: horseback riding, music, skeet shooting, 4H, raising gardens and livestock, traveling, taking educational family vacations (we did this a lot!), teaching children how to start their own home businesses, caring for infants and small children, taking care of a home, doing household maintenance and repairs, volunteering at local missions and homeless shelters, doing service in nursing homes and orphanages, taking mission trips, participating in building opportunities, teaching younger children or teaching a Sunday School class, and so much more! It is amazing what children can learn and be exposed to when they have dedicated parents willing to explore new opportunities and make the sacrifices needed to get their children involved.

I want to say, "Thank you," to all the parents still hard at work in their homeschools. It is worth all your sacrifice. You are saving your children from a host of things that happen in public schools. With the ability to set the schedule for your child to meet his individual needs, you are allowing him to work as quickly or as slowly as needed, without having to wait for or catch up to the rest of the class. Parents become the main influencing factor in the child's life—not peers or teachers. By homeschooling, you may be able to avoid putting your child on medications to control ADHD or ADD or other behavioral disorders. If your child is self-motivated you can let them work ahead and graduate early. You can teach them what you want them to learn about. They can read poets and authors that you approve of—not those set by some public school board that negates the importance of God and His Word. There are so many benefits to homeschooling!

It may get tough at times, but with all the materials and support groups to choose from, you are sure to succeed! Never forget the importance of prayer. Allow God to be real to your children. Children are God's personal gift to you. Be faithful stewards of those gifts.

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### **About the Author**

Eleonore lives in the upstate of SC with her parents and 5 of her 6 siblings. She enjoys housecleaning, sewing, camping, skeet shooting, working with animals, assisting at summer Bible camps, and going on missions trips. She plans to expand her new website in the coming year. Visit her family's web page at [www.kapandpen.com](http://www.kapandpen.com).

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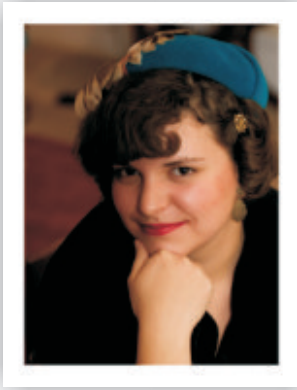
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# Chameleon Journey

Thanks Mom and Dad for Starting Me on This Creative Path  
by Samantha Jarrett

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**I**t was my first day of school. I had my blue backpack on, clean, decent clothes, and butterflies- no hummingbirds in my stomach. I was so nervous! I tried to smile for the camera documenting this momentous occasion, but I'm not sure how successful I was. I walked out the door, climbed into my Toyota corolla and drove to the community college about a mile away. I rode the elevator to the second floor, anxiously read the door numbers until I found 220, and walked in.

I can laugh about that first day now, how normal I looked when I felt like an oddity, a visitor from another galaxy. Algebra hadn't been my best subject in high school, so I was nervous about the material, as well as the other students. Would they realize I wasn't one of them? Would they look at me and notice I was different, sense my discomfort at being in a *school building*?

As the days and classes flew by I realized several important things: homeschooling had prepared me to be a hard worker, and to enjoy learning. Many other students hated being in school, and felt that they were martyrs, while I enjoyed being in class and learning new things. My parents had taught me confidence, and a mindfulness of where my blessings came from. They taught me that even if I don't crack a book, I will learn something new every day. I love books by the way, and that is another of the blessings of homeschooling. I was never forced to read; my mom punished me by taking pleasure books away! I also know that the gift of intelligence God gave me was nurtured and cherished by my parents, and watered for such a time as now. As you can see, being in college is about learning more than the history of France or the value of pi (which still hasn't been calculated). It's about learning your strengths and working on your weaknesses. It's about being an adult.

When asked if I felt that homeschool had prepared me for college, I had to admit there was fear at the beginning, but now I feel like I have an advantage compared to most of my peers. I have self-discipline, and self-motivation, which are crucial in college and which most of my fellow students don't have. They drag and moan and groan to each other, while I walk to class, proud to be a student and grateful for the opportunity given to me each day. I am grateful to you, Mom and Dad, for giving me the education I have. For giving me the opportunity to love learning.

I have been beading and making jewelry since I was about 11 years old, and it has added a lot to my life. The riot of color, the feel of sanded wood, light sparkling on crystal—are all added to the feeling of accomplishment when I finish a piece. I enjoy giving pieces I make as gifts, or selling them to people who see something unique and just right for them. Spring time is my favorite inspiration for jewelry, since colors become so bright and there are so many different shades of green. I love natural material; bone, wood, stone, glass. I love forming and fashioning new things and I hope that love shows in my work.

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A photograph of a woman with dark curly hair, wearing a green coat and blue pants, walking on a path. She is carrying a blue suitcase and smiling. The background is a lush green forest.

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# Encouragement Can Be Found at a Homeschool Co-op

by Emily Topp

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*It is hard work to homeschool your children. Why then do some mothers (and fathers) go above and beyond the call and agree to teach other homeschooled children, too? Perhaps they have a gift or skill they wish to share with a small group of children around their kitchen table. Some mothers or fathers volunteer to teach at a local homeschool co-op. These homeschool parents are not only invested in influencing their own children, but leave a rich deposit in other children as well.*

*The following essay by Emily Topp, a homeschooled graduate, will encourage those of you who volunteer your skills and talents to teach others. You may be sharing your experiences in an informal way or through a structured class, but you are having a positive influence on more children than just your own. Emily recognizes the academic value of learning from other homeschool parents, but acknowledges it was the relationships with those adults that became a lasting influence in her life.*

*- Carol Topp*

**W**hen I was in fifth grade, my mother enrolled me in a homeschool co-op because she thought it would be “good for me.” Unfortunately, I was less than enthusiastic about the prospect of trying something new and facing “real teachers.” In hindsight, however, I can see that the co-op was one of the greatest blessings of those years of homeschooling!

Perhaps the largest benefit of my co-op experience was participating in classes that otherwise would have been difficult to learn at home. My first co-op class—public speaking—serves as a prime example. My mother occasionally had me give short speeches at home, but the audience was very small and informal—usually just my mom and younger sister. While the co-op class was not much larger—eight students and the instructor—it was nevertheless effective. As I grew in poise and confidence, I overcame both my fears of public speaking and of learning in a group setting.

The volunteer instructor for my public speaking class was a veteran homeschool mother, Mrs. Hill. In her class, I learned how to follow a syllabus, complete weekly assignments, and learn from a teacher other than my own parents. I also benefited from Mrs. Hill’s patient encouragement and instruction, as she shared her passion for communicating for Christ with my class. Because each of my co-op teachers led a class in her area of expertise, their passion developed my love for learning beyond what I would have experienced working with just my mom and sister at home. Although I did not particularly enjoy speaking in public, I appreciated Mrs. Hill’s encouragement. Specifically, her praise—from a source other than my parents—reinforced my self confidence and motivated me to work diligently even in my least favorite subjects. On the car ride home from co-op, I would frequently say to my mother, “Guess what I learned from Mrs. Hill today!” The co-op provided a unique opportunity to learn from other adults, without sacrificing the integral element of family from my homeschool experience.



As I grew older, co-op provided several high-school level classes that I could not have accomplished at home. For example, my parents had never studied Spanish, but they wanted me to learn a foreign language. I greatly enjoyed several years of Spanish classes under another mother, Mrs. Tann. Her classes at co-op gave me the opportunity to learn Spanish grammar and converse in another language. The small class size enabled us to spend much of our time talking and listening in Spanish. In fact, I had more experience speaking Spanish than did many of my friends in traditional classes of 20-30 students. Later in high school on my mission trips to Nicaragua and Guatemala, I realized the value of my Spanish education, as I was able to communicate with the local children.

I came to know Mrs. Tann as more than my Spanish tutor. My relationship with the entire Tann family grew when she asked me to teach piano lessons to her daughter. One of the unique advantages of my co-op experience was getting to know entire families rather than just friends my age. I grew comfortable with talking to adults and gained new skills in working with children. In fact, my piano teaching business grew to include several other families from our co-op. The parents of my students became good friends with my family, and several of them even served as references for college and job applications.

At co-op, I was blessed to meet not only new friends but also their families. In my first year of public speaking class, I made a friend named Ashleigh. We bonded over lunches, homeschool dances, and sleepovers together. Since Ashleigh was two years older, I learned a lot from her experiences—particularly toward the end of her homeschool career. She shared tips with me about studying, college admissions, and preparing for the SAT, while our moms discussed the joys and struggles of raising teenage girls. Ashleigh's character and leadership at her church inspired me to take more responsibility in my own youth group during my last two years of high school. I was also impacted by Ashleigh's solid relationship with her family, as I observed every week at co-op with them. I remember sitting at lunch with Ashleigh and our two mothers, discussing Ashleigh's first car and the issues of gas and insurance. I also saw how Ashleigh's parents gave her more responsibilities and independence as she grew. These were certainly blessings I never would have expected to come from a simple, weekly lunch at a homeschool co-op.

Although I did not know it at the time, my mother was benefiting from our homeschool co-op as well. While I was in class, she was either teaching a class or enjoying fellowship with other mothers. Our co-op had a "Chew and Chat" room, where each mother spent at least one hour of co-op time socializing with other mothers and taking a break from volunteer responsibilities. As my mom spent time with other mothers, she gained tips about curriculum and managing a homeschooled household from the other mothers. They also served as a key support system to one another. As a wife, mother and homeschool teacher, my mom needed their encouragement to continue. Homeschooling can often feel difficult, isolated, and lonely, but our co-op offered my mom the encouragement needed to persevere as a wife, mother, and homeschool teacher.

I can see the benefits of being in a homeschool co-op now, as I look back. Not only did I grow academically through the classes, but I had wonderful adult roles models in my life. I formed many friendships that I still treasure today. In addition, my mother received the encouragement and support she needed to continue homeschooling all the way through high school. I appreciate the opportunity my homeschool co-op provided and I am very grateful for all of the social and academic blessings I enjoyed during my time at our homeschool co-op.

In a sense, the social and relational elements of co-op impacted me more than the academics. Although I did gain knowledge in classes like Spanish and public speaking, I learned how to learn from other adults and how to communicate with teachers. Not only did I make new friends, but I also came to know other adults and children, while my mother gained encouragement from her fellow homeschool moms. My co-op experience caused me to grow in ways I never would have imagined, and I am grateful that my mother signed me up for that original class in public speaking.

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### **About the Author**

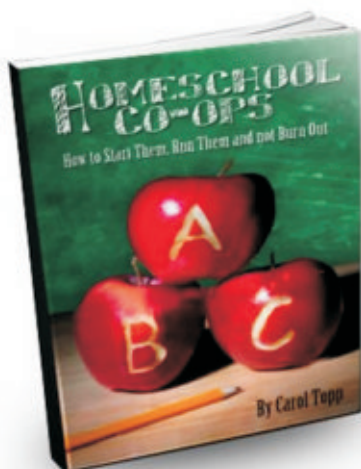
Emily Topp, a homeschool graduate, is currently studying accounting at Grove City College in Pennsylvania.

Emily's mother, Carol Topp, authored *Homeschool Co-ops: How to Start Them Run Them and Not Burn Out* as an encouragement to homeschool parents to start a homeschool co-op in their area. Her website is [HomeschoolCPA.com](http://HomeschoolCPA.com)

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Author, Carol Topp, CPA, has helpful information at **HomeschoolCPA.com**. There you will find ebooks, articles, audios and a newsletter to help homeschool leaders.







# Homeschool Parents

## The Great Emancipators of Our Generation

by Amanda Read

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**J**ust as eating against one's will is injurious to health, so study without a liking for it spoils the memory, and it retains nothing it takes in." - From *The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci*

"Recent polls have shown that a fifth of Americans can't locate the U.S. on a world map. Why do you think this is?" Many an ear across the nation was set tingling with the double insult to Americans: The Miss Teen USA 2007 pageant asked a shady question insulting American geographic intelligence, and a disconcerted Miss Teen South Carolina gave a nonsensical response. It was obviously a brain glitch—Lauren Caitlin Upton was an honor student<sup>1</sup> who later was given a second opportunity to answer the question on The Today Show:

*"Well personally, my friends and I, we know exactly where the United States is on our map. I don't know anyone else who doesn't. And if the statistics are correct, I believe that there should be more emphasis on geography in our education so people will learn how to read maps better."*<sup>2</sup>

Of course, one should only get so far into this discussion before waking up to smell the bogus. I've yet to find any source that takes the American-map-literacy-stats-question seriously. It could very well have been a bogus question—not too unlike the conventional standardized and I.Q. test questions that are intended to gauge a student's potential. I think Charlotte Mason would have effortlessly tossed such things in the twaddle category. However, I couldn't help but try to invent my own answer to the question:

*We are inundated with basic maps of the world through advertising, the internet, puzzles, globes, television, photographs, and paintings in public view. School has nothing to do with this issue. If any mature American doesn't know where the United States is on a world map, it is simply because they don't care to know.*

I'll bet that would sound to my contemporaries like just as much gibberish as Miss Teen South Carolina said. Since when has school had nothing to do with figuring out where that stupid, war-mongering, most-insignificant-country-in-the-world is on a map? Well, it never really did to me (and in light of the media's distaste for America's heritage, we probably aren't seeing the same country). If I didn't learn something, it was my fault, not the fault of a government run institution. I was homeschooled.

"So, what do you like best about homeschooling?" a potential homeschool mother asked me when I was fifteen years old. It was another one of those typical moments when the best answers seem to deliberately delay themselves until after the conversation has ended. What do I like best about

homeschooling? I asked myself repeatedly since then, hoping to be able to say something more memorable. After all, I had been homeschooled all my life. What did I have that non-homeschoolers didn't have? Finally I decided upon a one word answer: FREEDOM!

When I reminisce about a typical homeschool day in our house when I was a child, memories come to my mind that I revel in, but my mother probably doesn't find them particularly stellar. When Mom read the Bible aloud, my siblings and I each had clipboards that we used to draw pictures of the stories we learned about (I think we nearly illustrated the whole Bible). But soon Bible reading was done, and we were in the middle of History when the phone rang, and then she noticed the pile of laundry, and then she noticed what time it was and remembered that a meal needed to be made because Dad would be home soon. In desperation she would say, "*Alright, go on outside and play.*" That probably isn't the story that I should begin with when trying to convince a parent to homeschool their children, because few would recognize that as a cue for the real learning to begin.

Yet because education was not a tasteless formula shoved down our throats, my siblings and I always incorporated what we learned into our imaginative games. The hammock became a ship, the distant tree stump in the meadow became the island of Sri Lanka, my pencil post bed became a submarine, and the little creek nearby became a science laboratory. We researched facts on our own often times because in the course of imagining ourselves in a foreign country, we started wondering what it really looked like there. Or after discovering a bird's nest, we wondered what kind of bird lived there. That is the way children learn naturally.

My first classroom experience was at an art camp when I was twelve years old. I loved art so much that I didn't realize at first that conventionally schooled kids had a tendency to get offended whenever I raised my hand to answer every question, or struck up a conversation with the teacher about the techniques of Renaissance artists. The fellow students chattered endlessly, and when the teacher told them to simmer down, they responded with "*But Miss-so-and-so lets us talk in class all the time!*" That brought to my mind all of the effort that my mother put into making all my siblings sit still and quiet during read aloud. All that time she thought she was homeschooling poorly because she couldn't keep everyone perfectly organized! That wouldn't be the last time that I was surprised to discover what standards we were stressing to compete against.

Homeschool parents often get burned out because they take upon themselves unnecessary burdens. They are immersed in a culture that puts the responsibility of education upon trained professionals in a pre-made system, and homeschool parents are subsequently under the impression that they have to conform to that standard in order to truly educate their children. But is that really the best method of teaching? In the days of the Founding Fathers, education was considered a "moral duty," not a universal right or privilege. Caring parents in that era provided their children with a working environment (out of necessity) and an academic environment (out of principle). Similarly, the Biblical instructions for teaching found in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy are nothing like the America's Prussian-style modeled school system. The Bible says instructing children is mandatory, to be sure, but not in some sort of cookie-cutter straightjacket way. It's an all day long, everywhere you are, teach-as-you-live event.

I come from a military family, and we moved about every two years or so. There was often a new baby in the house just as frequently. Mom would probably sum up our adventurous life experiences by saying, "If we can homeschool successfully, anybody can." Never was any secret formula discovered that could mold a day of learning into the fabled traditional school day. We didn't learn

the way convention dictates. My younger siblings learned about spelling as much from playing with foam alphabet letters in the bathtub as they did from phonics books. We were exposed to more history while lying in bed at night listening to Your Story Hour tapes or history lectures by Diana Waring than spending time in a textbook.

I remember being impressed by stories of historical figures like Fanny Crosby and George Washington Carver who so desired an education that they were willing to work for it. *Why*, I wondered, *do children nowadays not usually pursue academics with such zeal?* Unfortunately, education has become more so a socialized, cradle-to-adulthood program that children are forced into rather than a goal that they personally seek. Perhaps no one is a better master at decimating the facades and fallacies of conventional public schooling than award-winning teacher John Taylor Gatto:

*“What, after all this time, is the purpose of mass schooling supposed to be? Reading, writing, and arithmetic can’t be the answer, because properly approached those things take less than a hundred hours to transmit—and we have abundant evidence that each is readily self-taught in the right setting and time.”<sup>3</sup>*

*“School is a twelve-year jail sentence where bad habits are the only curriculum truly learned. I teach school and win awards doing it. I should know.”<sup>4</sup>*

At the dawning of conventional schooling, a factory inspector questioned 500 child laborers whether they would rather work in a factory or go to school, even if their families didn’t need the money from factory work. To her shock, 412 children chose the factory.<sup>5</sup> This should have been a wake up call to the distastefulness of socialist education! Children have an innate desire to contribute and work towards something meaningful. Conventional schooling renders children’s work irrelevant by binding them to twelve years of pre-programmed academic service. By its very nature, socialized education can only be uniform in system, uniform in results, and revolve around state government rather than family government.

Alex and Brett Harris, authors of *Do Hard Things* and *The Rebelution* blog have observed that the concept of “teenager” has put imaginary shackles around the minds of young people. I think that the concept of conventional schooling is a great architect of these shackles. It teaches children to think in terms of grades, and to have their childhood education spread across twelve years of their life in assembly line fashion. When it finally ends, college becomes the most socially acceptable next step. The value of the college degree has declined because it has become just another link in the school system more so than higher learning that true scholars desire.

As a college student at a State university, I have had no impairments from being a lifelong homeschooled student. My characteristics as an unconventional scholar have actually been helpful in taking online classes. Professors warned me that I had to be entirely responsible for my own learning—much to my relief, because that was all I had ever known. I’ve since made the President’s List and Dean’s List. But even though I have discovered how to ace the system when necessary, I am also able to offer the critique of an outside observer. I shamelessly conclude that homeschool parents are the great emancipators of our generation, liberating us from dependency upon an artificial system and giving us the opportunity to find a calling higher than any grade level.



I will end with an eerily prophetic quote by a renowned apologist and intellectual:

*“Hitherto the plans of educationalists have achieved very little of what they attempted and indeed, when we read them...we may well thank the beneficent obstinacy of real mothers, real nurses, and (above all) real children for preserving the human race in such sanity as it still possesses. But the man-moulders of the new age will be armed with the powers of an omniscient state and an irresistible scientific technique: we shall get at last a race of posterity in what shape they please.”*  
- C.S. Lewis

Homeschool parents, we unconventional scholars are particularly indebted to your sacrifice and efforts to preserve godly sentiments for us in the midst of a pathetic, man-molding age. I assure you that you have not worked in vain.

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<sup>1</sup> “Pageant Contestant Re-Answers Question,” The Washington Post

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/28/AR2007082800734.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQKNvPn3V-8&feature=related>

<sup>3</sup> Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling* (Canada: New Society Publishers, 2005), 61.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Divine and others, *America Past and Present Volume II*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), pg. 556

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### About the Author

Having been a homeschooled military child ever since she can remember, Amanda Read toured the nation and the world, and upon her father’s retirement from the U.S. Army, she and her family (she’s the eldest of nine children) have been shaping their new land into a homestead known as Fair Hills Farm. A writer and artist, she blogs at [www.amandaread.com](http://www.amandaread.com) and is the author of the historical drama screenplay, *The Crusading Chemist*. Amanda is now majoring in History and minoring in Political Science at Jacksonville State University, and her constant prayer is to glorify the LORD far beyond her finite imagination!

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# Sincerely Amanda

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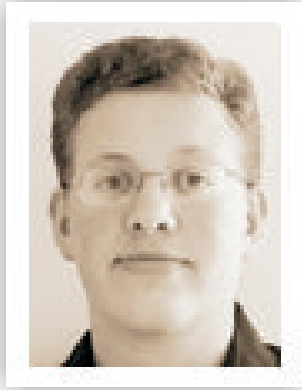
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# Time to Learn

by Eric Novak

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I've been told that my older sister used to wonder what would become of me. I can just hear her posing the question to my mother, "Hey Mom, what is Eric going to do with his life? How is he going to survive out in the real world?" Mom's answer was simple: "Give him some time, he's only a kid."

The fact was, I showed very little promise as a child. I talked slowly while I decided what to say. It may have been shyness, but when people asked me a question or tried to get me to tell a story, you could almost see smoke coming out of my ears as my brain struggled to keep up. I wasn't a great singer, and although I could yodel, I didn't devote myself to the love of music. In fact, I found it annoying when my sister tried to get me to sing along as she played a rousing version of "Wahoo," an old cowboy song. I was about as average as a young boy could be.

I didn't read until I was nine, and even though I tried to study hard, *Saxon Math* and *Math-u-See* were my arch-rivals. I wasn't all that interested in art, and writing wasn't very fun either. I was left-handed and a slow learner. Had I gone to public school, I'm sure I would have been diagnosed with ADD, dosed with Ritalin, and stuck in special classes. But my parents' decision to allow me to grow at my own pace had a profound impact on my development.

Ask some of my friends what line of work I'm in, and they'll instantly tell you, "Oh, Eric? He's a graphic designer!" Others would say, "He's a writer." But really, I'm both. I spread my energies across the two art forms graphic design and writing. How did I come to love creating art in both pictures and words? For me, learning came in unexpected ways—not from textbooks, and certainly not in a classroom.

**Graphic Design: As a child,** one of the only things I enjoyed doing was reading. I never wanted to pursue art, and for several years before we began nature journaling, coloring books were the closest we got to real drawing. Books weren't forced upon me, but being avid readers themselves, my parents often took me to the library.

I can still remember bringing Dad my allotment of five books as we browsed the children's shelves. When I reached the age of 10, the book limit was lifted and Dad often quipped, "If we get any more books, we'll need a wheelbarrow!" I devoured every well-thumbed children's book I could find. I'm not sure when, but in one wheelbarrow load, I stumbled upon *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, a series that did far more than merely entertain me. To this day, I appreciate Lewis' imaginative, dry, vibrant writing style. You could say that *The Chronicles of Narnia* shaped half of my career.

In 2005, only a few months before the release of Walden Media's *The Lion, the Witch and the*



*Wardrobe*, I stumbled upon NarniaWeb, a website designed and run by Lewis fans. Imagine my delight to discover a thriving community of fellow Narnia-lovers on NarniaWeb's Christian-based, family-friendly forum! For the next few years, my interactions on the forum stretched me in new ways. I learned graphic design skills working with Narnia fan art, writing skills as I discussed Lewis' work with other fans, and debate skills as I began to encounter serious questions about faith and humanity. NarniaWeb pushed me to grow in so many ways, and my graphic design business is a direct result of my time there. It also helped that my mom was a graphic designer before she married my dad, so she was able to encourage and help me with my work.

**Writing:** As I said, I didn't like writing very much, but around the age of 10 I started to find my voice and storytelling became important to me. Whether it was something I had experienced on our 200-acre farm or a tale from a book, I wanted to tell everyone in the family the story. My father always told us stories about his boyhood days on the farm, and I suppose I inherited from him this desire to share my experiences. Storytelling is an art form, a skill that must be honed like any other.

To help me develop as a writer, Mom tried to teach me the connections between oral storytelling, writing, and my personal experiences. One night as I struggled to write about an experience I had had that day mucking out stalls at a nearby horse stable, Mom said, "Your dad is a great storyteller, Eric, but he has a limited memory. Just think if he had kept a journal and written down everything that happened to him as a boy!" She was right. By keeping a journal, I would never forget what happened to me as a boy and I would be able to pass my life stories down to the next generation. At that moment, I became a writer.

I don't want to give the impression that academics are bad or that I was unschooled. In fact, my father and mother founded a company called Remembrance Press to help other parents discover the keys to unlocking the writers and artists in their children. What I do want to emphasize, however, is that relationships are more important than excelling academically and measuring up to public-school standards. Giving a child room to breathe and grow naturally is more important than setting rigid guidelines that may stifle his gifts.

Dr. Ruth Beechick, a former teacher, professor and curriculum developer, once said, "Homeschooling naturally is natural. Don't work too hard on making it artificially schoolish." She's right. Learning is a natural process that happens mostly by osmosis, in the course of everyday life. The reason why so many public school kids drop out of high school is because one size does not fit all. We weren't all designed to fit into a prescribed learning environment where we must learn the same exact thing, the same exact way, at the same exact age. Because children have different learning styles and personalities, they grow different ways. And as we mature, our talents, with proper nourishment, come to fruition.

Brothers Alex and Brett Harris, founders of *The Rebelution* and authors of two books, *Do Hard Things* and *Start Here*, describe a child's years at home as the launching board for the rest of his life. As with a diver poised over a pool, the slightest touch can spell disaster for the whole maneuver. It's almost scary to think a parent wields such a great influence. You can help your child grow naturally by nurturing his interests and talents, and if he doesn't fit the status quo, that's okay. Give him your love and time instead of an academic calendar. Nurture a strong bond between your family members that will build a well-rounded, stable individual, one who possesses God-given talents and heart knowledge versus just head knowledge. Remember, time is your friend.

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### **About the Author**

Eric Novak is a graphic designer and writer whose passion is using his creativity for God's glory. He is the co-founder and director of Cross-Eyed Blog and Webzine. And in his spare time he enjoys working in the family business Remembrance Press, cooking with produce fresh from the family farm, and preparing for seminary in the near future.

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