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# REVIEW

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TEXAS HOME SCHOOL COALITION

## REVIEW

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The articles in this magazine reflect the freedom of home educators in Texas to choose from a wide variety of home school philosophies and teaching methods. Opinions and attitudes expressed in articles do not necessarily reflect the beliefs of the Texas Home School Coalition. THSC does not endorse or advocate any one method or philosophy. The board encourages each home educator to seek God's will in determining what is best for him, his school, and his students.

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# REVIEW

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

TIM LAMBERT



In the 1980s home schooling was still a concept that most people were not familiar with and with which many elected officials were not comfortable. In fact, I often quote Texas Attorney General Jim Maddox who said that he did not believe parents were qualified to raise their children, much less teach them at home. In that environment, home schoolers were very happy with an elected official who simply said they supported the right of a parent to home school.

That was then and this is now. Almost any elected official or candidate for office today will say that they “support home schooling.” Unfortunately, what that often translates to is not a supportive position on the home school political, legislative or legal agenda. In fact, that phrase is often used just before the official tells us he opposes the parental rights or home school position.

I’ve been corresponding recently with the Chief of Police for the City of Euless regarding an incident in which Euless police officers stopped some home school children who were walking to their grandparents home into custody, took them back to their home, went in to examine the home, asked to see their curriculum and told their adult brother they were going to call CPS and report them. This was all done under the Daytime Curfew Ordinance of the city.

In his first response to my letter asking him to investigate this situation, the Chief began his letter by telling me he supported home schooling and his wife taught classes at a home school co-op. Then he went on to tell me that there must be something else to the story and declined to investigate. I guess he thinks that because he purportedly supports home schooling we should accept his lack of action regarding the egregious actions of his officers which violated the policies and procedures of the city and police department.

*Read the correspondence back and forth between myself and the Euless police chief at [thsc.org/euless-pd](http://thsc.org/euless-pd).*

During the recent legislative regular session Senator Kel Seliger, R from Amarillo, opposed SB 929 to allow home schoolers to participate in extra-curricular activities in public schools. He did everything he could do to oppose the bill and would give no reason for his opposition. In a newspaper article however, he said that he supported home schooling but if they wanted to participate in UIL activities they should attend a UIL school. Of course, he doesn’t seem to have a problem with the two affluent private schools which UIL has allowed to participate for the last decade. Seliger was one of only two Republican Senators to vote against the bill.

While we’re talking about legislators, State Representative Jimmie Don Aycock, Chairman of the House Public Education Committee, told me he loved home schoolers and was supportive and would be open to giving us a hearing on the Tim Tebow bills if we would make certain changes. However, in the end he told me he would not allow the bill a vote and only relented after the Speaker of the House asked him to do so. Since two of the bill’s supporters were gone it died. So, in spite of Chairman Aycock’s assurances that he supports home schooling he killed one of its key pieces of legislation, but when it looked like it might pass, he wanted credit for making it happen. With this kinds of friends, who needs enemies?

*Read a full explanation of the sordid episode involving Chairman Aycock at [thsc.org/aycock-legislation](http://thsc.org/aycock-legislation).*

Many of these elected officials are very “supportive of home schooling” while they are running for office and seeking the votes and support of the Texas home school community but their real colors often come out after the election. A district judge in Houston who was elected with the help of home schoolers, recently ruled in a divorce case that the mom would get custody of the children but that the father who for many years had supported home schooling and was not arguing that it was not in the best interest of the children, would get to make the educational decisions for the family. Test scores for the children showed them all doing very well but the judge ruled the unfaithful father will get to make the educational decision for the children, which is tantamount to ruling against home schooling. You can read our letter to the judge here. This same judge made a ruling in another case in her court that was obviously wrong and was overturned on appeal. However, she issued a “gag order” to prevent anyone involved in the case from talking about it publicly. Sounds like a judge trying to protect herself from the consequences of her rulings in an upcoming election next year.

*Read our letter to this Houston judge at [thsc.org/houston-judge](http://thsc.org/houston-judge).*

As we stated in our video summary of the 2013 legislative session *thsc.org/2013-wrap-up*), we had wins and losses in the legislative session this year, but it’s over now. That is clearly evidenced by the calls we are getting from candidates legislative and state-wide office seeking the support of THSC in their campaigns for election or reelection. So while the 83rd regular legislative session is over, the campaigns for next year’s elections have begun and we will have an opportunity to not only educate candidates on parental rights and home school issues, we may have an opportunity to oppose the election or reelection of some officials who give mere lip service to the support of the home schooling and parental rights, because the battle for freedom is never over and as we say in Texas, “Talk is cheap!”



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# Mothers of Grace

by Charlene Notgrass



*Charlene Notgrass and her husband Ray home schooled for twenty years. She is the head of curriculum development for Notgrass Company and blogs at [dailyencouragement.notgrass.com](http://dailyencouragement.notgrass.com).*

When I was in the second grade, my parents entered me in a beauty contest. Mother gathered layers of baby blue tulle onto a satin bodice to create my first evening gown. She curled my hair with skinny rubber curlers. While we girls waited in a school classroom, someone snapped my picture. The black-and-white photo shows my curly hair, long gown, and big smile with two front teeth missing.

I don't remember what it was like to walk across the stage or how I felt when I didn't win, but I do remember comparing myself with another girl. Her dress was pink and fancy and came from one of the big department stores in Nashville. Mine was simpler, homemade, and blue. I felt second best.

My feelings about my homemade dress have changed since 1959. I'm not ashamed of it anymore; it is a sentimental keepsake. My blue gown, made by my sweet mother, is in a closet, waiting for my granddaughters to wear it for dress-up someday.

Comparing myself with other women is still a challenge. As much as I want to be like Mary Poppins, "practically perfect in every way," I am much more like Jo in *Little Women*, "hopelessly flawed." I have a desperate need for grace.

Do you feel inadequate, imperfect, hopelessly flawed? I'll tell you a secret: You are, I am, and so are those mothers to whom we compare ourselves. That's why Jesus died. Do you think

you have to be perfect to do a good job with your children? God doesn't think so. Stop and think about the woman God chose to be your children's mother. Out of all the women in the world, out of all the women in the history of the world, He chose you.

Cherish your role as a mother. Don't let your feelings of imperfection keep you from being what your children need. Those feelings can rob your children of something they need very much: you. Pray. Trust. This is God's work you are doing. Remember that He understands all, He is able to help, and He loves you. You don't have to carry the whole load. Give yourself grace.

Do you compare your children to other children? Your children need grace too. God made each one in His image but He didn't use a cookie cutter. Some children learn calculus with ease; others are good with their hands. Some learn to read when they are four, others when they are eleven. Some grow up to be skilled engineers; others become compassionate caregivers. Trust God's wisdom in making each child the way He did.

One of the beauties of home schooling is that you can tailor a child's learning to help him become the person God intended. Teach him. Be patient with her. Wait when he needs you to wait, push when she needs you to push, but never try to press your child into someone else's mold. Accept each individual that God has created and put in your care. Give your children grace.

If we play this comparing game long enough, we might actually find people who make us feel not inferior, but superior. Do you sometimes look at other mothers, shake your head, and wonder why they do this or don't do that? Do you wonder why their children act the way they do? Do you judge some mothers because of how they home school and others because they don't home school?

Remember that we don't all have the same story. We don't have the same challenges. Perhaps the women we are judging are doing the best they can. They might be learning every day what "normal" is because they grew up in troubled families. They might barely be holding on in their marriages. They might be struggling to rear hurting children whom someone else has abandoned. We only see part of the picture. Only God knows the whole truth. He is the perfect judge. Give grace to other mothers.

God began giving grace in the Garden of Eden. Thousands of years later He inspired the last words of the Bible: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen." Look at that tiny word all. God offers grace to everyone who seeks Him: you, me, and all those other mothers. Let's be mothers of grace—mothers who seek God with all our hearts, mothers who raise children to be the people He created them to be, and mothers who have the grace to let others do the same.



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# IT IS A HOME SCHOOLER'S PREROGATIVE TO CHANGE HER MIND

by Holly Williams Urbach

Each year I eagerly look forward to the used curriculum sale. I prepare my list well ahead of time, making sure I detail the retail prices of the curricula next to the items listed so I know whether or not I am getting a good deal. My limited budget goes the furthest at this yearly sale. I happily load my purchases into the car and take them home to show my students what they will be studying in the coming school year. My books look so enticing on the shelves as they wait for school to begin. Every time I see them, I breathe a sigh of relief that I have the curricula I need for the coming school year.

Imagine my distress after school began one year and I realized that items I had purchased were not working well for some of my students! My six-year-old began crying and hiding when it was time for his reading lessons. My twelve-year-old daughter was no longer enthralled with the curriculum that had served us well for the past five years. Not wanting my students to hate school, I prayed for guidance and sought input from some seasoned home schooling friends. A very wise friend helped me to assess my children's learning styles and suggested some other curriculum that would be a better fit for them. The learning styles of these two children were not compatible with the repetitive nature of the materials I had purchased.

It seems that I had a Wiggly Willy and Wiggly Wilma/Sociable Sue on my hands. If you are unfamiliar with learning styles, I suggest you take some time to look over learning styles information at the Smoothing the Way website ([smoothingtheway.com](http://smoothingtheway.com)). Basically, Wiggles need a lot of activity to be able to learn and they are not too happy doing drill work. They thrive on variety, which was not a hallmark of the curriculum I had purchased.

Wanting my children to enjoy school, I decided to make some immediate changes while I looked for more suitable resources. I used the current materials as the spine for our schoolwork but created different activities to teach the concepts. I drew big footprints on scrap paper and wrote the phonics blends on them, taped them on the floor, and allowed my son to jump from one

to another as he sounded out the blends. He found this method more engaging than reading the blends to me from our Blue-backed Speller. I helped him find pictures of items that began with the letter sounds I wanted him to practice, and we made little books together, which allowed him to practice his scissor skills along with phonics.

I obtained some online sample pages of a unit study curriculum to see if it would be a good fit for my daughter. She very much enjoyed creating an illustrated science notebook rather than writing the science terms and definitions. I actually had to tell her to stop working on it in order to get other schoolwork completed. My daughter and I were both delighted when a friend had several of these unit studies to lend me for the remainder of the school year.

For my son I began looking for a new phonics program that was multi-sensory and had a lot of variety. Sing, Spell, Read, and Write really spoke to his needs. I found an old cassette tape edition at a winter used curriculum sale for \$10! All I had to do was order new workbooks, and we were in business. God had provided just what my children needed for the limited funds that I had available. Both children went from being reluctant to do their assignments to students who were highly interested in their work. It was not unusual for me to find my son awake early, working on his phonics pages before breakfast instead of trying to hide when it was time for school. I was one thrilled home educator!

If you are a home school parent struggling with curriculum that is a poor fit for one or more of your precious students, I encourage you to exercise your prerogative to change your mind and look for something better suited to the learning styles of your students. Seek the Lord for His wisdom and guidance; then anticipate with excitement His answer!

*Holly Williams Urbach has home schooled her children since 1993. She has been married to her husband Joe since 1985 and is*



*also a mother of five and grandmother of two. Holly currently works as an on-site director for a home school academy. In her spare time Holly enjoys writing (her blog is at [thewhollyholly.blogspot.com/](http://thewhollyholly.blogspot.com/)), gardening, physical fitness activities, and interior decorating.*



# MY MOTHER'S GARDEN

My mother kept a garden, a garden of the heart,  
She planted all the good things that gave my life its start.

She turned me to the sunshine and encouraged me to dream,  
Fostering and nurturing the seeds of self-esteem.

And when the winds and rain came, she protected me enough ~  
But not too much because she knew I'd need to stand up strong and tough.

Her constant good example always taught me right from wrong,  
Markers for my pathway that will last a lifetime long.

I am my mother's garden. I am her legacy ~  
And I hope today she feels the love reflected back from me.

- AUTHOR UNKNOWN

## Where Is the Potter's Wheel?

As parents, we are privileged to be used  
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-MAHATMA GANDHI

# A TIME WHEN TEARS CEASE

by Sheila Campbell



When my youngest son was learning to read, I started teaching him with the phonics program I had used with his older brother. A few months into the year we had made little progress. I was frustrated, he was frustrated, and we were both often in tears. At Christmas I borrowed another phonics program from a friend, with hopes it might “click” with his learning style, but by May he was still unable to read, and the tears still flowed regularly. During the summer I continued to work with him, trying to teach my struggling little learner how to read.

Over the next few years we tried a couple of other curricular options and made tweaks to the ones we had, but reading continued to be difficult for him. He did eventually learn to read, and today he reads technical manuals that I cannot even begin to comprehend; but it was accomplished only with great effort and plenty of tears.

As a young mom, many times I heard that age-old adage from more experienced moms, “Enjoy them; they grow up in a hurry.” Though I felt I still had many years of school books and childhood tears ahead of me, I did not let their words go completely unheeded. I tried to be thankful for each day and enjoy my children, but doing so did not eliminate difficult days. Like all moms, I had times when I let my frustrations get the better of me—losing my patience with my children. There were also other times when I was able to step back and see that the issue at hand was really quite small, and I was granted grace to patiently handle the problem. There were days when learning was fun and lessons were finished quickly; and days when studies were hard, tempers were high, and tears readily flowed. We had some bitter disappointments when all the hard work we put into a science experiment failed, and there were times when we simply laughed together when projects went awry. There were difficult days when we stuck it out to the bitter end and other hard days when we packed up school and went on a picnic or some other fun outing.

During those early years I was often saddened to discover some anticipated new curriculum was not what I expected. My students battled through it with frustration and tears because I was determined to use my purchase. Eventually I learned that sometimes a change in curriculum or a different approach to a subject could be just the thing to turn a frustrated student into an eager learner. Although it was hard on my school budget and on my pride, we would try something different. As I became more confident in my own teaching abilities, I also learned that we did not always need to strictly adhere to a curriculum’s specific format. With some creativity and supplemental materials, we could use the general information and salvage what might have been a curriculum flop earlier. Those happy modifications were the result of experience gained through frustrations and tears.

If I had it to do over again, I am sure there are things I would do differently. I might have waited a little longer with my youngest son and been a little more patient. I might not have changed curriculum so often with my struggling little speller but might simply have stuck to one program until he mastered it. I might have made some different curricular choices in other areas and done a host of other minor things. However, even if I knew then what I know now, I don’t think we could have completely avoided those days of struggle. Some experience is only gained by trial, and some difficulties are only mastered with struggle. Take heart. There will come a time when there are no more tears—when there are no more students at home.

Today I am the older mom encouraging young moms to enjoy their children each precious day and to be thankful for the opportunity to teach them. Take education seriously and know that the process of training up a child can be a difficult journey, often fraught with tears. The days do pass quickly, so treasure the tears as well as the laughter and the smiles. Dry the tears gently, knowing they will soon cease. Encourage your children when learning is hard, keep looking for ways to remove those stumbling blocks, and don’t be discouraged by the tears. There will be difficult days, but there will come a time when childhood tears will cease and you will sadly realize that there are no more little tears to dry.

*Sheila Campbell began homeschooling in 1991 and continued homeschooling as a single parent after the death of her husband in 2001. She was also the parent of a special needs child whom she cared for at home until his death in 2004. Now that her children have all graduated, Sheila pursues her writing, after being a valued member of the THSC staff. She resides in Hale Center and invites you to visit her blog at [www.pausingtopraise.com](http://www.pausingtopraise.com).*





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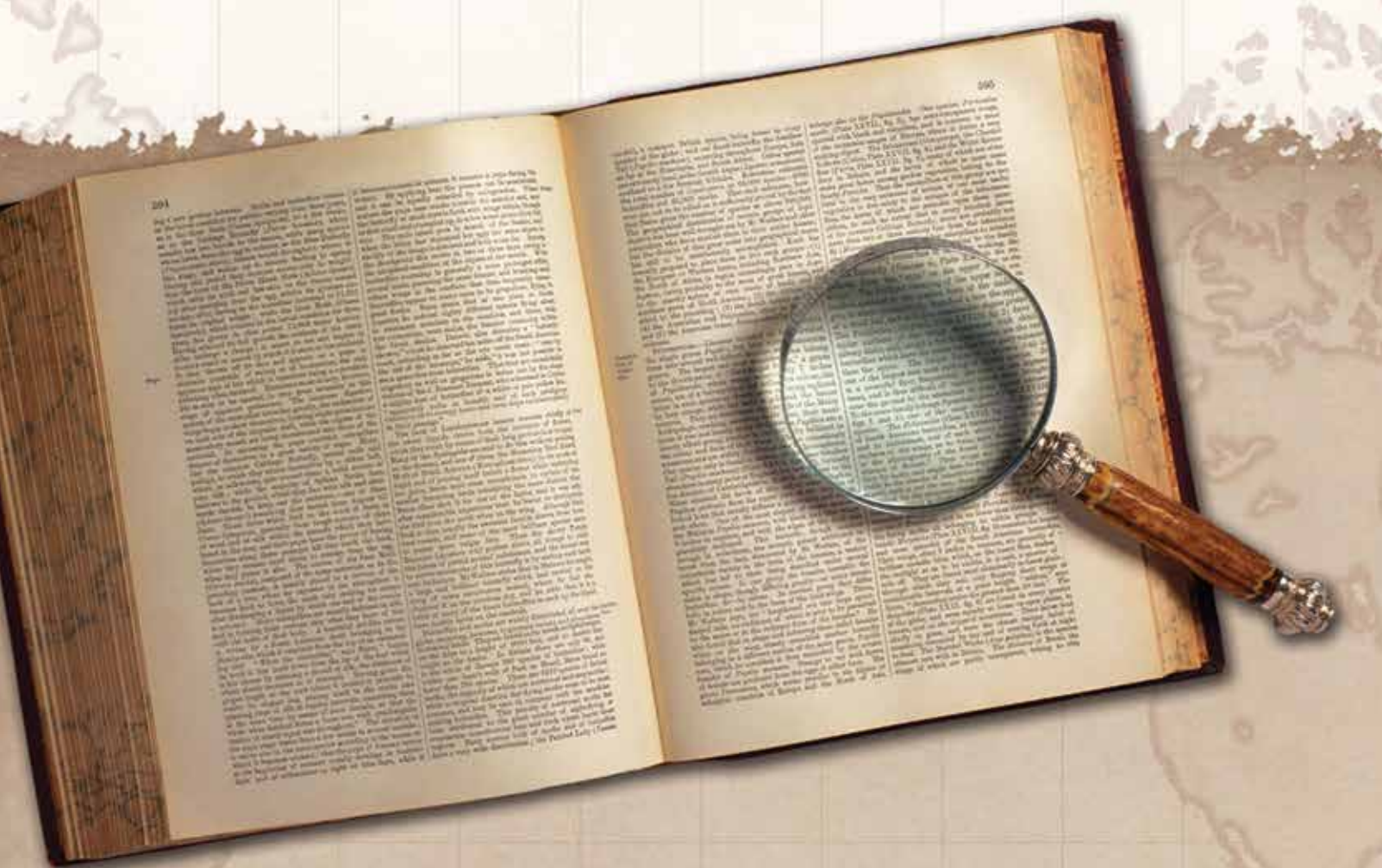
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# History Revealed

## A Review

by Suzanne Reid

**D**iana Waring shows us the way to an Abundant-Life Homeschool.

For the past eighteen years, Diana has traveled around the world, speaking to thousands of home schoolers, bringing a message of loving our kids and loving home schooling. Working with her husband Bill, Diana has developed a ministry/business that focuses primarily on two areas: encouragement and curriculum.

With great enthusiasm and humor, Diana shares her love of God and of history in a manner that is contagious to children. From the dusty pages of history, she brings to life the fascinating stories of real people, whose lives intersected with great moments in history leading to the accomplishment of great feats.

The premise behind *History Revealed* is to teach history as “His Story.” Diana developed the material so that students would understand history from God’s point of view. She desires that students come to “view all history—all cultures and events—in the light of God’s revelation of Himself and His ongoing redemptive purpose.”



Another foundational concept communicated in this history and throughout Diana's work is the idea of honoring and respecting the children that God has given us. Each of us is created in the image of God and is unique. Most likely, our children's gifts are not the same as ours, and the biggest challenge most parents face is that of appreciating the differences in our children. Instead of being frustrated with those who learn differently than we do, we must humbly respect them and discover how God made them.

With that thought in mind, Diana has spent years studying how to reach both the hearts and the minds of our children, and the results are integrated into her curriculum. She has structured this history series on the foundation of three approaches to learning, which are Four Learning Styles, Three Learning Modalities, and Eight Intelligences. The Four Learning Styles was developed by Myers-Briggs and is a categorization of how each personality style learns best. The Three Learning Modalities (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic) are the three means that learners use to process and retain new information. Lastly, Howard Gardner of Harvard University theorized the Eight Intelligences, which are natural areas of talent that humans possess, beyond basic verbal and mathematical skills. Diana explains these learning approaches clearly at the beginning of the teacher guide so that the parent can discover her child's learning style, modalities, and intelligence and then begin gearing education to meet her child's God-given abilities.

History Revealed covers history from Creation to 1950 A.D. in three separate packages. Ancient Civilizations covers Creation to Jesus Christ (4004 B.C. to 29 A.D.). Romans, Reformers, Revolutionaries covers the Resurrection to the American Revolution (A.D. 30 to 1799), and the soon-to-be-released World Empires, World Missions, World Wars will cover from Napoleon to Korean Conflict (A.D. 1800 to 1950).

Each section of history year is divided into nine units, each requiring four weeks to complete. Within the four weeks, each week is geared to one of the four learning styles. For example, week one appeals to the "Feeler" learning style. During this week the student listens to auditory recordings and reads and discusses scriptures and history materials. Week Two appeals to the "Thinker" by studying timelines, vocabulary, and research projects. Week Three appeals to the "Sensor" learning style with art projects, science experiments, mapmaking, etc. Week Four provides the "Intuitior" learning style opportunities for creative expression through drama, dance, poetry, etc. Students approach the history in each unit from the four different learning styles, maximizing their understanding and memory of learning.

The curriculum is a complete package designed for a year's study. It includes a hardbound teacher guide, a companion paperback student text, and three history DVD sets. On the DVD sets, Diana narrates captivating history stories, biographies, and church facts under the titles of "What in the World?" "True Tales," and "Digging Deeper." For those who want to administer tests, Diana has created a test kit, which has a

comprehensive test and answer key for each unit. Younger children can follow along with the ancillary "Elementary Activity Book," designed for children grades K-4. It is a fun approach to studying history with recipes, puzzles, Bible stories, crafts, and much more.

The beauty of History Revealed is its design, and I don't mean its graphic design, although that is professional and very pleasing. History Revealed is masterfully structured for those who depend on a curriculum for detailed direction, yet it allows freedom and creativity for those who tend to feel trapped by structure. Additionally, families using this curriculum could teach several children in varying grades concurrently. The first week of each unit includes relevant reading lists from several grade levels. Families can study together but complete different assignments relevant to each student's grade level and learning style. The curriculum meets the needs of every learner and instills a joy of learning His Story.



*Suzanne and her husband Brian have completed fourteen years of home schooling and have graduated both of their children from home school. They serve in the home school movement as board members of Idaho Coalition of Home Educators. To contact Suzanne with any comments or resources you would like her to review, email her at [sreid@iche-idaho.org](mailto:sreid@iche-idaho.org).*



# F E A R S, T E A R S, A N D V O C A B U L A R Y

by Marilyn Rockett

**I**n the small, Mayberry-type town where I grew up, everyone knew everyone else and no one locked front doors. Children played in the streets and in neighbors' yards until mamas called them in for a meal.

One day when I was a preschooler, I wanted to visit our next-door neighbors, Mr. & Mrs. Lee, sweet, loving grandparent-types who frequently offered treats to the neighborhood children. Being a much too independent youngster, I scurried out without telling my mother, crossed into the Lees' yard, and marched right through their front door. They were not home, but I found a nice play spot under their dining room table to await their arrival.

Details of the long-ago event are fuzzy now, but I recall being quite ashamed and fearful that my mamma was searching the neighborhood, frantic over her missing child. I could hear her and neighbors calling, but I was too frightened to let them know where I was. I just knew that I was in trouble and should not have made a social call on my own.

Whether child or adult, certain life-events stick in our memories, often because we experienced shame or regret over the occurrences. Those regrets ooze into our consciousness at inconvenient times, depositing painful feelings of inadequacy and failure.



## Useless Vocabulary Words

Moms seem especially vulnerable to that nasty sludge and slime, so I suspect that we should regularly review our Home Schooling Mom's Vocabulary List. No, Moms, not words on our students' lists. I mean words on our own *mental* lists.

Two words should be absent from your list: shame (noun—a painful emotion caused by consciousness of shortcoming\*) and *rue* (verb—wish undone or done differently). In what ways do you rehearse those vocabulary words?

*You forget that learning is a lifelong event  
and that you can learn right along  
with your children, having fun doing it  
and showing them that no one  
knows everything.*

Do you criticize yourself often, thinking that your children might have done better last year if you had used the math curriculum your friend used? Or maybe you berate yourself because you did not finish a particular book or course or unit study that you loved, but you just ran out of time to do it. Eighteen years later, I still occasionally think about a *Learning Language Arts through Literature* book that we never finished!

When you see or hear of another home school student winning an award, receiving a special honor, or accomplishing some amazing task, do you turn on yourself to think that your children could do those things if you did a better job?

Does your mind drift to questions about your ability to teach your children, thinking you don't know enough about math, history, science, or whatever subject you didn't study well or like in your schooling days? You forget that learning is a lifelong event and that you can learn right along with your children, having fun doing it and showing them that no one knows everything. Child and adult alike are always learning.

Does your home's disarray embarrass you so much that you dread welcoming visitors, robbing you and your family of lessons in service and hospitality to others? Your children never learn what it means to open a home (and heart) to others in the "castle" you call home.

## Replace Your Vocabulary Words

Shame and regret can rear their ugly heads in many ways in a home schooling mom's life. If they besiege you, try these five things to replace your negative vocabulary words with new words:

1. Identify the source of your feelings. Satan certainly loves to tell you that you can't accomplish those things that have eternal consequences, such as raising and teaching your children for God's glory. Maybe when you were growing up others told you that you were not capable. Look at you! You are doing something harder and more impressive than do many moms who shuffle their kids off to school and go to an outside job somewhere. Consider what you will have in the future with your family that others might not have. (Ephesians 6:18) Add this new vocabulary word: **perseverance** (noun—continued or steadfast pursuit or prosecution of an undertaking or aim)

2. Examine your fears apart from your feelings of inadequacy. Take a clear, unemotional look and then make a plan for facing those fears. Refuse to entertain negative thoughts. Enjoy your children now, right where you and they are. Laugh a lot and know that many who have gone before you have succeeded. (Philippians 4:8-9) Add this new vocabulary word: **praiseworthy** (adjective—worthy to be praised)

3. Consider what you would think of another home school mom who expressed the same inadequacies. Would you judge her harshly? I imagine that you would instead understand what she was feeling and come alongside her to encourage her. Aren't we usually more inclined to be easier on other people (especially those we idolize) than on ourselves? Give yourself the grace that you would offer to a friend, or even to a stranger, and that God gives you. (2 Corinthians 9:8) Add this new vocabulary word: **grace** (noun—disposition to kindness, favor, clemency, or compassion)

4. Talk to someone. Be honest. If you feel shame or you rue something you have done or are not doing, talking about it robs shame of the power over you. You will likely find that others feel the same way you feel and you can encourage each other. Sharing with someone might even give you a new idea for something useful to solve a problem. (Proverbs 11:14) Add this new vocabulary word: **counsel** (noun—recommendation, especially when given as a result of consultation; a policy or plan of action or behavior)

5. Separate who you are in Christ from the job of training and teaching your children. Will you make mistakes? Sure! We all do. However, when we confess our shortcomings to others and to the Lord, He forgives us and washes us completely clean. (1 John 1:9, 2 Corinthians 5:17) Add this new vocabulary word: **forgive** (noun—to grant relief from; refrain from exacting [a price])

You do not have to continue to be ashamed or rue the things you have or have not done. Shame and regret are enemies to defeat. Decide what is

*Decide what is important and what  
will make a difference for your family—  
and do those things.*

important and what will make a difference for your family—and do those things. A new plan or course of action does wonders to clear away past mistakes. Then you can add another vocabulary word to your list: rejoice (intransitive verb—to feel joy or great delight; experience gladness or pleasurable satisfaction).



*Marilyn Rockett is a veteran homeschool mom of four grown sons, six grandsons, one granddaughter, and two great-grandsons. She has mentored moms for almost thirty years. Her book, *Homeschooling at the Speed of Life*, provides organizational helps and encouragement. Visit her at [www.MarilynRockett.com](http://www.MarilynRockett.com).*

*\*word definitions courtesy of Merriam-Webster Online*



# TEXAS HOME SCHOOL COALITION

## WHO WE ARE

Texas Home School Coalition (THSC) is the statewide advocacy organization for home schoolers in Texas.

## WHAT WE BELIEVE

Even though our organization serves all home schoolers in the state of Texas, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or creed, we have a distinctively Christian worldview.

Fit parents should always be the ones to direct the care, control, and upbringing of their children. That includes education.

Home schooling has shaped America's history since its founding and continues to do so today. Home schoolers are among the brightest and most civic- and community-minded students in our nation.

## WHAT WE DO

THSC protects the rights of fitparents to raise their children as they choose, which includes being allowed to home school them. **We achieve our mission through:**

LEARN HOW YOU CAN BE A VITAL PART OF THSC AT [THSC.ORG/MORE](http://THSC.ORG/MORE)



## PROVIDING SUPPORT

We answer thousands of phone calls and emails each year from both new and veteran home school parents.

## SPREADING INFORMATION

We publish a free, quarterly magazine, THSC Review. We also distribute a weekly email that includes pertinent information and special offers for home schoolers.

## NETWORKING

We connect local and regional home school groups together and provide training for their leaders.

## HOSTING EVENTS

We host one of the largest annual home school conventions in America in The Woodlands, TX, as well as other events for leaders, families, and students.

## LOBBYING

We work tirelessly at the Texas State Capitol passing and killing legislation that affects home schooling and parental rights.

## OFFERING PROTECTION

Every year we defend families from bureaucratic organizations that are harassing home schoolers or violating parental rights.

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# Take Possession

Encourage  
your children  
to reach their  
full potential

by Pat Harrell

"So Pat said unto the young men of Arlington, 'How long will you delay going in to take possession of the ice cream from thine refrigerator, which the Lord hath given unto you? Provide three men from thine house, and I will send them out that they may seek frozen goodness from throughout the freezer. You shall write a description of the frosty flavors with a view to your inheritances and then come to me with spoon in hand.'"

Recognize this Bible story from Joshua 18? I did change it (a little), but the principle is the same. Seven tribes of Israel had not taken possession of good things the Lord God had provided. Joshua demanded, "How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land, which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you?" Why were the men of Israel hesitant? Well, maybe because they were guys, and sometimes guys find it easier to take possession of the couch than of the land our Lord gave us.

Note verses 4-9 state "describe" and "write a description" six times! Why did Joshua tell the men to write down what they saw? Ladies, you already know this answer: Joshua told the men to write it down because they were guys.

About forty years earlier Joshua was on a twelve-man Special Operations Group invading Canaan. The mission went badly, with ten of the twelve operators giving wildly inaccurate reports. This time Joshua wasn't letting the team spin up any bogus facts about giants in the land (see Numbers 13). Something about writing down the truth keeps a man sane.

Fast forward 3400 years to my family after a recent home school semester ended and my sons responded with great joy to the Call of the Wii. Until their heartless father proclaimed, "Nope! You shall make the best of your summer days!" Then, for about the fiftieth time, I told my sons the story of squandering my B.C. (before Christ) life and the film music calling the Lord gave me. For about the fiftieth time, my sons pretended to listen. So, I took desperate measures. I wrote it down.

Cracking open a fresh deck of 3x5 index cards, I scrawled crazy phrases like, "Learn to whistle loudly" and, "Attend Boy Scout camp." I inked insane ideas like, "Earn driver license" and, "Listen to stories of naval heroes." No mention of calculus or dissecting anything. I taped the vision cards on the back of a door. Twice a week I called my sons to the door and reviewed their vision cards and a life beyond Wii.

Ephesians 2:10 reads, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

"Walk in them." Not "struggle" or "thrash futilely." Dads, if you or your child question why you were created, visit Ephesians 2:10 before leaving on the journey to "find yourself." You've already been found.

So dads, how do you find out which "land" the Lord has promised to your children? Well, paying attention is always a good move when working with your children. I remember my six-year-old daughter Halley turning her head to talk with me while continuing to play a complicated piano piece. I was never able to do that! So Halley received the land of piano lessons.

Leadership expert John Maxwell says, "Over the course of an hour-long dinner conversation you can almost always identify what makes another person tick by asking three simple questions:

- "1. What makes you cry? That is, what burdens your spirit or weighs heavily on your heart?"**
- "2. What makes you sing? What activities bring you joy?"**
- "3. What do you dream of doing or becoming?"**

Dads, I'm guessing you can ask three questions while eating with your child. When your child answers, write it down.

In the book of Revelation, an intriguing phrase appears twice, in 7:17 and 21:4: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." From the verses' context, it appears these are not tears of sadness after an oppressed life on earth. Rather, these are tears of regret from a life that was not invested wholly in the Lord. I don't want my children having regretful tears. I want them to hear the Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your Master." (See Matthew 25.)

So I tried it. I asked the questions. I watched my children. I discovered the needs for dance shoes, music lessons, art supplies, hero books, Legos, camping gear, and toy soldiers. I even wrote it all down. Because I am a guy.

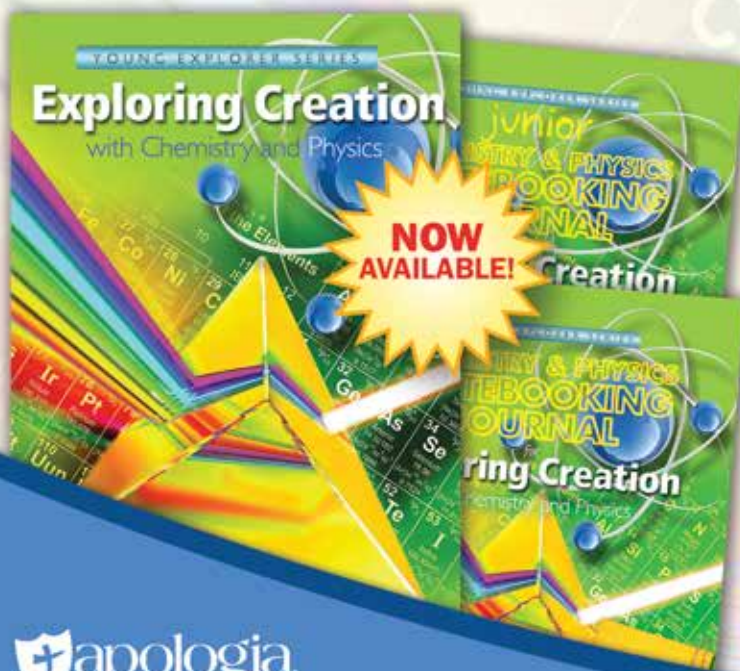
Please send an email to [ImperfectFather@gmail.com](mailto:ImperfectFather@gmail.com). I'd love to read stories of your children's talents and how you've helped them pursue those talents. E-mail me at [ImperfectFather@gmail.com](mailto:ImperfectFather@gmail.com).



*Pat and Belinda Harrell have home schooled since 1995. They have five jolly children—and the loudest house on the block. Please send your thoughts on this article to Pat at [ImperfectFather@gmail.com](mailto:ImperfectFather@gmail.com). He promises to write back. Read more about being an Imperfect Father at [ImperfectFather.com](http://ImperfectFather.com).*



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# Ice Cream and Heartache

by Rachel Saltereli



*H*er apron still lingers on the wall next to mine. The faint scent of her perfume isn't gone, but she is. Yesterday I broke down in the car on the way home. My ten-year-old son immediately noticed my swollen eyes and wet face, even though I had fought to keep the tears silent. With the maturity of an adult, he patted my shoulder and softly shared, "I know, Mom. We have all been crying too."

That night I broke down in front of my husband. "Everything is different now," I sobbed. He tried nobly to comfort me while barely restraining tears of his own. Our oldest child, our little girl, moved out last week for college. She is on her own now, and the worst part of it all? She likes it. While she is exhilarated with her independence, I feel like someone has slain my soul. Why didn't anyone warn me this was coming? Oh, wait. They did. But there were no words to prepare me for this. Some things you just have to experience yourself.

My little girl and I used to eat ice cream together, back when she was young. Those were the days she used to say that when she grew up she would live next door. Have you ever noticed something about the mixed flavors of soft-serve ice cream? You can't tell exactly where the chocolate ends and turns into vanilla. You can see the individual flavors, but they blur together. I am like that these days: a mixture of distinct emotions. Like a rainbow-swirled soft serve, I'm grieved because I don't want to let go of her. I'm bursting with pride at her accomplishments, I'm excited for her future, I'm angry at . . . Well, I don't know at exactly what, but I'm angry. I don't want to let her go, but I do want to let her go. I'm so confused, so swirled together, you can't see where one emotion ends and another begins.

On the other hand, this experience is nothing like soft serve because there is nothing soft about it. Completely devoid of gentleness, her leaving feels more like hot-wax hair removal, without mercy, ripping my heart out in one fell stroke.

Still, God has not left me in my pain. He has already begun to soothe the wound with the salve of truth: She was never fully mine. In stewardship, He entrusted her daddy and me to care for her. She still belongs to her heavenly Father, Who will continue to care for her. While the grief may never leave completely, there is much hope for the future. I will leave that apron hanging on the wall to remind me of the days ahead when she will come home to visit, the memories yet to be made, and the many ice creams to be shared.

## Three Tips to Share With Those Whose Children Are Leaving Home

1. Nurture your marriage relationship. This is not the time to cling to the one who is leaving but rather to cleave to the one with whom you were created to be. (Genesis 2:24)
2. Don't expect your child to understand how hard it is on you. My husband's parents told him that when he left for boot camp at the age of eighteen, he got on the bus and never looked back—not once. It broke their hearts. He didn't understand what the big deal was. Here he is at forty-eight. Now he understands. (Proverbs 14:10)
3. Reconsider your ministries. Look again at your spiritual gifts. Is this a time to sharpen some skills or dive into a new area of ministry? Remember: Our purpose in life, to glorify God, has not changed. God has lots of other work for us. (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

## Three Tips to Share With Those Still Far Off From This Season

1. Nurture your marriage relationship. This is the primary and permanent one. Make time for fun and meaningful conversations away from the kids. (Genesis 2:24)
2. Enjoy your children today. I know you are distracted and exhausted. I know the Tupperware is all over the floor and the toddler is playing in the dog's water, but one day you will trade millions of quiet moments for just one more day like you have today. (Psalm 90:12)
3. Always be a mother before you are a teacher. One day it won't matter that you didn't finish the spelling book. Those kids will have their whole lives to memorize the state capitals, but you can't go back and curl up with them on your lap and read Tom Kitten again. There will be no more opportunities to blow on their skinned knees. Mothering is a God-given priority above almost everything else. (1 Timothy 5:10)

*Rachel Saltarelli lives in Montgomery and is the mother of four homeschooled children. She is a certified Biblical counselor and is currently writing a Bible study for women's groups.*







## Breaking Records


Greetings from the Texas Home School Coalition Association! In the past quarter THSC has had a vital impact on behalf of home schoolers in the state of Texas by hosting events, writing ministry letters, and supporting home education in the state of Texas.

This year Texas Home School Coalition proudly welcomed more than 6,400 home schoolers to its Southwest Convention and Family Conference—making it one of the most successful home schooling events to date with that record-breaking attendance. As always, the convention

was a marvelous time of inspiration, encouragement, and equipping of home school parents, children, and teens for the coming year.

*Everywhere you looked, there were children smiling, parents talking, and old friends meeting once again.*

During the convention, attendees enjoyed a full program, complete with notable speakers, fun after-hours events, informative workshops, and an Exhibit Hall packed full of resources. Everywhere

there were children smiling, parents talking, and old friends meeting once again. The convention was a blessing to many. 

## Opposing Forces

This year as THSC attendees enjoyed fellowship and shared knowledge at the Convention, exercising their right to freely assemble and express various views on a variety of educational subjects, home schoolers were once again reminded that there are those who oppose the freedom of parents to direct the care and education of their children. When it was announced that Ken Ham of Answers in Genesis would be a keynote speaker at the Convention and that he would lead several


reminder that there will always be people who oppose home schooling freedoms and there will always be those who actively work against it.

In fact, people from this opposing group argued that home school parents should not be allowed to “teach lies” to their children. In response President Tim Lambert released this statement to the press: “While we find it unfortunate that a group of self-professed atheists have

*“We believe that parents in the United States have a fundamental, constitutional right to direct the care, control, and upbringing of their children, and that includes being able to teach them what the parents believe is appropriate.” ~Tim Lambert, THSC President*


workshops on creationism, an opposing group tried to rally a protest. On the third day of the Convention, a small group of protestors congregated outside the convention area using signs, flyers, and slogans to express their displeasure with parents private schooling at home. In particular, this group objected to a parent's right to use curriculum related to certain teachings on scientific topics, such as evolution, creationism, and intelligent design.

When an online group of atheists began hosting webinars and writing blogs declaring their intent to protest at the Convention, it was a

decided to protest the THSC Conference, it is not unusual for statistis to argue that parents should not be free to teach what they choose to their children. . . . We believe that parents in the United States have a fundamental, constitutional right to direct the care, control, and upbringing of their children, and that includes being able to teach them what the parents believe is appropriate. THSC has been battling for more than twenty-five years to allow every parent to make these decisions for their children, and we will continue to do so even in the face of those who argue that parental rights should be restricted.” 


## Discriminatory Practices

Another issue THSC addressed this quarter came from a home school student and THSC member who applied to the University of North Texas. His application brought to light the university's discriminatory policy against home schoolers. The policy treats all home schoolers, regardless of their ability, as though they are equivalent to the 51st – 75th percentile of their peers in accredited public high schools. This standard unfairly biases the admissions system toward public school students, without regard

to demonstrated ability or test scores. Therefore, when the student was informed that he would most likely be denied admission based on these established percentiles, he contacted THSC. Tim Lambert responded by writing a letter in support of the student and urging the school to take any and all actions necessary to change the discriminatory and illegal policy. Thankfully, after the university received Tim's letter, they admitted this home school student and apologized to him for the delay in doing so. 

## Administrative Hurdles

THSC also steps up to help members when public administrative hurdles are thrown in their way. One such situation arises when members' Social Security benefits are denied based upon their schooling status. Recently, when a home school student's Social Security benefits were dropped for a second time, the family contacted THSC requesting

help. President Tim Lambert, who helped get this member's benefits reinstated after the first cancellation, quickly responded with a letter to the Social Security Administration in support of the student. The student's benefits have again been reinstated. 

## Legislative Agendas

THSC works throughout the year to serve the home schooling community of Texas by addressing immediate needs. They also examine the potential threats of proposed legislation or of those running for political office who would use their office to infringe upon the home school and parental rights and freedoms of Texas home schoolers.


This past legislative session THSC continued to work diligently to pass the Texas Parental Rights Restoration Act. Although the Association was not successful, it was encouraging that it made greater progress in the effort than ever before. In fact, the chief lobbyist for the Texas Family Law Foundation (TFLF), who has steadfastly and aggressively opposed THSC's efforts in the area of parental rights, complained that they have had to spend time and money for three sessions now to oppose them. The TFLF even tried to pass legislation to make every fit parent in Texas susceptible to lawsuits by any grandparent to sue for possession of their children.

By God's grace THSC was successful in killing that attempt to undermine parental rights in Texas. At the same time, the Association made more progress than ever before in changing the law to allow home schoolers to take part in extracurricular activities in public schools.

THSC Association will raise both of these issues in the next regular session in 2015. They will also spend a great deal of time and effort looking at the upcoming 2014 elections in order to keep members informed of voting records; they will also report on the opinions voiced by elected officials


as those opinions relate to home schooling and keep members aware of any potential threats to parental rights as they arise.

There are so many avenues by which parents' freedoms can now be changed, limited, or taken away. Freedom-loving parents must always be aware that each parent must make his or her voice heard in order to maintain those freedoms. THSC Association exists to assist those who need someone to help them defend their right to direct the care, control, and upbringing of their children. That right includes being able to privately school their children at home, if that is their choice.

Texas parents must never take for granted that they have a choice, because many do not. In other states or in other countries around the world, home schooling is often heavily regulated—or completely illegal. An example of this is the recent case of the German home schooling family that has appealed to the United States for asylum. The fate of these two fit parents and their children has yet to be determined, but if they are returned to Germany, they will be forced to stop home schooling their children. If they do not stop, they could face the possibility of losing custody of their children and even being incarcerated. The threats to home schooling are very real in this day and age, and it is for times such as these that the Texas Home School Coalition exists—so that no one will ever have to stand alone, so that Texas' people will have a voice. 

## Elections and Good Citizenship

The primary elections are only a few months away, and several statewide positions will be on the ballot—including Texas governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, and more. As usual, Texas home schoolers will be active in these campaigns and will play a critical role in electing not only Texas' statewide officials but also state legislators and local officials such as district judges, county commissioners, constables, etc. There is a direct correlation between the amount of effort that home schoolers put into these elections and the amount of sway they ultimately have in their communities and the success of home school legislation in following legislative sessions. The most obvious reason is that home school-friendly candidates who share the home school value system are more likely to be elected. But a less apparent reason is that opposing candidates who

narrowly win or lose are very likely to take notice and will realize that without the support of the home school community, their chances of being elected or reelected are lowered. Over time, many candidates have realized this fact and have changed their positions to be favorable to home school and parental rights. In fact, almost all candidates today will at least pay lip service to home education. That is why it is critical that THSC vets candidates, researching their voting records and their policies—to separate the wheat from the chaff. Home school families can play a role in this important part of the governmental process by volunteering with THSC to help vet candidates (Contact THSC at [policy@thsc.org](mailto:policy@thsc.org).) remotely or by volunteering in local campaigns. 





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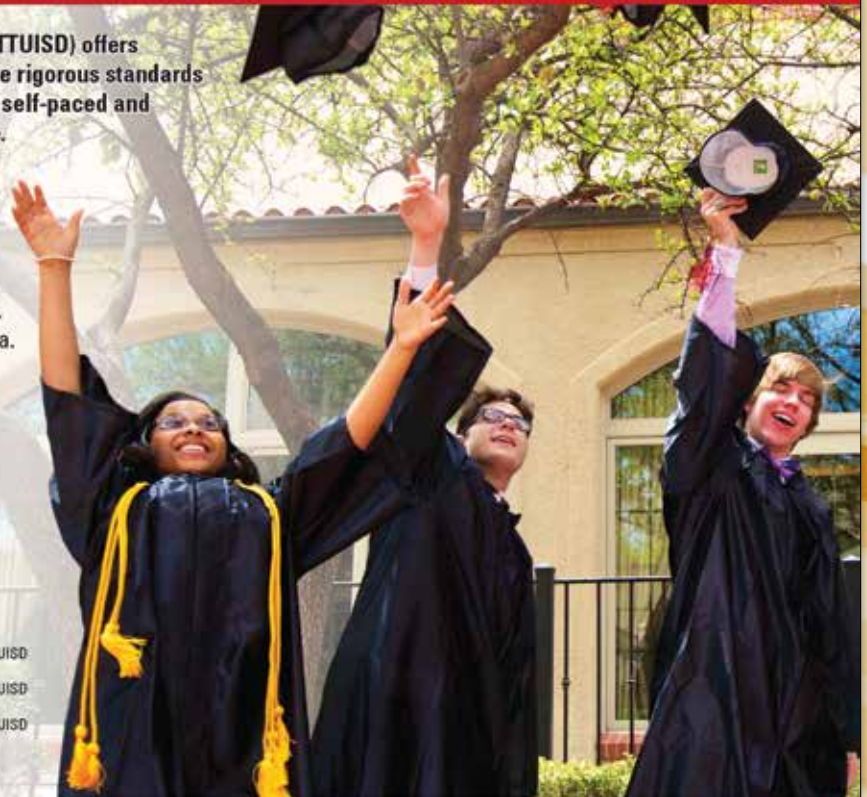
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# Teenagers

by Lynn Dean

## Beloved Disciples

**A**s I waited to check out at my favorite Christian book store,

a young mother behind me cooed to a newborn in a stroller. The baby responded with smiles and delighted gurgles. A grandmotherly type joined us and, as grandmothers do, asked to see the baby. Of course, his mother was only too proud to show him off. And that's when the trouble started.

"What a sweetie!" the older woman gushed. "Enjoy him before he gets to be a teenager."

"Oh, please don't tell her that!" I blurted without thinking then tried to explain my outburst.

"Teenagers are the best part of parenting. They're my passion!"

"Really?" the young mother said. "I've never heard anyone say that."

No one? How sad. What had this young woman's role models demonstrated? That we adore our babies but like our children less and less as we come to know them better? I longed to be a voice of hope. "Oh, yes!" I assured her. "Don't you wonder what your little guy is thinking? Who he'll grow up to be? The teenage years are when you begin to find out!"

The grandmother said something to the effect that she'd find out, all right. "They get loud and ornery. Like two-year-olds, only bigger."

It was my turn to check out. I didn't get to tell them that teenagers get loud for the same reason two-year-olds do. It's very frustrating when you want to do things you can't do yet. Limitations sometimes seem to define life for toddlers and teens!

This encounter caused me to think about stereotypes of parent-child relationships. "Because I'm the parent" and "Because I said so" are quasi-humorous expressions of parental authority, and the teen's expected response ranges from resistance to rebellion. Kids DO need parents who act like parents, but scripture tells us not to provoke our children to wrath—not to "lord it over" those in our charge. Our Lord is our heavenly Father. How does He treat His children? In the New Testament, "disciples" is used interchangeably with "beloved children." What if parents treated their teens in the way Jesus treated His disciples?

He was Emmanuel—God with us. Simply sharing your presence and your time demonstrates to children that they have value . . . that they are a priority. As children accompany their parents in life, they absorb and begin to emulate the behavior their parents model. Most Christian parents and homeschooling parents are acutely aware that far more is "caught" than "taught," yet we still sometimes experience a breakdown in family relationships, especially during the teenage years.

What's missing? Sometimes the missing ingredient is respect—not the respect a parent demands, but the respect we give. You can't take away a person's self-worth and expect them to respond positively.

Surely no Christian parent would deliberately strip their child of dignity, but a child's self-worth can be fragile, particularly during the teenage years. Teens yearn to know that they are loved unconditionally, that we hear them and trust them (even if we have to count to ten and take a calming breath before asking, "Why did that seem like a good idea to you?"). Teenagers often feel full of doubt. They need to borrow our confidence that they can succeed as competent, independent adults. If we write or say things, in public or in private, that communicate a lack of trust or respect, the security that forms the foundation of any good relationship can be damaged.

This can make necessary discipline tricky unless we remember that true discipline reinforces responsibility and independence. It is possible to express disappointment in behavior without attacking personal worth. We can and should establish structures to promote responsibility, but we should do it without punishments that sting and shame. Think about your own reactions to the people in authority over you. Would you be more eager to please a boss who insulted and questioned you or one who challenged you to higher standards?

So give respect, and respect "will be given unto you." Viewing our teens as beloved disciples, we can model better ways of listening and loving. When necessary, "I'm sorry" can be even more powerful than "I love you."

Within the safe haven of acceptance and mutual respect, teens can weather their inevitable frustrations with growing maturity, and we can enjoy the reward and privilege of discipling the next generation of godly leaders . . . and future friends.



Lynn Dean is the author of *Discover Texas*, a unit-study based Texas history curriculum for Christian schools ([www.discovertexasonline.com](http://www.discovertexasonline.com)). In addition to the *News Around Texas* blog, she also sponsors FREE weekly writing tutorials at [www.aNOVELWritingSite.com](http://www.aNOVELWritingSite.com). Lynn and her husband, Tom, homeschooled for over 16 years and led the Greater Waco Christian Home Educators support group for 3 years. Their two children are now adults who prove that homeschooling was worth every effort!





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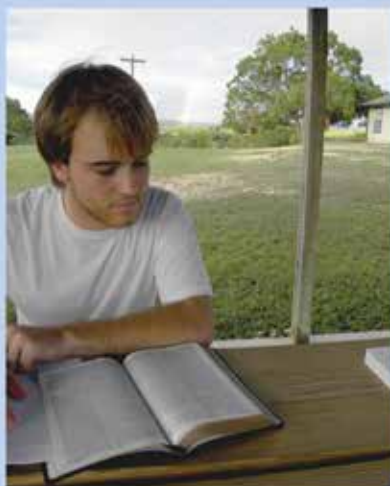
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**D**euteronomy 6:6-7 is probably one of the most quoted scripture references when speaking of home education: "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

I thought of this verse many, many times as we home educated our four now-adult sons. I often pondered what teaching my sons as I sit, walk, lie down, and rise would look like. Did it mean having regular family worship times? Did it mean memorizing Scripture and plastering our walls with Scripture?

In looking back I see that these are worthwhile activities and that this kind of thinking is correct. However, I always seemed to miss the order the Holy Spirit has orchestrated His Word. There is a reason verse five precedes verses six and seven. Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

Before I can expect to teach my children the words of God, I must be in a heart relationship with God myself. As a result of this revelation, for the past year and a half I have been asking God to help me to love Him with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength.

I did not know how He would answer this prayer, but because it is clearly according to His will, I knew He would. I confess that I expected that I would experience some sort of quickening and would find my affections being drawn heavenward.

The opposite happened. Instead of my feelings towards God changing, I have been increasingly aware of His affection for me. Through a series of experiences and scriptures, over the past several months God has been conveying to my heart how much He cares for me. Through these providences He has been communicating to me how much he loves and even likes me. As I pondered this fact, I realized it is consistent with how our heavenly Father operates. We read in 1 John 4:19 that "we love because He first loved us." As I have been shown how much God loves me, I am finding that I love God more than ever. My newfound appreciation for my Savior is in direct proportion to the revelation of His love for me. Once again God has taken the initiative and made me know that I am His and He is mine.

The most powerful scripture that the Holy Spirit has quickened to me in recent months has been John 15:9: "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved You. Abide in My love." To think that Jesus loves me as much as His Father loves Him . . . this truth is difficult to absorb, but it is the Word of God. I see with new eyes that the best thing I can do for my family is to fall in love with God and His Word continually. A heart relationship with my heavenly Father is what prepares and equips me to teach my children. In fact, as I love God and His Word, discipleship will flow from my heart to the hearts of my family members.

Recently a friend sent me an email describing what God has been teaching him and his wife about home-based discipleship. With his permission I am sharing some of it with you:

"We are in a time of real soul-searching and transition of heart and mind from external-based, legalistic forms of 'family discipleship' to which we'd been exposed and had thought, 'Well, that's how the so-called experts seem to be doing it.' Our new goal is heart based, humility powered 'just loving each other.' 'Just loving each other' doesn't sound nearly as noble and high-minded as 'family discipleship,' but honestly, it's what we need to do. We are desperate to see something of Jesus in our home these days."

Home education is not a formula but a relationship. This relationship begins with our hearts as parents turning toward God and then toward home. May God save us from the external forms and appearances of home schooling and do a deep work in our hearts that will birth relationships with God and each other that will last for eternity.



*Steve Demme and his wife Sandra have been married for thirty-three years. They have been blessed with four sons: Isaac, 33; Ethan, 31; Joseph, 28; and Johnny, 25. With God's help, they have all been home educated.*

*Steve is the author and founder of Math-U-See. He has served in full- or part-time pastoral ministry for many years, after graduating from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and has served on the boards of Joni and Friends, Christian Freedom International, and Lifework Forum.*





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# Keeping *Close to* HOME

by Lisa Pennington

One thing you may notice about our family if you ever come to visit is that we are not running around town much. We like to keep close to the old homestead.

When the kids were young I watched my friends rush from one lesson to another, hurriedly dropping son #1 off at soccer while trying to pick up #2 from karate.

They would have a fast food, drive-through dinner, go back to the house to throw a load of laundry in, and head off to bed because there were piano lessons first thing in the morning. I thought home schooling meant you were at home!

Once our kids were old enough to participate in these opportunities, we looked at the price tag that goes with many of these activities and were stunned. No way could we do all of that without building up debt or sacrificing in other areas, like electricity. It was not the life we wanted for our family.

We made a drastic decision. We were not going to enroll our children in any outside activities when they were young. Yes, it was a shocker. There was pressure from all sides to let our kids get some socialization, learn to play a team sport, or an instrument—you name it.

What I found funny was that I had no opinion about the choices my friends made to be gone from home every night, but they all had a strong opinion about our choice to opt out. Apparently we were going to be the ruin of our children. Well, time would tell, right? If they grew up feeling ruined, they could just go

get themselves on an adult softball team and figure it out.

As time passed and each of our kids began to exhibit individual talents and interests, we looked for ways to help them explore them. We have occasionally joined groups, and our oldest son was in a scout troop for a few years. That meant the rest of the family sacrificed and picked up the slack for the chores and absence of father and son on scout days. We could not do that for all of the kids at once or we would never see each other, so we chose carefully.

Now we have a houseful of older kids and a plan for managing outside activities. We put family time and the running of the home over lessons and entertainment, but we do have some wiggle room occasionally to do things.

If one of the kids wants to participate in an outside activity, he comes to us with the idea. Then we look at all of the costs: financial, time, family effort, and effect on the character of the child. Is the cost in these areas something our family wants to spend? If so, we parents share the idea with the rest of the family for their input as to how it will affect everyone. Probably more than half the time, by the time we have gone through this whole process we decide not to do it.

When we say “yes,” then the real planning begins. Our older children, for example, attend a Bible study outside the home once a week. To make this work we carefully plan the meal for that night and give them the night off from cleanup. We make sure there is a car available and that the schedule is running on time.

Music lessons are another example. It was always difficult for me to drag the rest of the children along for lessons, so we found a teacher who will come to our house. Currently we have three children taking piano and two taking voice lessons from her. This is financially costly, but for now we are able to work it into the budget. Every year we revisit these lessons and decide if we should continue.

My goal in sharing our ways of managing outside activities is to encourage you to think about these activities as a whole, for the entire family, and not simply do them because everyone else is doing it. It is OK to tell your child “no,” no matter how important an activity feels to him at the time. We have three adult children now. I can say they turned out great and are following their passions despite their lack of extracurricular activities.

Sometimes it is healthier for the family to skip the lessons and spend that time together.

*Lisa and her husband James live on a family farm outside a little Texas town with their nine kids and a whole herd of animals with which they have no idea what to do. It's an adventure they never expected, filled with moments of greatness*


*and moments of wondering why no one can remember to put their shoes away. In addition to home schooling and doing laundry, Lisa runs an Etsy shop with her daughters and blogs about it all at [The PenningtonPoint.com](http://ThePenningtonPoint.com).*





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 Texas Home School Coalition (THSC)  
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**May 9-10, 2014 ~ Arlington**  
 Home School Book Fair  
 Hearth and Home Ministries  
 homeschoolbookfair.org

**May 16-17, 2014 ~ San Antonio**  
 Home School Convention and Curriculum Fair  
 Family Educators Alliance of South Texas (FEAST)  
 homeschoolfeast.com

**June 6-7, 2014 ~ San Angelo**  
 West Texas Family Conference  
 San Angelo Christian Home School  
 Association (SACHSA)  
 sachsa.org

**July 24-26, 2014 ~ The Woodlands**  
 Southwest Convention & Family Conference  
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THSC Association, a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization dedicated to serving and protecting the home school community of Texas, is supported by membership fees (not tax-deductible) and sales of resources. The Association now offers legal assistance in regard to home education issues as a benefit to its members, along with several other benefits and discounts.

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