

HOME

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QUARTERLY

*Joy in Finding
His Purpose*

Jeremiah Thomas
2002-2018

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We are only weeks away from the 2018 midterm elections, a crucial time to defend pro-family values. Often, Texas elections have been decided by the primary results, but we face some interesting challenges this year.

While midterm elections always bring their unique set of difficulties, there are two main contests this November. First, homeschool champion Sen. Ted Cruz is being opposed by a Democrat who has raised millions of dollars to unseat him. Texas Governor Greg Abbott is also running against a liberal Democratic opponent.

These two races seem the most likely to be impacted by the so-called “blue wave” of Democratic voters that might turn out in November. Although it seems hard to imagine Cruz and Abbott being unseated by Democratic challengers, the down-ballot races may be collateral damage from the blue wave of new or irregular liberal voters.

Even if both Cruz and Abbott secure re-election, Republican candidates all over the state could lose in areas that are more Democratic. As we were reminded while fighting off establishment primary candidates, not all Republicans are pro-family champions. Many are, however, and the blue wave could indiscriminately jeopardize some of our hard-won primary victories.

According to *The Huffington Post*, Texas has the fifth-lowest voter turnout in the nation at only 55.3 percent.

Every single vote counts.

That is where homeschoolers come in. THSC estimates that there are approximately 285,000 homeschool parents eligible to vote in Texas. If you include recent graduates and former homeschool parents, that number skyrockets.

As the Greek philosopher Pericles said, “Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn’t mean politics won’t take an interest in you.” Now is the time to take an interest in politics. Complacency is the biggest threat to freedom. If we sit out the vote in November, we should not be surprised at new threats to our homeschooling freedoms when the Texas legislature convenes in January.

Connect with a campaign. Talk to voters in your sphere of influence. Make a difference. Visit THSC.org/Endorsements to find candidates who have been vetted by THSC.

With all this talk about politics, you may be wondering how this could aptly be called “The Joy Issue.” We didn’t plan the theme this issue, the theme just started recurring in articles. And if you think about it, it’s not surprising. I believe homeschooling families are some of the most joyous people you might ever meet—even in the gravest of situations.

It has been our great privilege to walk briefly with the family of Texas homeschooler Jeremiah Thomas during his battle with cancer. Even though a knot starts to form in my throat just thinking about his plight, I can’t help but also feel joy. Read “Finding Joy in Purpose” on p. 8 and see if you agree. ■

Wishing you joy,

Inside This Issue . . .

Through the plight of Jeremiah, God has answered all our prayers when it comes to our desire to love, serve and obey Him in fulfilling the Great Commission in our fallen world. It is literally above and beyond all that we could ask or imagine.

Rusty Thomas, p. 10

History involves conflict: war, oppression, greed, slavery... Every historian must have some sort of mental template through which to make sense of these conflicts.

Lynne Tagawa, p. 16

You know that Daddy is at home with you every day, and that Mommy is at work. This is a choice that Mommy and I made together—both for your benefit and for mine.

Derrick Brown, p. 23

We felt that home-schooling was the best option for meeting our son’s learning differences (ADHD and dysgraphia). There’s nowhere else to get one-on-one [teaching] and customize your student’s education.

The Gowayed Family, p. 32



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Best Practice in Science Education Now Easy and Affordable for Homeschoolers

Lack of access to well-equipped science labs has long been a slight disadvantage to homeschooling families. Meanwhile, even in public schools, children often lack immersion, hands-on activities and individual attention in science education.

Studying science in general should be a tactile and interactive activity—after all, it's the study of the structures and processes that underlie our basic existence! But most schools and home educational resources dull the shine with rote memorization and only the occasional demonstration.

We may have found a solution—a new aid for engaging, home-based science education.

MEL Chemistry is a straightforward subscription service with compact chemistry experiments delivered to your home. To subscribe, we just

entered our information on their site (MelScience.com) and selected a plan. Intrepid science wizards might gravitate towards the pro plan (two experiment sets per month), while more casual enthusiasts might prefer the basic plan (one experiment set per month). Since each set contains two or three separate experiments, either plan can easily keep kids busy!

These sets are aimed at children ages 10 and up, though younger kids can potentially still enjoy them with increased supervision.

Our first package contained not only experiments, but also a sleek box chock-full of useful equipment. An interesting cardboard construction turned out to be a headset for a virtual reality (VR) program; we also found a macro lens meant to help kids better document their experience. Counting the beaker,

flask, compact stove and numerous additional components, we had everything we needed for our very own home laboratory.

The experiment kits are equally compact. The colorful bottles of chemicals are pre-sorted neatly into plastic bags. The experiment instructions themselves are definitely easy on the eyes—they're simple and straightforward, with clear illustrations and concrete explanations regarding what we would soon be seeing and doing. And the app (available for iOS and Android) is always available for comprehensive video instructions and troubleshooting.

A MEL Chemistry subscription also includes free access to their entire series of VR lessons, which we regarded with some trepidation. But as we opened the VR program, inserted a smartphone into the cardboard headset, and stepped into an immaculate white laboratory, our trepidation rapidly turned to interest and enthusiasm.

We chose to explore the molecular structures of a diamond and a piece of graphite. As you soar through carbon atoms, bouncing off of them in all directions, watching them thrum with vibrant energy, you learn that these molecules are constantly in motion. This information isn't simply fed to you through unimaginative text—you see and feel it happening all around you.

If you've ever sought to give your student the tools to explore science in-depth, in practice, and all in your own home, MEL Chemistry just might be a fitting solution. ■

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Finding Joy in Purpose

by Lynn Dean



The Texas homeschool community sometimes feels like extended family. When one family experiences hardship, it weighs heavily on us all.

2018 has been a year of extraordinary trial for the Thomas family of Waco, Texas. Their 16-year-old son, Jeremiah, struggled against an aggressive cancer until his passing on August 26 of this year. In the midst of his suffering, Jeremiah found a platform to live out the Gospel and speak strongly against abortion.

The Make-a-Wish Foundation approached him and with his wish, Jeremiah sought an audience with Texas

Governor Greg Abbott in which he urged him to make abortion illegal.

Jeremiah's face lit up when Abbott responded, "Your wish is granted," assuring him of plans to bring legislation in the upcoming session to make abortion illegal in Texas.

In "Jeremiah's Letter to His Generation" published on Facebook (see excerpt on p. 12), Jeremiah explains the rationale and faith that prompted his wish. With more than 110,000 views, the outpouring of comments has run the gamut from encouragement to vitriol. Whereas some are shockingly cruel,

most commenters have been receptive and supportive.

Last July, I interviewed Jeremiah's father, Rusty Thomas, about family, ministry, homeschooling and how Jeremiah's illness has brought them all into sharp focus.

Interview with Rusty Thomas

When I married my first wife, Liz, I didn't have God's perspective on the importance of marriage, family and children. I was a Christian in full-time ministry and thought I was a spiritual giant, but marriage provided a major reality check. I had a lot of growing up to do in short order.



Photos by Kasper-Creations.com

We discovered that if you do things God's way, you get God's results. This biblical model of education not only allowed our family to grow and learn together, but provided a wonderful opportunity to disciple and mentor our children.

Children Are a Blessing

A year after we married, God began breaking our hearts about the plight of the preborn and the covenant of death that America has made regarding abortion. As God's word dramatically shifted our worldview, our hearts became convicted about the preciousness of children.

We became keenly aware that we, like most Christians, had adopted an anti-child mentality. God calls children "blessings," "gifts" and "rewards." Christians clamor for God's blessing while believing they can do without the blessing of children. How could we expect to defeat the evil one who lies and murders the innocent when we were marching to the same spirit of the age as the world?

In the Old Testament, a barren womb was considered a curse, but a fruitful womb was a blessing. Today, most believe quite the opposite. My wife and I repented of that idea. Afterwards, God turned on the switch of life and then broke it. We had 10 children right in a row, five sons and five daughters.

When God changed our hearts about children, we knew that our duty was to homeschool. From the very beginning we loved, cared for, trained, instructed, disciplined and taught our children at home. Every subject we taught was directly connected to God's word to root and ground our children in a biblical worldview.

For us, homeschooling wasn't just an educational option. We knew from God's word that homeschooling was a jurisdictional issue. No-where does God ordain the state to teach children. Though the church can supplement education, the family has the primary responsibility for educating our offspring (Deuteronomy 6:1-9, 32:46-47).

We discovered that if you do things God's way, you get God's results. This biblical model of education not only allowed our family to grow and learn together, but provided a wonderful opportunity to disciple and mentor our children. We took field trips to abortion mills to minister the Gospel. Our children saw firsthand the destructiveness of sin and the glory of God's redemption. Homeschooling allowed our children to go on the offense against evil instead of always being on the defense.

If there's one truth we could leave other homeschoolers regarding the previous statements, it's this: You can homeschool unto isolation, or you can homeschool unto Kingdom impact. Choose the latter.

Father of 10, Widower

On August 3, 2005, Liz went home to be with the Lord. She was 38 years old, yet she accomplished more in those years than most could accomplish in three lifetimes. Her heritage remains and continues to grow as our family presses on to the high call and prize.

Waking up a widower with 10 children to rear on the frontlines of the battle was a punch in the gut that almost knocked the life out of me. Life didn't take a vacation because Liz died. There was hardly any time to grieve as some of my children were still babies. Though I tried desperately to "get in contact with my feminine side," Daddy wasn't Mommy.

During this time, I learned it is doubtful that God can greatly use a man that He has not deeply hurt. This poem by Barry McGuire became my faithful companion.:

"I walked a mile with pleasure, and she chattered all the way, but there was nothing I learned from pleasure when we walked along the way.

I walked a mile with sorrow and nothing did sorrow say, but O the things I learned, when I walked with sorrow along the way."

My life was plowed to its core. Thankfully, I had enough spiritual maturity to not shake my fists at heaven and get mad at God. I'd learned it was vain to ask why. We prayed for Liz's healing, and God answered. The answer wasn't what we wanted. God said no. My first wife, as all our family, belongs to the Lord, and He took her home to be with Him. Ultimately, she is far more His bride than she was ever mine.

Though I could possibly have remained single for the rest of my days, it wasn't good for my children to be without a mother. One year after Liz passed, God raised up another beautiful woman, Kendra, to take me on with

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10 children. God truly brought beauty from ashes (Isaiah 61:3). She stepped in, and God used her to nurture our family back to health. Kendra had twin daughters, and one year later we had our own daughter, Jubilee. We had her when I turned 50, so the name was appropriate. Altogether, we have thirteen children.

Seven of our children have been released like arrows from the bow of family and church. Six are married (and

the grandkids are multiplying), and we still have six at home to raise in the fear and admonishment of the Lord.

The Painful Gift

When it comes to the plight of our dear son, Jeremiah, we have termed it "the painful gift." Our family has taken a roller coaster ride filled with great challenges, mourning, grief, deep sadness, and yet times of great rejoicing.





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True to His Word, God has taken the feebleness and weakness of Jeremiah's condition and shown Himself strong (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). Jeremiah's testimony has literally reached around the world, influencing the nations for Christ and His Kingdom. Daily we receive testimonies of salvation, the backslidden returning to the Lord and His church, broken relationships restored, and good soldiers of Jesus Christ recruited into the battle for the souls of men, the lives of children, and the future of our beleaguered nation. My default statement for all this is: "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Through the plight of Jeremiah, God has answered all our prayers when it comes to our desire to love, serve, and obey Him in fulfilling the Great Commission in our fallen world. It is literally above and beyond all that we could ask or imagine. The only prayer that has not been answered fully is what the future holds for our son. To live is Christ and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21)! ■



Lynn Dean, creator of the Discover Texas history curriculum, taught co-op classes for many years in Waco, Texas, where the Thomas family calls home.



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An Excerpt from Jeremiah's Letter to His Generation

Basketball season was almost over. After a game, I came home with a small injury. A little bump on my ribs. Thinking it was your average rib injury, I wrapped it up and finished the basketball season. It was hurting a lot more by baseball season, but I had already started playing, so I kept my commitment.

I kept my ribs well wrapped and it didn't give me too much of a problem. It wasn't until I got home and tried to fall asleep that I would have major problems. I couldn't sleep to save my life. My ribs hurt, and my back hurt as well. The back pain was excruciating. Sometimes I would pound the ground with my fist and cry out. My mom or dad would wake up and hold me as I grimaced in pain.

The first doctor said the pain was scoliosis in my back and a contusion on my ribs. But the pain only grew worse. We went back to the doctor's office and they took a CT scan. The doctor said we would have to wait for the radiologist to read the scan. We went home expecting to come back sometime next week. As soon as we entered our house, the doctor's office called us saying we needed to get back ASAP.

My parents and I headed back with a bit of anxiety. The doctor received us back into his office and sat us down. The next few moments were a blur as my world was turned upside down and inside out. The only thing I could really understand was that I had a tumor in my front chest and it was malignant. I was dying.

My dream to play college football was DEAD. My dream to minister was DEAD. We were absolutely blindsided. I was the healthiest I had ever been. I was in my prime! I had so many plans and goals for the year. I couldn't accept the news that I had a malignant tumor, not yet. Not now. Maybe a tumor at 70 years old; I could die at 70. Not at 16.

I was in full-time ministry mode at that time. I went out to my local abortion mill, Baylor college, and high schools. I would share the gospel of the Kingdom with complete strangers to fulfill the Great Commission. I was pursuing the call that was on my life. I thought I could only serve God if I was healthy. I thought if I was hospitalized, I would lose all opportunity to minister to others. Little did I know that God was going to use my sickness to reach the lost and encourage brethren throughout the world.

After a few months of cancer and a bunch of different treatments, here I am. I'm lying down in bed, typing this letter. I have lost my hair, my ability to walk, fifty pounds of healthy muscle, the sensation in my legs and back, and my football career. But I haven't lost my faith and hope in God. In fact, my faith in Him has been strengthened. I have grown so much closer to my Savior, knowing full well my life is in His hands. He has been with me every step of the way, guiding me and teaching me.

I've learned no matter what you get hit with in life, you sometimes have to lower your shoulder and keep trucking, just like in football. Trust God to keep your feet and sustain you. In less time than it takes to play a full football season, my life has been taken over by cancer. I don't know how much time I have left on this earth, but with what time I do have, I want it to count for God and my generation. This is my call to my generation, "Leave it all behind and come back home!"

"This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19). ■

View the video of Jeremiah reading his letter in full by searching "Jeremiah Thomas' Letter to His Generation" on Facebook.



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THE HEROES

of History

By Lynne Tagawa



SAM HOUSTON

1793 - 1863



Looming 67 feet above highway I-45 near Huntsville, Texas, the visage of Sam Houston peers over the nearby wooded slopes. This iconic statue reminds visitors of a man who looms large in Texas history.

General Houston led the charge at San Jacinto, the movement to form The Republic of Texas, and the concession to join the Union as a state. He fought against General Santa Anna and others who supported the Mexican regime.

He fought against himself, too. He was a man with feet of clay and knew it well. He sought the Lord and was baptized in 1854.

Why do we memorialize and study the lives of “great” men like Sam Houston?

Nineteenth century Scottish philosopher and historian Thomas Carlyle is known for his “great man” view of history. He purported that great men propel history forward and that much can be inferred from who we memorialize.

“Show me the man you honor, and I will show you what kind of man you are,” said Carlyle. This quote echos a biblical principle: “The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm.” (Proverbs 13:20)

Augustine also theorized about the study of history: Why should we study it, and through what lens should we view it?

In Augustine’s world, history came in one of two forms: the factual records of Herodotus and Josephus, or the heroic epics of Homer. The latter was a tangle of facts, such as the Trojan War, with fantastical backstory—gods pulling the strings and heroes wrestling with their giants, both internal and external.

But Augustine was a Christian, and he saw purpose in history, particularly in the Holy Scriptures—themselves historical documents. In Augustine’s providential view of history, great men may appear to propel history forward, but in reality, God, who “removes kings and establishes kings,” is in charge of all. (Daniel 2:21)

Conflicting Views

I didn't learn history through a providential lens and many of you did not, either. We learned social studies, in which economic or cultural movements eclipse great historical persons. In fact, I don't remember men or women being held up as "great." There was no discussion of the moral strengths or thought processes that explained their choices. What happened to that kind of study of history?

First of all, let's establish that history involves conflict: war, oppression, greed, slavery... Every historian must have some sort of mental template through which to make sense of these conflicts.

Thomas Carlyle, a humanist, acknowledged morality—esteemed it—but did not acknowledge God as the lawgiver. He recognized the conflict between good and evil but without assigning causation to either. Some of his contemporaries, such as Herbert Spencer, disputed his ideas, saying that

the conflicts that beset mankind were simply the result of limited resources. This school of thought eventually became known as Social Darwinism. According to this view, we are all involved in the survival of the fittest, and of course, some do not survive. This logic culminated in Marxist political theory, which identified private prop-

erty as the source of conflict. However, in this atheistic perspective, history has no purpose.

The providential view of history explains what the atheistic view cannot: Why am I here? Why am I drawn into conflict? Why is the world like it is?

The Bigger Picture

It is this perspective that has shaped the study of world history into social studies—often a mere

hodge-podge of faceless conflicts and movements. Events simply happen, with no overarching purpose. If there are great men and women, they simply rise to the top through the random alignment of impersonal forces, like flotsam and jetsam riding a current. We are forever learning facts without coming to a knowledge of their significance. (2 Timothy 3:7)

The providential view of history explains what the atheistic view cannot: Why am I here? Why am I drawn into conflict? Why is the world like it is? We discover the answers in the narrative of Scripture, beginning with the creation and the fall of humanity, climaxing at the cross, and ending with the victory of Revelation.

Fortunately, homeschooling parents today have access to a large selection of history curricula written from the providential perspective.

Ultimately, as home educators, we need to grasp the implications of history. By examining the moral implications of world events, we better chart our own courses as we help our children chart theirs. ■



Lynne Tagawa lives with her husband in South Texas. She has four grown sons and three marvelous grandbabies. She is the author of a Texas history curriculum in narrative form entitled "Sam Houston's Republic." Her newest book, "The Shenandoah Road: A Novel of the Great Awakening" is available on Amazon.com. Lynne blogs at GraceTrails.blogspot.com.


"Show me the man you honor, and I will show you what kind of man you are," said Carlyle.

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THE PURPOSEFUL MEANING OF EVERYTHING

Past, Present and Future

Lynne Tagawa interviews Douglas Bond, author of historical fiction books for young adults, including “War in the Wasteland” and “Hostage Lands.”

Q: How important is someone’s view of history?

A: As rudimentary and foundational as one’s view of God and all things. Either we see history as the unfolding of God’s purposeful plan of redemption, or we see it as random events that “just happened” and that are, therefore, not particularly relevant to the present. Either history is shot through with design, purpose and meaning; or it is meaningless chaos unfolding in the same way biological evolution just happened (so we are told).

Q: In your years as an educator in the classroom, how did your view of history affect your teaching?

A: I hope in every possible way. If we see history as God’s unfolding purpose, then our study of history ought to be intensely meaningful, a daily quest to see and appreciate the ways in which God has providentially brought about His redemptive purpose in the affairs of men and nations.

Q: How has your view of history shaped your writing?

A: Some might think my primary genre, historical fiction, is an oxymoron. Which is it, history or fiction? It can scarcely be both, right?

My view of history has a historical name, Augustinian historiography,

which was articulated by Augustine in his landmark A.D. 410 work, “City of God.” Devotees to irreligious secularism hate the Augustinian view of history because it is essentially a Christian, providential redemptive view of the world.

I write historical fiction in part as an attempt to rescue my reader from the bondage of the Darwinian secularist reductionist spin on history. If there’s no meaning in the past, there’s no meaning in the present, or in the future.

By placing my reader boots-on-the-ground where history happened; that is, where God purposefully guided and governed in the minutest detail in the affairs of men in the past—hairs falling from heads, and sparrows falling and dying—my hope is to demonstrate the purposeful meaningfulness of everything, past, present and future. ■



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Clinging to Joy Amidst the Trials of Homeschooling

By Peggy Ployhar

Life has trials. No matter how well you plan or prepare, they are bound to interrupt your family and affect your homeschool. Throughout 16 years of homeschooling special needs students, our family has endured many trials. Some have related to academics, but most are the result of living life together as imperfect individuals in an imperfect world.

Our journey has taught us that joy can be found even in the darkest places. However, we must choose it and resolve to keep it, no matter how dark our surroundings may look.

Doubt is an instinctual reaction to trials. That leads to worry, which fuels our fears and eventually weakens us. By giving into our doubts, we expend our energy thinking about how we want our circumstances to change. However, we have very little control over making that happen.

“The one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.” (James 1:6–7)

The word “doubt” in the verse above is translated from Greek as “one who has a dispute against another,” implying that doubt is ultimately a dispute against God’s will. By doubting anything that He allows in our lives, we disbelieve

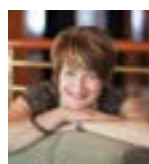
in His ability to work all things together for good. (Romans 8:28)

On the other hand, we can choose to trust God. That requires faith. Putting our faith in God means that we accept whatever He allows our family to go through. Thus, we have the ability to rest in the midst of the trial.

Yes, we actually rest! Letting go and not fighting God is the first step toward joy. God’s joy gives us the ability to wait—as we do so, our minds are cleared and our strength increases. Nehemiah 8:10 states: “Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

God’s joy is the most effective sphere in which to operate. He developed our minds to work joyfully. However, we can’t access this joy unless we live by faith and trust God in every circumstance.

No matter what your family is facing now, or may face in the coming years as you continue to homeschool, you can decide how you lead your family during trials. I pray that you will choose to look beyond the visible. Look up and allow God’s joy to be your strength and guide! ■



Peggy Ployhar, founder and CEO of SPED Homeschool, is a leader, writer and speaker in the special education homeschooling community. Learn more at SPEDHomeschool.com.



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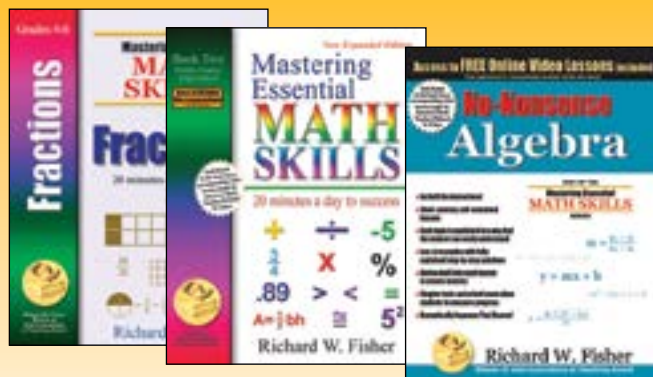


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Daddy's Home A Letter to My Daughter

By Derrick Brown

Sometimes it makes sense for Dad to stay home and take the lead in homeschooling, but even dads who relish the opportunity will struggle with feeling industrious and wanting to make a greater contribution to the family wallet.

In this letter to his daughter, Derrick Brown describes his journey of self-discovery to fulfilling industry while caring for his daughter, Hannah.

Dear Hannah,

Your mother and I learned that she was pregnant with you in January 2013. We dreamed and prayed about our future. Our dreams and prayers aligned, but they took different paths. You know that Daddy is at home with you every day, and that Mommy is at work. This is a choice that Mommy and I made together—both for your benefit and for mine. I would like to tell you how we got to that point, how the experience has blessed and benefitted me, and how it will benefit you too.

Becoming “Me”

At the tail-end of my experience with teaching at charter schools in 2010, I formally began my plan to become “me” on a full-time basis. My journey through charter schools had taught me some very important lessons which would carry me through my plan. I realized that I wanted to pursue creative writing and speaking on themes of hope, healing and change. Your mother supported my ideals, and we began the adventure.

Writing and speaking are my passions—so are teaching and learning. I had developed a lot of original content while teaching (projects, games, ebooks, how-to guides, crossword puzzles, problem sets, proposals, etc.), so I began to publish the items on my blog. But nobody paid much attention to it. Then I learned about TeachersPayTeachers.com, a website that linked buyers and sellers of educational materials. To date, we have sold 750 of our publications. I know that others have sold many more—but I celebrate the progress and embrace the process.



Music To My Ears

The next part of embracing my creativity came in the form of music. You know that I love music. I learned how to use computer-based synthesizers to produce music tracks. Then I learned how to layer them into new, rich compositions with my own lyrics.

Recording my own songs led to my desire to make movies. At first, I thought that it took too long and required too much. Then a client bought a digital camera and a CD burner for me in exchange for some extra work. Someone left a broken Dell computer on my apartment doorstep; I fixed it. Those finds gave me the tools to get started, while marriage gave me the inspiration, and soon I had crafted content into enough beautiful stories to realize that I had found my storytelling voice. My films feature the people, virtues and ideas that I love.

Hannah's Here!

Your arrival happened fast, but pictures help me remember it. Those first few weeks were filled with much joy. Before we knew it, you were one month old ... then two months old. Then Mommy went back to work. It was time for me to

You and I collaborated to make a music soundtrack for each movie. You would inspire all of the songs and even sing a few of them.

start my new job as Daddy on Duty.

It took a month to settle in and understand what each day might look like. I changed a lot of diapers, mixed a lot of formula, and took a lot of naps. I also

had a lot of time to write and a lot of new inspiration. I wrote a film concept called “The Adventures of Hannah” that I have produced each year for your birthday. It commemorates the year in pictures, video and music. You and I collaborated to make a music soundtrack for each movie. You would inspire all of the songs and even sing a few of them. A lot of our “Daddy songs” were born through our walks.

I walked you to sleep for every nap (including the overnight one). Walking you to sleep helped me to burn some calories; it helped me to wind down each day so that I could sleep; and it granted me clarity and abundance of ideas. I created brief summaries of all my existing projects during a walk. Solutions would drop into my head. During one walk, I formalized and named the approach that has shaped my sustainable role in your education. I called it “The Curriculum.”

The Curriculum

I wish to draw from my experiences to help you have your own adventure. “The Curriculum” is my blueprint for embedding project-based learning into our family’s lifestyle. I have started to understand that the different ways your mother and I have approached teaching and learning can create synergy. Your mother’s niche is formal learning (math, reading and Spanish); Daddy’s forte is informal learning. You will get the best of both worlds. You will always be immersed in a learning environment. You will engage in and practice various subjects that will stay with you long after your formal education concludes. These subjects include ministry, stewardship, entrepreneurship, literacy, numeracy, language, self-identity, self-expression and analysis/synthesis.

ChangED

By singing to you, my most receptive audience, I discovered my voice. My goal was to use my art to inspire hope, healing and change to anyone who would listen. My music could be the bridge to facilitate small group fellowship, relationship building and character education. I was not concerned with it becoming popular or being played on the radio. With this motivation in mind, I wrote and produced a “curriculum album” called “changED”—an original video collection of 10

songs (with on-screen lyrics) that encourage social change through direct action.

After producing “changED,” I decided to make an album each year (to pair with our yearly movie) to leave an intentional legacy for you. Each year’s musical project would speak to you about discerning and addressing the status quo.

Standup Storytelling

The road ahead is not certain, but I am thankful for what we have and full of hope for the future. While caring for you, I have become “me” on a full-time basis. I have converted my writing, creativity and problem-solving into products and services that I can sell. I have a story of hope, healing and change to tell. My prayer for you is that you would embrace your

creativity, never stop learning, and tell your story. And thank you for helping me tell mine. ■

Your Loving Dad, *Derrick*

Derrick Brown’s standup storytelling about love, change, equality, power, self-control and purpose can be found at ReachThenTeach.com. Contact Derrick at derrick.s.brown@att.net.

Photo courtesy of Derrick Brown

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"I like being part of a cohort; we all take classes together. There are several students from the academy in each of my classes, and we can get together and do homework and help each other. I also really enjoy being a peer teacher. I like helping all the students and seeing all their takes on our projects, because there is more than one way to solve a problem. I share their joy when the program is fully debugged, and I like helping them think of other ways to solve problems."

Gabrielle Toutin
CLASS OF 2021

"What I've enjoyed most about the Engineering Academy at Austin Community College is that I am able to stay home. I am younger than those normally going to college, so I'm glad I get to stay in Austin for 1-2 more years before transitioning to the Texas A&M campus and living on my own. It can be overwhelming being in classes with everyone older than you—making friends is a big thing, and it is really easy in this program. As a part of the first cohort of the Texas A&M-Chevron Engineering Academy at Austin Community College, I feel like we are making a legacy. We get to really embody the Spirit of Aggieland while we are still in Austin."

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Jake Robertson: From Injury to Intention

By Christina Belbas

Eight-year-old homeschooled student Jacob Robertson was struggling with fear and dread, terrified that he could lose his arm.

Jake had fallen on his right arm and twisted it painfully underneath his body. As he lay in a hospital emergency room listening to the doctors' hushed conversation, he only grew more afraid. As the minutes ticked by, it seemed that the doctors couldn't do much and might have to amputate his arm.

Then he entered the room—a doctor that Jake would never forget. This doctor made a genuine effort not only to understand and defuse the situation, but to calm the terrified eight-year-old. He made friendly talk with Jake's family and repeatedly reassured Jake that things were under control.

"Jake, it's going to be okay. I'm going to fix your arm." Jake believed the doctor's promises, and one surgical procedure later, his arm was well on its way to healing.

The doctor's influence stayed with Jake for years afterwards. Not only was he an incredibly gifted physician and able to completely repair Jake's arm, but his simple gestures of friendliness and confidence went above and beyond the call of duty.

"From that moment, I dedicated my life to becoming a physician," he says, and he determined to not only be as skilled as that doctor, but just as compassionate too.

A Pattern of Caring and Curiosity

The 2008 recession forced the Robertsons to leave their Texas home behind and eventually settle in Idaho. After homeschool graduation, Jake enrolled in Boise State University.

In his youth, Jake had many opportunities to test and try his life's calling to a caring, scientific vocation.

After a family member's diagnosis with DICER1 syndrome (a genetic disorder increasing a person's risk of developing tumors), he researched the disease for himself and compiled the most current research he could find into



Photo by Sandy Robertson

a single reference article for other members of the scientific community.

While working for the Good Word Ministry (a ministry for disabled Honduran children), Jake managed the group's social media pages, regulated donations, and gave them exposure to other nonprofits in the region. He also traveled to Honduras to help with the construction of a school for deaf children and taught basic Honduran sign language to his team so that they could communicate.

While enrolled in Boise State University in 2014, he joined the apiary team, managing the college's rooftop beehive. He spent his time inspecting the hives for blight, harvesting honey (which was then sold in the college bookstore), cleaning the hives, and collaborating with local beekeeper societies regarding the most sustainable beekeeping habits.

Jake also volunteered for multiple organizations that were resettling Middle Eastern refugees in Boise; helping them learn skills such as reading and writing as they adjusted to American life.

“America is a nation of immigrants and diversity, and the American ethos is to lend a hand to those newer Americans, often refugees, who are still trying to find their footing,” Jake explains.

Jake’s academic and extracurricular excellence was recognized with a Top Ten Scholar Award, one of Boise State’s highest honors, and the Spirit of Boise State Award, granted to “outstanding students who exemplify the Boise State University Shared Values.” Jake graduated in 2018 Summa Cum Laude with a 4.0 grade point average.

Serving Others: Becoming the Compassionate Doctor

Jake’s next move is to medical school at the University of Washington in fall of 2018.

As a child, Jake probably did not appreciate how an injury and an act of kindness would impact his life. “His [the doctor’s] compassion and authentic care touched me in ways I couldn’t possibly imagine,” Jake recalls. The future physician’s goal is to demonstrate that same life-impacting compassion for his own patients. ■



Christina Belbas is a homeschool graduate, college student, and publications intern for THSC. She lives in Houston with her family and two cats.

All images courtesy of the Robertson Family.



A Boy of the Boise Boys

The Robertson family seems destined for the spotlight. Jake’s father, Clint, along with his Timber and Love (TimberandLove.com) business partner and fellow homeschooling father, Luke Caldwell, stars in “Boise Boys,” a show about home remodeling.

Jake and his brothers often appear on the show, working alongside their father. The family is hopeful that the first season’s popularity will be the start of a long haul on HGTV. Watch “Boise Boys” on HGTV on Wednesdays at 10 a.m. CST. ■





Why I Homeschool: A Parent Panel

By Shannon Kingsbury

The general public likely has a stereotype of homeschoolers, but if you attended one of THSC's Called to Teach Homeschool Conventions this year, you may have noticed that homeschoolers are a diverse bunch. In fact, homeschooling may be the only thing that some of us have in common.

So how do people from all walks of life arrive at the decision to homeschool?

Wouldn't you love to gather a diverse panel of families and hear the reasons that compelled them to homeschool? We would, so we did!

Meet the Campbell, Gowayed, Olivera, Swanson, Kim and Anderson families. We put three questions to each of these families to get to the heart of their motivation for homeschooling. We hope that you will share this roundtable with friends, family, neighbors and others who think that all homeschoolers are alike.

What is your primary reason for homeschooling?

Campbell Family

A culmination of things in public schools made us realize that we could do better with homeschooling. The public school system was failing our children educationally and removing Christianity.

Gowayed Family

We felt that homeschooling was the best option for meeting our son's learning differences (ADHD and dysgraphia). There's nowhere else to get one-on-one [teaching] and customize your student's education. We're also committed to keeping our kids out of secular education for religious [reasons]. Homeschooling is

a great solution to all of this. We plan to homeschool our older children in high school as well.

Olivera Family

My daughter who has ADD and dyslexia was dealing with emotional problems and bullying at her high school. She didn't want to go to school anymore and started cutting herself. Eventually, the school counselor told both of us that he could only act if the bullying happened to her face. Then he told me that I needed to get her professional help at a psychiatric hospital, and I said, "No more!" I had dropped out of high school because I was being bullied, and I didn't want that to happen to my daughter. I removed her from school and began homeschooling.

Swanson Family

For black children in public schools, it's not going to be positive because a lack of resources and the curriculum available in public schools are not meant to make us strong people in any area of life. There are a lot of inconsistencies in the way that children are treated racially in public schools, and that's been documented—not just peer-to-peer but also regarding teachers and administrators.

Kim Family

Our kids learn faster, learn more material and are ahead of their peers in the same grades. Plus, we are Christians and concerned with false worldviews. Recently, my son's friend told him, "Guess what I learned in world history today? All white



I had just finally gotten the opportunity to stay home with her—there was no way I was going to send her off to school.

Photo by Eye For Ebony, Unsplash.com

men are dangerous.” When my son told me that, I said, “You know what? I’m glad we got you out.”

Anderson Family

I was a single mother and my daughter went to daycare from the age of 12 weeks. Then when she was four, I got a job working from home. A couple of months later, I got mail from the public school saying it was time to register her for four-year-old pre-K. I had just finally gotten the opportunity to stay home with her—there was no way I was going to send her off to school. Also, years before I ever had her, I had read a book about learning through play and it shaped my thinking about how education could be.



Photo by Zach Lucero, Unsplash.com



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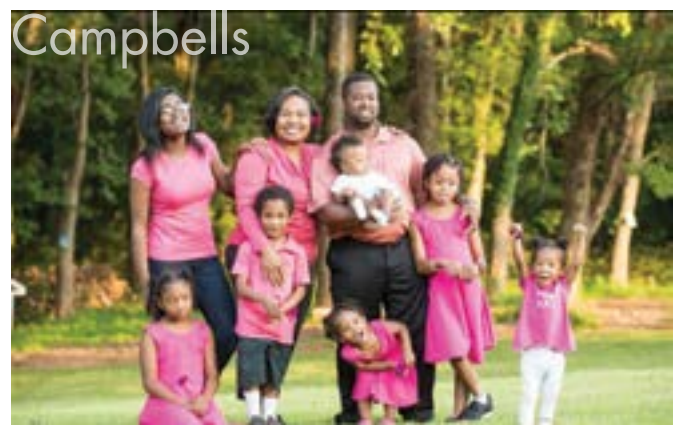
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In what ways has homeschooling made the positive impact that you expected or hoped for?

Campbell Family

Homeschooling is a lifestyle, and one of our regrets is not having homeschooled our kids from the beginning. We've watched our kids grow in confidence, and their thirst for knowledge has gone way above average.

Gowayed Family

We noticed that our son's stress level decreased. His ADHD symptoms diminished considerably. He was just a happier kid. Ten minutes of reading a day one-on-one with me improved his reading by leaps and bounds! Seeing his love of learning increase is incredible, and we weren't able to cater to his needs like that before.

Olivera Family

Now my daughter is always laughing and smiling. She loves the relaxed environment of homeschooling. She's not cutting anymore; she's not depressed. Our relationship has been strengthened. I always joke with my daughter: "Honey, when you go to college, make room, because I'm coming with you!"

Swanson Family

Our daughter is five, and she hasn't been exposed to a lot of negative influences. I like that she hasn't had the negative effects of being in school.

Kim Family

The obvious impact is the knowledge level. My children are either at or above their grade levels in comparison to their public-schooled peers. We're able to teach the kids manners. My children's homeschooled friends all behave fairly well, and that rubs off on my kids. They were picking up all sorts of bad habits in public school.

Anderson Family

I loved having my daughter with me. I know that her education was so much more well-rounded than what she could have anywhere else. I loved that she could wake up naturally every morning and start the day unhurried. I loved that she could go to the bathroom whenever she wanted. She never had to sit in class with her tummy growling, waiting for lunchtime. She got to order her day and she was responsible for getting her work done. Plus, we had the freedom to travel and see the places we were learning about in history, and practice Spanish in Mexico. She learned life skills. And because she wasn't exhausted every day, she had plenty of energy for extracurriculars like sports, scouting, dance, theater and more. She has a real appetite for experiencing new things and reading, and I know that she will be a lifelong learner.

What words of advice do you have for other parents who might want to homeschool for the same main reason that you started homeschooling, but haven't yet decided to do it?

Campbell Family

Doubt and fear about it is normal. Just do it! Go to a homeschool convention, grab a mentor, embrace the doubt, embrace the fear and overcome it by jumping head-in. Only your family can define what homeschooling should look like for you. God planned for you to be your child's parent, so you're not going to mess up God's plan for your child.

Gowayed Family

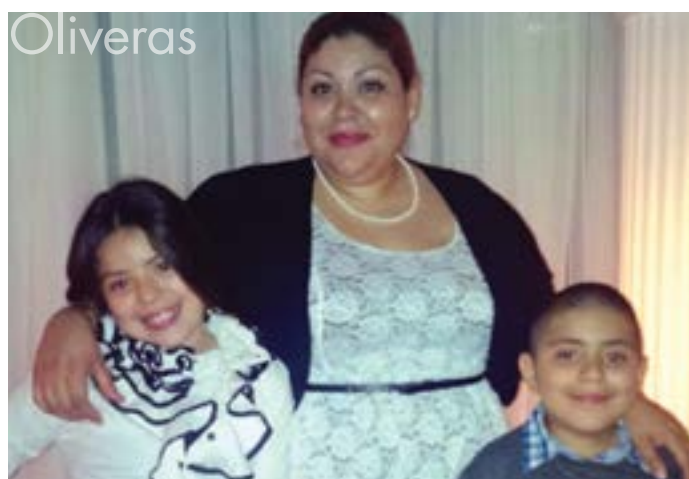
Take baby steps and don't let the magnitude and resources overwhelm you and make you decide not to homeschool. Honestly, if I can do it, you can do it! I used to think that homeschoolers were a little kooky and that I would never do it! Have the confidence to instill a love of learning in your child.



2018

School Days

Tuesday and Wednesday
November 6th and 7th
9:00 am - 4:00 pm
Texas Renaissance Festival



Olivera Family

Research curriculum and programs. There is so much available. Look for homeschool groups on social media and at THSC.org/findgroups. Talk to your kids about what their expectations are for homeschooling. Homeschooling is flexible: I'm a single mom and I work around my schedule to homeschool. My mother helps us a lot too.

Swanson Family

I made two lists about the pros and cons of homeschooling and the pros and cons of public schooling. Make lists comparing and contrasting the two, and if the list is heavily skewed toward the homeschool side (like mine was), you as a parent would naturally want what is in your child's best interest.

Kim Family

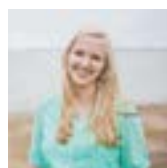
Don't be intimidated by what appears to be a lot of work, because once you start homeschooling, it's rewarding and can be fun as well. Find your routine and it'll be like second nature to you.



Anderson Family

When my daughter was in daycare, I was neck-and-neck with the daycare to be the number one influence in my child's life. I didn't want to compete against the public school system for that place of honor. My daughter and I have a very special bond and, in large part, I attribute that to homeschooling. Where there's a will to homeschool, there's a way. I found a way by becoming the caregiver to my grandparents. That lasted three years, but once I was determined to homeschool, my choices started to line up with that goal, and we were able to continue homeschooling even while I worked full time.

Like these families' experiences, homeschooling has been rewarding for me. As a homeschool graduate, I can say that homeschooling molded me into the woman that I am today. I wouldn't trade my homeschooling years for any other education. Do you want to give your children a culture that sparks in them a love of learning? Visit THSC.org/Getting-Started to find the next steps in your homeschool journey! ■



Shannon Kingsbury is a homeschool graduate pursuing a bachelor's degree in English. She serves as managing editor for THSC and desires to serve her Lord Jesus in all seasons of life. She loves reading, editing, outdoor activities (especially those involving water), and quality time with friends and family.

Some names have been changed to protect the identity of the families that we interviewed.

The Changing Demographics of Home Educators

The Coalition for Responsible Home Education (CRHE, ResponsibleHomeschooling.org) collects data on homeschooled students every four years.

The data from CRHE's 2016 survey found that from 2012 to 2016, the number of white homeschooled students decreased slightly while the number of Hispanic homeschooled students increased.

The survey also found a consistent rise in the number of students being homeschooled by parents who have not completed high school or a GED is consistent. "In 2012, 11 percent of homeschooled students fell into this category; in 2016, 15 percent did."

Homeschooled students are more likely to come from lower-income households (possibly because one parent gives up income to homeschool), although most homeschooled students live in two-parent households. Only one in five homeschooled students lives in a single-parent household, compared with one in three students across all types of education.

Clearly homeschoolers are a diverse group. Educational attainment and economic factors are not insurmountable obstacles to home education. Increasing curriculum options, including self-teaching options, in a wide range of prices are also contributing to the feasibility of homeschooling for many families. ■

African-Americans and Homeschooling

A 2015 study by Brian Ray found that the motivation for African-American parents to homeschool aligns with most other homeschool families' reasons. And occasionally they chose homeschooling to better focus on black culture and history.

Ray also reports, "The average reading, language and math test scores of these black homeschool students are significantly higher than those of black public school students ... and equal to or higher than all public school students as a group..."

"Homeschooling has grown among African-Americans by at least 20 percent since 2000. Specifically, because they feel that black boys are moving along that 'prison pipeline' beginning at nine years old," according to Joyce Burges, co-founder of National Black Home Educators (NBHE). "We're seeing more and more black families come to homeschooling because they feel like their little boys are being targeted in predominantly white schools."

NBHE serves families of all races and religions and is one of the organizations currently working with G Suite for Education (which is used in traditional school settings) to bring that technology to homeschoolers. Burges says that it will "open up the doors for more families to homeschool." She plans to explore categorizing curriculum using G Suite for Education to support African-Americans and other families who are homeschooling.

"I'm all about integrating traditional education with technology. I think G Suite will be a great tool for the millennial generation that is homeschooling," says Burges.

Visit NBHE.net for more information about NBHE and its work with G Suite for Education.

Members of THSC Partner Groups can also access G Suite for Education. Group leaders, contact THSC@THSC.org. ■

Mentoring: A Homeschooling Essential

A secret to staying the homeschooling course is to have a solid counselor or confidant whom you can turn to for wisdom.

Chyrece Campbell says: "Go to a homeschooling convention and grab a mentor. Get to know someone that's been doing it for a long time. Often, you have a picture-perfect dream of what homeschooling is like. But homeschooling is like a recipe: Anybody that likes spaghetti will tweak the recipe to his or her family. And that's what homeschooling is. There will be tweaks to the curriculum or process for your family, and no two families

will have the same recipe. A mentor can give you those words of encouragement [for tweaking]. A mentor can tell you that it's okay to have that crying break in the bathroom, that you can eat a Snickers bar, and then you come out and re-engage with your kids and be that encouraging light for them!"

Getting connected to a local group is also a great way of finding a mentor. Visit THSC.org/findgroups to find a THSC Partner Group near you. ■

Standing the Test of Time: Homeschooling's Trials and Triumphs

By Stephen Howsley

Homeschooling in Texas has drastically changed over the last several decades. THSC President Tim Lambert and his family began homeschooling in an era when it was considered illegal in Texas—and probably many of our readers did as well.

Homeschoolers began to civilly disobey the state government, which was attempting to control how families could raise and educate their children. For many families, this was a moral decision. They wanted to pass their worldviews to their children. Even today, concern with morality in the public schools is a top reason why families choose to homeschool.

The hostile legal environment in the 1980s and early 1990s forced homeschoolers to conceal their activities from the general public. If the doorbell rang, it was standard practice for the children

to stay out of sight while doing their schoolwork as either Mom or Dad answered the door. Dozens of families were prosecuted for truancy or even faced jail time for their decisions to homeschool.

Everything changed with the 1994 *Leeper* decision by the Texas Supreme Court and the new homeschool policies that Tim Lambert negotiated with the Texas Commissioner of Education. The court ruled in *Leeper* that homeschools are a type of private school and are not subject to compulsory attendance laws.

Today, homeschooling is entirely different. Not only has homeschooling diversified across political, ethnic, religious and socioeconomic lines, but it has also become a common option for families who simply believe that they can offer their children something better. By a wide margin, it is the fastest-growing, most efficient and most academically successful form of primary education in America. THSC is proud to have been instrumental in the transition from hushed homeschooling behind shuttered windows to proud ambassadors of one of the best forms of education.

THSC has continually worked with every commissioner of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and we will continue to engage in dialogue with government agencies like the TEA and others to ensure that homeschoolers are protected. In fact, THSC assists and intervenes with agencies and organizations on behalf of dozens of THSC members each year. This member benefit is just another way that THSC is *Keeping Texas Families Free*.

We look forward to standing guard once again as the Texas legislature convenes in January 2019. THSC Watchmen will be on the ground in Austin, reading bills and mobilizing constituents, because we know that ultimately Texas families must protect their own freedoms. ■

Stephen Howsley serves as public policy analyst for Texas Home School Coalition.



Do We Still Believe That Families Know Best?

By Jeremy Newman

Over the last 30 years, homeschooling has challenged the academic, social and political status quo in every conceivable way. We were the pioneers of change against a system that was hostile to anything new, anything different. We fought tirelessly against the state, the schools and crippling social pressure that was brought to bear against us. We were prosecuted, persecuted and even incarcerated because others felt they were better equipped to raise our children. We disagreed. Our stand against the status quo was relentless.

We did this because we believed that families had the God-given right and the high responsibility to raise and educate their own children. We believed that individual families were the best equipped to make decisions about what their own children needed, what things were good for them and what things were not, how to raise them and what they should learn ... This was the foundation of it all.

We believed that families knew best. But do we still?

Have we, the homeschool community, strayed from the fundamental origin of the homeschooling movement: the belief that individual families have the right and the responsibility to raise and educate their own children? Or do we still believe that parents, not the government, not doctors, not other parents, have the right to make decisions for their own children?

This question poses itself on one particular issue which has been a growing topic of discussion in recent

legislative sessions: Should homeschool families have the freedom to participate in extracurricular activities through the local school? Thirty-five other states currently allow this. Each family decides for themselves whether it is right for their family and, if so, they participate. For many, this is a determining factor in whether they can homeschool at all.

So if we believe in individual freedom, why do some homeschoolers oppose allowing families the freedom to decide for themselves on this issue? The question becomes even more difficult when you consider that we are talking about whether the power of the state should be mobilized to physically prevent families from making their own decisions.

The 35 other states that have allowed homeschool participation in extracurricular activities with the schools have never seen a regulation increase as a result. This includes both high-regulation states and low-regulation states like Texas. Some of these states have actually seen regulation decrease after passing such measures.

So is it reasonable to fear that homeschool regulation will increase if families gain the freedom to choose University Interscholastic League (UIL) activities? No. There is no evidence to support this. The Texas homeschool community has a legacy of courageously standing for freedom for families and it is time to do that again.


Considering that a separate argument, we still come back to the main

question: Do we still believe that families know best and should be able to make their own decisions? Sometimes I wonder if we would put our son in UIL activities if we had that option. Frankly, we might not. However, I still have to ask whether other families should be allowed to make their own choice about it, or should the rest of us make it for them? Should the power of the state be mobilized to compel them to make the choice we would have made?

The homeschool community has always believed in empowering families to make their own decisions. I think we still believe that. No matter how well intentioned they are, homeschoolers should not be telling other homeschoolers how to raise their kids. Each family must be empowered to raise their own children how they believe is best. This principle is what the homeschooling movement was built on and it is the only thing that will keep it alive.

The thing that makes our community great is that we embrace our differences, have good discussions, and in the end allow each family to decide for themselves. Polling shows that 77 percent of Texas homeschoolers support UIL access and that only 16 percent oppose it. Disagreements are okay. This is what homeschoolers believed 30 years ago when we fought to make homeschooling legal in Texas. This is what we still believe today. ■

Jeremy Newman serves as public policy director for Texas Home School Coalition.

A young girl is sitting on a light-colored shaggy rug, looking up and smiling while holding a wooden model airplane in her right hand. She is wearing a brown leather flight helmet with goggles, a thick cream-colored knit scarf, a maroon long-sleeved shirt, and purple leggings with purple shoes. The background features a white brick fireplace mantel decorated with colorful balloons (blue, red, green) and a potted plant. To the right, there is a large window with sheer curtains, and sunlight is streaming in, creating a warm, golden glow. A wooden toy chest is partially visible on the right side of the frame.

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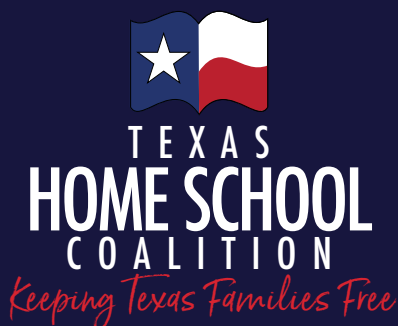
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Delighting in Writing Using Joy to Shape a Child's Writing Relationship

By Stefanie Bennett

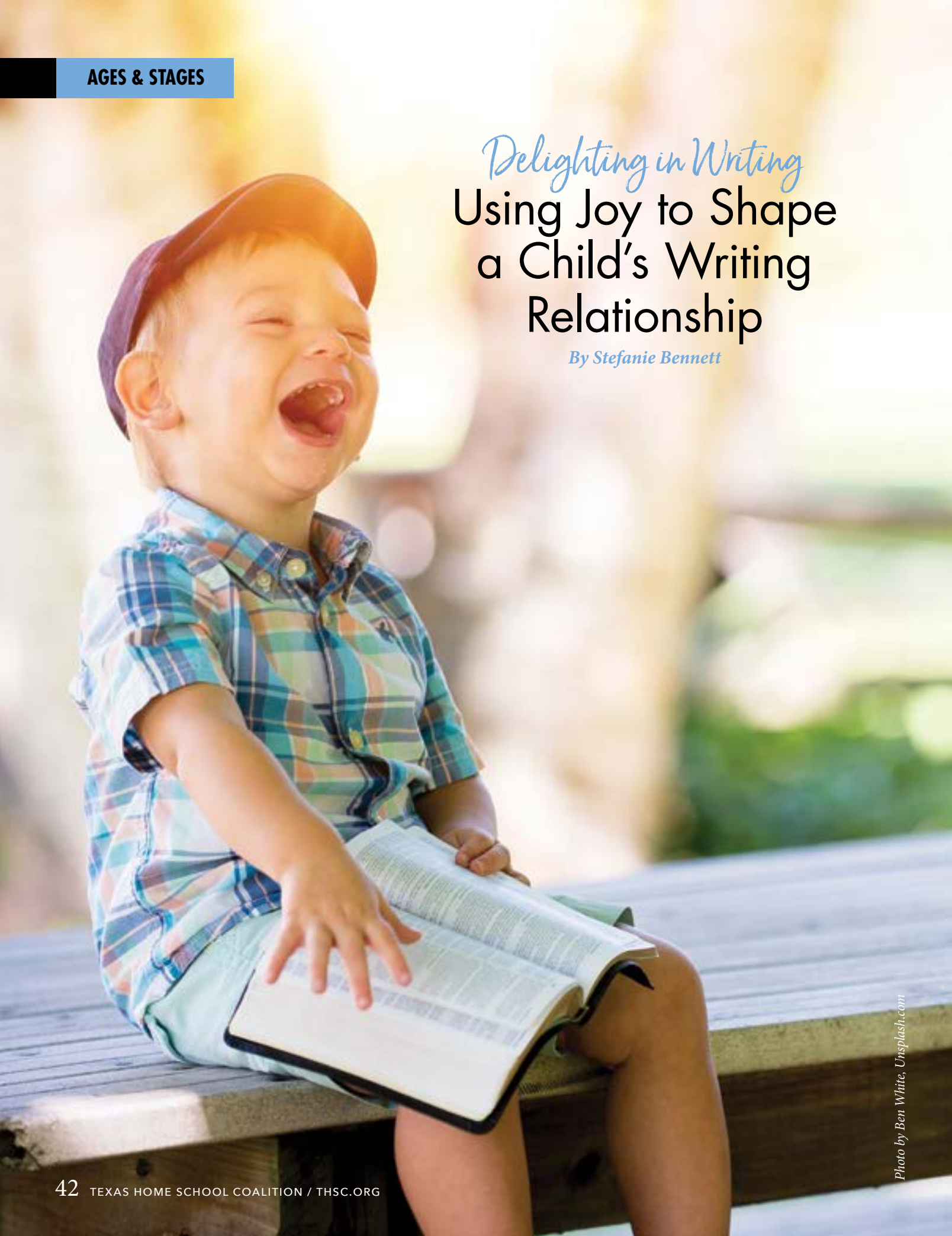


Photo by Ben White, Unsplash.com

I would like to pose two questions: What kind of relationship do you want your children to have with writing, and how does your homeschooling approach help to shape that relationship?

To answer these questions, it is helpful to first consider our own relationship with writing. Do you savor words like candy? Are they spread all over your life like confetti? Do books and journals surround your bed like a moat? Or are you the person who rejoiced when you finished school, just because it meant you never had to write another paper ever again? Beyond that, can you reflect on your own history with reading and writing to determine what shaped your relationship?

In my elementary years, I wrote a poem that, two decades later, my father is still quoting to me—and even to complete strangers! I look back on my dad's delighted response to my writing as the beginning of my love for words. It showed me that words have the power to do things in the real world—to move people; to make them laugh; to challenge them with a new or beautiful idea.

How we respond to our own children's writing has the power to shape their relationship with words too. Often, we hear both children and adults bemoan, "I'm not a good writer," or "I don't like writing." When I hear that, I can't help but wonder at the experiences that led them to believe those things.

As an educator, would you rather your children love writing first, or write proper sentences first? If we teach them to love words, doesn't that open the door for teachable moments in writing that will last?

But how do we replace the fear and frustration that has been known to accompany writing with healthy relationships instead? We can do this by recognizing that writing is both a joy and a journey.

Joy is what motivates us to try our best and to keep trying, even when we encounter obstacles. Setting joy before our children—by modeling it in our own interactions with writing, by sharing joy



over their work, and in offering positive experiences to them can help them avoid the drudgery that so many encounter when it comes to putting pen to paper.

Certainly we don't neglect grammar or idea development for the sake of "fun," but we can reflect on the ways that we were taught and challenge our approach to be intentional about what we are offering our children. If we aren't careful, we can allow grammar and a blank page to rob them of the fulfillment that comes from the process of crafting quality texts. I want my daughter to feel the freedom to create (even if it initially involves mistakes), so long as she sees them as a purposeful part of the journey.

And joy—both theirs and ours—nourishes our children as they take these risks.

Thankfully, joy is not just to be found in the finished product—we can offer it to our children all along the way. Even in the process of writing, which involves patience and perseverance, there is joy which comes in exploring new genres and writing opportunities, discovering a new favorite word or phrase or seeing new ideas taking shape.

When our children get frustrated in their writing process and want to shut down, we can open a window of possibility for them to restore their joy. We can offer them some low-hanging fruit so they can envision potential for success—a well-placed compliment or pointing out the areas where they've grown.

The beauty of homeschooling is that we know our children so well that we can determine when they are reaching the point of frustration and can offer them the very thing that will specifically encourage them to keep trying. We can step back from the workbook and remember the end-game—the desire to see our children adapt to a variety of writing situations with ease—not because writing is easy, but because they have the experience and tools to find success and joy all along the way. If I can help my daughter embrace writing as a joyful journey of discovery filled with challenges to overcome and adventures to be had, I know I will have offered her a nourishing gift.

No matter the ages or stages of your homeschool children, there are ways to foster joy in writing; nurturing healthy writing relationships that will last. It begins with reflecting on our own feelings about writing and then modeling the journey toward joyful composing. ■

Joy in Writing at Any Age

For Parents:

- Write something that you love—poetry, blog posts, journals, letters, children's stories, your memoir—to remember the joyful journey.
- Journal about your own literacy history and consider how that might shape your teaching practices.

For Lower Elementary:

- As you read books with your child, talk about what makes certain ones enjoyable for you, emphasizing your reaction of surprise, laughter or sadness. In the future, use those books to illustrate what good writers do.
- Offer ways to “make marks like mommy” in different settings through chalk, a paintbrush or crayons.
- Use alphabet bath toys to spell simple words in the tub to mix play and purpose.

For Upper Elementary:

- Share a journal or mailbox with your child where you write back and forth to each other.
- Record and transcribe your child's next winding story. Read it back to your child, ask clarifying questions,

and welcome his or her edits until your child feels that this is a story to be proud of. Then allow your child to share it with his or her playgroup, or during a library storytime.

For Middle School:

- Encourage your child to enter local or national writing competitions to instill a sense of excitement about other people encountering your child's words and ideas. For a list of writing competitions, search “Writing Contests for Kids” at ImaginationSoup.net.
- Explore writing in non-academic genres like graphic novels, flash fiction or a personal website.

For High School:

- Looking forward to future careers, help your teenager discover the various types of professional writing in the career fields that interest him or her—scientific findings, real estate listings, sermons, doctor's notes, etc. Your teenager can even interview professionals to ask about their writing processes and the important role that writing plays in their fields. ■



Stefanie Bennett taught junior high and high school English in private and public school settings before returning to school for an M.A. in English/ Writing Studies from

Texas A&M University Corpus Christi. She also holds an M.A. in Christian Education from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Her husband is an associate pastor in New Braunfels, Texas, where they are raising their daughter, Lila, alongside other homeschool-minded families. She blogs about life, loss, and sanctification at MadeOverBlog.blogspot.com.



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Children

*Have strength to let them be bored
like soldiers watching eyes white,
Hold – Hold – against the whine
until turns on the light.*

*And in one magic switch
the world becomes not,
a shimmer circus to watch
but a wild they have wrought.*

*Give dirt and sun and water
and hearten them to bleed,
creation begs its birthright
as imagination goes to seed.*

Photo and Poem by S. J. Dahlstrom, WilderGood.com.





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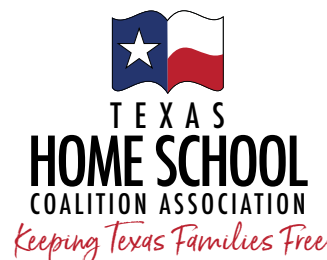
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The Texas Home School Coalition (THSC) is a 501(c)(3) educational organization that is supported by tax-deductible donations. THSC is dedicated to serving the homeschool community; it promotes home education in Texas by educating the public, the homeschool community, and officials about homeschooling.

THSC Association, a 501(c)(4) advocacy organization, is dedicated to *Keeping Texas Families Free*. It is supported by membership fees and donations. THSC Association membership benefits include legal assistance, as well as a long list of other offerings and discounts.

The work of the THSC PAC (Political Action Committee)—endorsing and supporting pro-homeschooling candidates—is supported by donations that are not tax-deductible.

See THSC.org for more information.



Leaves of Color

The following STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) activity is one of 25 in the new e-book “25 STEMulating Activities for Future Scientists, Techies, Engineers and Mathematicians” by Robert H. Roach, M.Ed. Texas Home School Coalition is proud to partner with Mr. Roach to offer this e-book free to our subscribers until December 1. Visit HomeEducator.com/StemBook to download.

Why are green plants green? One reason is because of the green substance in the plants called chlorophyll, which produces food for the plant. Without this material, all life as we know it would cease to exist.

But what happens in autumn, when some plants' leaves begin to lose their green color and change to browns, reds and yellows?

For the most part, you will see this change in trees. As cooler temperatures

begin to creep in, food production in the leaves will cease and the food the plant has been making will be stored in the roots. Once this occurs, the leaves are no longer needed, and the production of the green chlorophyll stops, allowing other vivid colors in the leaves to become visible, and signaling their coming fall from the tree.

Why are there variations in color? Why don't all the leaves just turn brown? Once the chlorophyll has broken down, chemical changes occur and additional colors manifest themselves through the development of red anthocyanin pigments. Some pigment mixtures give growth to the reddish and purplish fall colors of trees such as sumacs and dogwoods, while others give the sugar maple its intense orange.

The autumn foliage of some trees displays only yellow colors. Others, like many oaks, display mostly browns. All

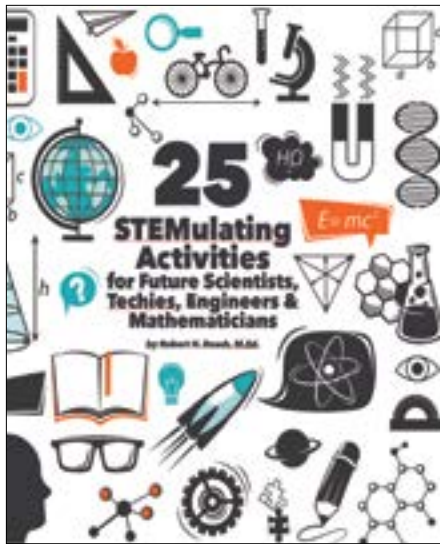
these colors are due to the mingling of changing amounts of the chlorophyll deposit and other tints in the leaf during the fall season.

Objective:

- Analyze the colors and apply the correct pigments to autumn leaves.

Supplies:

- White art paper or white construction paper
- Red, blue, green and orange bottles of finger or tempera paints
- An old shirt (worn inside out to protect clothes)
- An old paintbrush for each learner
- Water
- Leaves (various types)
- Cups (to rinse off brushes)
- Cheap paper plates
- Permanent markers
- White T-shirt



Activities:

Early Elementary

- Select variously colored leaves that have fallen to the ground.
- Place a few leaves on a paper plate
- Use a paintbrush to paint the back of a selected leaf.

- Place the leaf, painted side down, onto the construction paper or art paper, and gently press the leaf surface so that all the parts of the leaf touch the paper.
- Carefully pick up the leaf and observe the patterns made by the paint.
- Repeat the process again with another differently-colored leaf.
- Continue and use other leaves with other colors until the art paper is covered with the painted leaves.

Adaptations for Other-Aged Learners:

Middle School

- Continue with activities 1-7 and arrange into a format such as a collage, using other colors to enhance your work. Incorporate the painted leaves into your own design. For an example of similar art, research the work of various collage artists such as Hannah Höch or Man Ray.

Junior High, High School

- Develop a T-shirt design using the leaves. Once arranged, use ink and the painted leaves to impress the design on the t-shirt. Come up with spring, summer or fall-themed quotes or your own sayings to complement the arrangement.
- Adapt the early elementary activity by trying to match the paint to the color of a leaf. Correct by adding color after each print until you match the color closely. As you work, create a formula or recipe for the color by keeping track of how many drops of each color paint were used to match the color. Then visit w3schools.com/colors and select Color CMYK from the left menu to learn about the four colors that make up print images. Try to match the leaf color by experimenting with CMYK combinations on the webpage. ■

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- Cliff White, SpaceX Manufacturing Engineer
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How I Found Joy in the Journey

By Roxanne Parks

Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the task of homeschooling your children? Do you have fears about the results of your efforts? Goodness gracious, join the crowd! I found that this daunting task often left me exhausted and feeling alone in my doubts. It felt paralyzing at times. But deep in my mama-bear heart, I felt called to this significant journey.

So how do we find joy in the overwhelming tsunami of homeschooling and parenting our children? That question inspired me to write the book “Are You Enough? Encouragement for the Overwhelmed and Exhausted Homeschool Mom.”

Upon realizing that I was not alone in my feelings, the Lord quickened my spirit to host an event to build and encourage the hearts of home-educating friends. My passion has been to speak life-giving truths into our hearts that share this common ground of homeschooling. Birthed over 10 years ago, the Winter Summit event was not a convention, but a very intentional retreat to renew, refresh and restore the mother-heart for educating her children at home.

There was so much freedom in coming together in purpose and passion with other like-minded women. Besides enjoying great fellowship and side-splitting humor, it brought joy to the journey and lightened our loads to know that we were not alone. ■

“The Summit speakers were transparent, honest, and real. Loved taking off the masks of trying to live under imaginary expectations. Wow, wow, wow!”

“Thank you for freeing my heart!”

“The Summit completely changed me. I didn’t know what to expect, but it was nothing like I expected ... in a good way. It was complete refreshment to my body and soul. I can’t tell you how thankful I am for the ministry you provide for moms. So powerful and life-changing. I am forever impacted by your obedience to do this for us. Thank you for pushing through your trials and imparting His very specific Word into our hearts. I’m eternally changed.”

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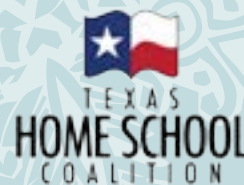
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Michelle

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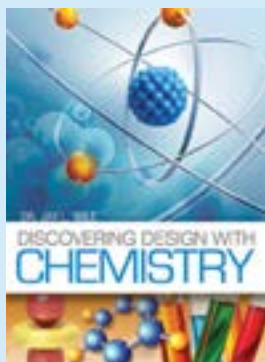
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