

homeschool iowa

A Publication of the Network of Iowa Christian Home Educators | Summer 2016

Back School!

**2016 RECAP: GRADUATION,
CAPITOL DAY, CONFERENCE**

TOOLS FOR CHARACTER TRAINING *pg. 9*

**HOW TO HOMESCHOOL
IN IOWA** *pg. 6*



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THE GOALS OF A FAITH EDUCATION

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CONVICTIONS

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*You shall love the Lord your God with
all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

*These words, which I am commanding you today,
shall be on your heart.*

*You shall teach them diligently to your sons 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 up.*

Deuteronomy 6:5-7

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what's the point?

The NICHE Board believes that even more important than quality academics is eternal salvation from the penalty and power of sin. While we come from different church backgrounds, we, with all true Christians, agree on the fundamentals of salvation:

1. All people are in rebellion against the God who created them and deserve eternal punishment for that rebellion (sin).
2. God, in love, sent His sinless Son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross as payment for the sins of sinful humanity, rising again from the dead.
3. Jesus' death and resurrection provide forgiveness of all sin and reconciliation with God to any who repent and believe in Him.
4. Salvation cannot be earned by any act on our part; it must be received as a free gift by faith in Jesus Christ alone.

If you'd like to talk more with someone about your relationship with Jesus Christ, we invite you to write niche@homeschooliowa.org for a confidential and biblical response.

magazine

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our mission

To provide Christ-centered events, communication, and resources to better equip, inform, and encourage Iowa home educators to the glory of God!



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finding your NICHE

IN 1983, AS A SINGLE 20-something, I attended an inner city church in Chicago. It was there that I first came across homeschooling. I was teaching forth grade girls' Sunday school. I noted that only two girls could read accurately and fluently. I decided to ask the mothers of the girls why it was that their daughters could read well while the others around them couldn't. Both had the same answer—they homeschooled. The mothers were very humble about it and each shared with me how the Lord led them to homeschool. I was invited into their homes and into their lives. I was sold on the effectiveness and on their biblical reasons to homeschool. Little did I know that at about the same time, my future husband was being convinced of homeschooling his future family by the example of his older sister. By the time we started to date, we each came into our relationship convinced that we wanted to homeschool. We were both relieved to find that the other needed no convincing.

We married and our family began to quickly grow. Our first child came just before our first anniversary. Our fourth came by the time our oldest was five. As we started our long-awaited homeschool journey, I remember having some opposition from some family members, church members, and neighbors. I felt like we needed to "prove" that we were doing the right thing; our kids had to be nothing short of outstanding both academically and socially to show the doubters that homeschooling was a good idea. I cringe to think of all the pressure on our first-born, especially. One thing I really worried about were the so-called "holes" in their education. I might just miss something—what if there was something they should know that they didn't? What if someone asked them a question they "should" know and they didn't? Oh, no!

As time went on, I began to realize something that relieved my anxieties. My primary job was to give my children the tools for learning—to make sure that our children knew how to read; how to write; how to do addition and subtraction; how to apply sound logic to situations; and most importantly, how to read and apply God's Word. If they had those building blocks, they would fill in any holes for themselves. These were their tools for life. My long-term goal became to develop life-long learners who would desire to glorify God in their lives.

In our early years of homeschooling, especially, we were so very thankful for a wonderful homeschool group. Friendships with those families helped so much on those hard days; and the more experienced homeschoolers were such a great source of support and encouragement. We all benefited from like-minded friendships; and our school days were enhanced with classes, plays, sports, and field trips. My husband and I were also thankful for the Network of Iowa Christian Home Educators (NICHE) and their diligence in keeping an eye on Iowa legislation, letting us know when we needed to make our views known to legislators and also for their support in everyday issues and questions. We also appreciated Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) and their work in the homeschool community in

this country and around the world. Just knowing they were there and could defend us if we needed it gave some peace of mind. These entities, along with some very good books and articles, helped shape our homeschool journey.

Seeing the fruit of our labors, my husband and I are well-pleased with the adults our children have become; their love of God, the integrity in which they walk, and the friends they have become with each other. We know that homeschooling was a tool for us in equipping our children for life. While it was not the only way to accomplish the principle of discipling our children, it did provide an advantageous opportunity for us to teach our children to love the Lord their God with all their heart; to teach God's Word diligently to them; to talk of it as we sat in our house, walked by the way, and when we laid down and when we rose up (see Deuteronomy 6:4–7).

May God richly bless your journey and give you his grace and peace.

Diane Desautniers
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Wife of John, mother of Joseph, Erin (Daniel), Wesley (Allison), and Sadie; Grandma of Wesley, Jr. and Jack. Diane has been a member of the NICHE board since 2001 and will be retiring this fall.



HOMESCHOOL OPTIONS IN IOWA

➔ a quick-look overview chart

COMPETENT PRIVATE INSTRUCTION (CPI)

CPI OPTION 1 (299A.2)

HSAP SUPERVISING TEACHER

Requires:

Form A filing and four visits per quarter by teacher assigned by public school and adherence to HSAP requirements.

Grants access to:

- >> Dual Enrollment
- >> Parent-Taught Driver Education

PRIVATELY HIRED SUPERVISING TEACHER

Requires:

Form A filing and two visits per quarter by teacher hired privately by parents.

Grants access to:

- >> Dual Enrollment
- >> Parent-Taught Driver Education

CPI OPTION 2 (299A.3)

OPT-IN REPORTING

Requires:

Form A filing and annual assessment with results showing progress reported to school.

Grants access to:

- >> Dual Enrollment
- >> Parent-Taught Driver Education

OPT-OUT REPORTING

Requires:

NO required reporting
NO access to dual enrollment

Grants access to:

- >> Parent-Taught Driver Education
(File optional NICHE Notification Report to create documentation.)

INDEPENDENT PRIVATE INSTRUCTION (IPI)

NO REQUIRED REPORTING. If written request for IPI information is received, a simple, legally-defined response is required.

- >> DOES NOT grant access to Dual Enrollment
- >> Could possibly grant access to Parent-Taught Driver Education



IPI was passed by the Iowa Legislature and signed into law in 2013.

MORE INFO

FOR MORE DETAILS ON HOMESCHOOL
OPTIONS IN IOWA, PLEASE VISIT
HOMESCHOOLIOWA.ORG OR EMAIL US AT
INFO@HOMESCHOOLIOWA.ORG.



BY HAL AND
MELANIE YOUNG

What Kind of Parent?

A MOM CAME UP after our session on raising boys. “My son is so frustrated and angry. He can’t understand why we won’t let him get his driver’s license, but he’s so immature still!”

“How old is he?” I asked.

“Eighteen.”

My eyebrows went up,

“What is he planning to do next year?”

“Oh, he’ll be going to a university,” mentioning one many hours away.

I was concerned she didn’t believe he was mature enough to drive, but was prepared to stand up for his beliefs in the college environment. We continued to talk, and after a while she mentioned that she hadn’t spoken to her parents in over twenty years.

“Oh no! What happened?” Breaking contact permanently is the capital punishment of relationships.

“My parents just wouldn’t let me grow up! They kept treating me like a child, not letting me do adult things, so when I was nineteen I ran away and never looked back.”

I paused, stunned. “Perhaps you should reconsider and allow your son to get his driver’s license.” She suddenly turned white as a sheet as she realized for the first time that she was doing the same thing to her son.

So, what kind of parent should you be? Benevolent dictator or trusted advisor?

Well, it depends on the season of your child’s life. A toddler is in desperate need of a benevolent dictator to teach him the law of God and the rules of civilization, but if we haven’t transitioned to the role of trusted advisors by the time our children are on their own, we’ve made a grave error.

As we travel around the country, we meet many Christian families. Unfortunately, quite a few great families seem to falter during the transition from childhood to adulthood. We’ve noticed that the adult children of parents who retain control too long tend to either rebel or become passive, lacking drive and motivation. This is especially true of boys. God made them to be men. He made them to lead.

Of course, it’s right and proper to train them to obey! “Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves” (Luke 22:26, ESV). As they get older, though, we’ve got to prepare them to stand alone and to be adults. We won’t always be there and even if we could be, they need to learn to rely on God themselves. So how do you do that? How do you move from a benevolent dictator to a trusted advisor?

“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much” (Luke 16:10, ESV).

We give them as much responsibility as they can handle, as soon as they can handle it—and a little sooner than they think they can. That way, instead of pushing us away so that they can stand on their own two feet, they are reaching back to us for advice!

The process starts the first time you give them a job on their own, “Put all the toys away,” and it doesn’t end until you’ve got a young man who’s taken his place in the world, serving the Lord on his own. It’s not easy to figure all this out, but it is worth it to see those arrows fly out straight and true!

Hal and Melanie Young, authors of Raising Real Men, are parents of six real boys and two real girls. They have homeschooled through eight high-risk pregnancies, three relocations, two decades, and 181 degrees of longitude. Hal and Melanie have served on the board of directors of North Carolinians for Home Education for over fourteen years, including three terms as President for Hal. Hal and Melanie’s articles have been printed in numerous magazines and publications and they have made more than fifty media appearances. They are sought-after conference speakers who routinely draw standing-room-only crowds with their mix of uniquely entertaining cross-banter and practical, powerful, Scriptural principles. The Youngs live in noisy familial bliss in North Carolina. WWW.RAISINGREALMEN.COM

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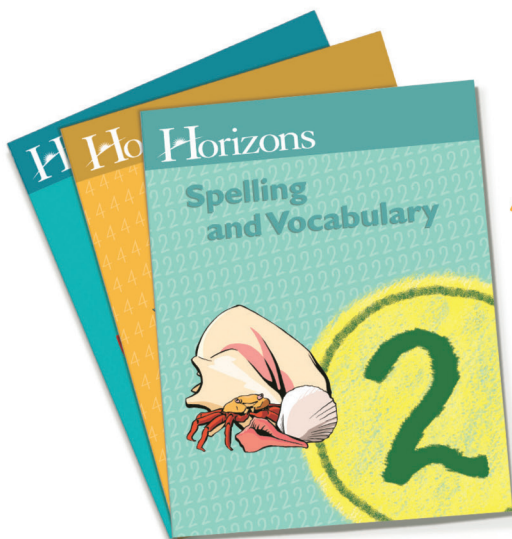
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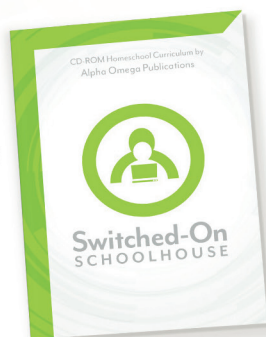


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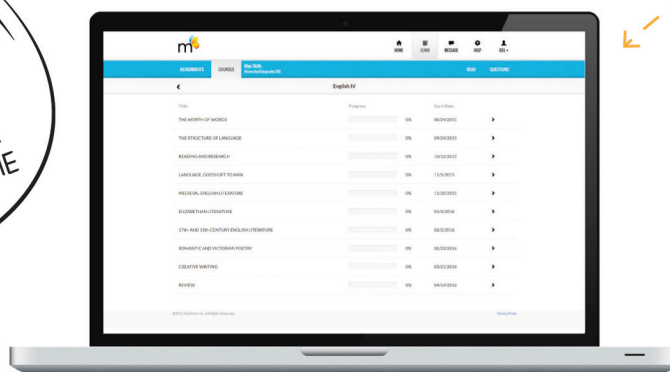


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FOUR IMPORTANT TOOLS *- for -* CHARACTER TRAINING

BY LINDSAY LAMBERT

A friend of mine once told me that if she was going to homeschool, she wanted to give her children things that they could not get anywhere else. I liked that, so I began to think about what that would be for my family. I decided it would be an education that incorporates scripture and character into all aspects of the curricula.

We believed that if we could teach our children to work with numbers, to read, and to write, and train them in character, they could educate themselves. How? They would have the tools and the desire, as well as the character needed to persevere. That does not mean we did not pursue academics; rather, we emphasized tools and character training as the most important part of schooling.

Character is moral or ethical quality. According to Character First, “Good character is the inward values that determine outward actions.” In practical terms, character is knowing what is expected and understanding why it is valuable to the extent that you are willing to do the right thing, even when no one is watching.

Why is character training important? Honestly, it makes everyone’s life easier. Think about it. If a person knows how to exhibit, for example, self-control, honor, contentment,

and truthfulness, he will get along better with peers, he will be a better employee, and his parents will have more joy in raising him.

Also, our hearts’ desire was that all of our children would come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior at an early age and learn to walk with Him. We all come to Jesus with “grave clothes,” so to speak—habits and qualities that need to be “taken off” in the new life. We regarded character training as a way to help our children develop qualities and habits that would ease the transition from unsaved to serving the Savior.

So what are the four tools?

THE BIBLE

We believe that the Bible is the inerrant, inspired word of God—the final authority for all truth and practice. In other words, it is God’s handbook for life. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (NKJV) tells us, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

One day while meditating on this passage, I noticed a progression. The Bible teaches us God’s way. Doctrine tells us what that way is, reproof tells us how we have gotten off the right path, correction leads us back to the path, and instruction in righteousness teaches us how to stay on the path.

Psalms 119:11 says that hiding scripture in his heart helps a young man to not sin against God. Have your children memorize scripture. I made it a school requirement and put their weekly memory verse on their assignment sheet. (Hey, it’s your school; you can require whatever you deem necessary!)

Also, using scripture helps your children understand that they are accountable to God, not just to you. You are not always going to be with them when they come to important crossroads in their lives—when character makes a difference—but God will be.

Some of our most used verses were Ephesians 4:32 (Be kind to one another ...); Philippians 2:3–4 (Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself ...); I Samuel 15:23 (For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft ...); as well as many verses from Proverbs. It’s probably apparent why these verses were some of our most frequently used!

CURRICULA

I found it helpful and less time-consuming to start with a curriculum. Some curricula focus on individual qualities, starting with a definition then providing examples



from real life or nature. Some reference applicable Bible verses and stories, and some suggest ways to demonstrate the particular character quality.

Take, for example, the character quality of attentiveness. (I have heard that it should be the first quality you teach, because if a child is

the motivation.) A big storm was coming, and Laura Ingalls' father and uncle were trying to bring in the harvest before it hit. Laura's cousin didn't want to help. Several times he "cried wolf," faking an injury, and distracting the men from their urgent task. Then when he actually jumped on a hornets' nest and was being stung severely, they chose to ignore his cries.

I followed that with a story from my childhood about how I had told my parents I was sick when I actually wasn't. Later when I did in fact feel bad, they didn't believe me, and I threw up—in church! How embarrassing!

I had learned the hard way as a child, but my story helped my child get the point, and we made no more false runs to the doctor.

RECOMMENDED CHARACTER TRAINING RESOURCES

CHARACTER FIRST EDUCATION *Age-appropriate character curriculum, non-sectarian. Also offers free materials online at CharacterFirstEducation.com*

CHARACTER SKETCHES *Three-book series, includes nature and Bible stories by the Institute in Basic Life Principles, IBLP.org*

DOORPOSTS.COM *offers Bible-based books and charts about character and other topics*

KONOS.COM *offers unit study based on character qualities*

PROVERBS FOR PARENTING: A TOPICAL GUIDE FOR CHILD RAISING FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS *by Barbara Decker*

TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY: HOW TO USE THE SCRIPTURES IN CHILD TRAINING *by Lou Priolo*

A CHILD'S BOOK OF CHARACTER BUILDING *by Ron and Rebekah Coriell*

CHARACTER BUILDERS, LOOKING GLASS SERIES *by Ron and Rebekah Coriell, for ages 12 to 15*

not attentive, you will not be able to teach him anything else. Good point.)

- Definition of Attentiveness: Showing the worth of a person or task by giving my undivided concentration (Character First)
- Opposite: Unconcern (Character Journal)
- Verses: Deuteronomy 12:28; John 10:27; Hebrews 2:1
- Bible stories: 1 Samuel 3—Samuel hears God calling; Matthew 13—Parable of the sower
- Nature stories: "The Wood Duck" (Character Journal)

STORIES

Have you ever noticed how quiet it gets in church when the speaker illustrates a point by way of a story? It seems to grab everyone's attention, including young children's. Teaching character qualities using stories is no different.

Stories can be about, well, anything! They can be from books, Bible stories, real-life situations (their life, your life, or someone else they know), nature, world history, your own history, etc. They can even be made up!

For example, a story from *Little House in the Big Woods* came in handy once when I took one of my children to the doctor to learn the child was feigning sickness to get attention. (I was pretty sure this was

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The most important tool is the hardest to implement! And yet, the other tools may not work without this one.

Remember that oft-quoted and oft-hated saying of some parents, "Do as I say; not as I do"? Unfortunately, that rarely works, because children are little mirrors! W.E.B. DuBois rightly opined, "Children learn more from what you are than what you teach." Put another way, "Children catch more than they are taught!"

Does this mean that you should not require your children to work on a particular character quality until you consistently exhibit that quality? Not at all! One of the great things about homeschooling is how much we as parents get to learn alongside our children. Working on our own character is a part of that. A friend of mine calls homeschooling "sanctification on steroids." However, if you wait until you are perfect to require certain behaviors of your children—face it—it will never happen!

In summary, use a curriculum. It's a good starting point. Teach your children that in all areas, including in our character development, scripture has the final word. Help them understand that everyone will exhibit character. Theirs should please the Lord.

Then pray like crazy! Ask God to help you be a good example to your children. Ask Him to help you be aware of areas in your life and in the lives of your children that need work, and for wisdom on how to best proceed (James 1:5). Ask God to bring to mind, and across your path, stories you can use to help your children understand what good character is.

Never forget that you are dealing with human beings (translation: sinners). They are probably not going to learn to exhibit good character after the first lesson—it may not even happen in your lifetime. God has not promised us that we will be successful, but He has called us to be faithful!

Lyndsay Lambert, a graduate of Texas Tech University, homeschooled her four now-grown children for sixteen years. She assisted Tim, her husband of over thirty-five years, in serving the homeschool community, first in helping to start and lead their local support group and, from 1990–2013, in running the Texas Home School Coalition, the state organization committed to serving Texas homeschoolers. Her strongest desire, however, is to encourage homeschool moms and support group leaders in the work that they are doing. Lyndsay now blogs regularly at FromAnOlderWoman.com.

Homeschool Iowa Capitol Day 2016



Over 450 homeschoolers from across Iowa gathered at the State Capitol on Thursday, April 7, to meet their legislators and learn how to build relationships with them. Informative and interactive training sessions equipped families to meet their legislators face-to-face with confidence, and families could also participate in Capitol tours, scavenger hunts, prayer walks, and historical reenactments! Thanks to everyone who came and put a "face to homeschooling" for our legislators!



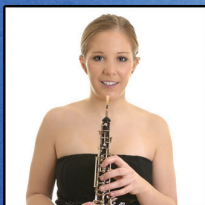
On May 21, NICHE held its twenty-first high school graduation ceremony at Des Moines First Church. Between the two ceremonies, eighty-six bright-eyed, future-bound students walked across the stage to receive their diplomas. A special message from the parents to their graduate was read by our narrators as each family posed on stage for a picture. These graduates and their families traveled from all across the state—one even from Nebraska. Our commencement speaker, Mr. John Stewart, addressed the graduating classes on navigating the "brave new secular world" of today as biblically minded Christians. The Network of Iowa Christian Home Educators congratulates these graduates and wishes them the best in their future endeavors.

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THE FINAL ROUNDUP



"I love the encouragement that we gain from the conference every year. It really helps us continue in this journey."

***"Speakers spoke to my heart.
...Workshops that I went to, greatly
exceeded my expectations."***

***"I was so encouraged to keep on raising
my children for the Lord."***

***"Excellent speakers! I left with new ideas and
knowledge. I also felt encouraged
and energized."***

***"The number of families working with their
special needs children in the home setting
is growing! I was thrilled to find so many
sessions that related to meeting those needs,
including emotional needs!"***

***"I don't feel overwhelmed by the thought of
homeschooling anymore. I am more prepared
to be a better teacher and mom
to my kids."***

***"Being encouraged in the workshops and
learning so much that we want to implement
in our homeschool."***

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2017 CONFERENCE Q & A

Q: Why is the Homeschool Iowa Conference moving to the Iowa City area?

A: Homeschool Iowa has been searching for a facility that would accommodate our conference space needs, assist in offering more economical options for attendees and exhibitors, and continue to connect homeschoolers from across the state to one another. After careful facility comparisons of both churches and event centers around the state of Iowa, along with demographic research, it was determined that the Coralville Marriott Hotel & Conference Center could provide for the needs of the Homeschool Iowa Conference in a manner that both attendees and exhibitors could best utilize. The Coralville Marriott features 30,000 sq. feet of exhibit space, 2 ball-rooms, 13-20 breakout rooms, 280 hotel rooms, an outdoor terrace along the Iowa River, on-site concessions and dining, additional dining options within a 2-block radius, and a convenient location along Interstate 80.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the heart of Homeschool Iowa.

We are grateful for the many hands that made the 2016 Homeschool Iowa Conference a wonderful experience for the children, teens, exhibitors, and attendees. Thank you for taking the time to bless the many homeschooling families of Iowa with your gifts and talents, as noted by several of our survey responses:

"Exceptional help from volunteers! They were great. We've never been in and out during setup so quickly anywhere else!"

"You have the best group of individuals helping with this conference from adults to teens."

We couldn't agree more!

Thank you!

THE HOMESCHOOL IOWA BOARD





The Crucifixion of Contentment

It seems harmless. It even feels constructive. A miniscule issue, surely. Hardly something to be concerned over ... But

God has been showing me that it's the executioner of my peace. It's the killer of contentment. It's merciless, miserable, and makes no exceptions. What is it?

Com-par-i-son (kuhm par'uh suhn): n.

1. the artifice of judging God's goodness to me based upon how it appears from my perspective when placed next to His goodness to someone else.

2. a very dangerous practice; a poisonous perspective resulting in self-pity, self-condemnation, and/or insecurity and stemming from evaluating my position using subjective standards. (Taken from the Dictionary of God Using His Word to Convict Me.)

I don't know why I do it, but I sometimes find myself struck with the sour grape syndrome, grumpy over my life for no apparent reason. Out of the blue, it seems, my life is to be pitied or drastically altered OR ELSE—or else what? Or else I just simply cannot be content ... or can I? After some digging around for heart issues, I discover that I have been visited again by the Grinch Who Stole Gratitude (a.k.a. Comparison). See, what I have done is begun weighing my circumstances in the faulty balance of my own wisdom.

“Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good. Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way? (Proverbs 20:23–24)”

See, truth is not relative in nature, but relativity is the essence of comparison. God is truth, and His perspective is solid. Our perspective is, well, “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).” That would relegate it to the “divers weights” category, unfortunately.

I often feel as if my life is a puzzle for which only God can see the finished picture. He is fashioning and fitting each piece together perfectly, but my comfort necessitates a firm belief in that revealed truth. As I look around, I can see pieces of other puzzles—of His plans for those around me—and I admire them. I'm tempted at times to cry out in woebegone complaint over the “missing pieces” in my puzzle, desiring to take pieces from their puzzles and fit them into my own. But puzzles are much too specific to share pieces; they would lose their speciality and intrigue.

I have been graciously prompted by the Lord of late to have a “just measure”—to judge my circumstances based on truth.

“Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt

Have you ever looked at someone else's life and wondered what you were doing with your own? Have you ever looked at someone else's appearance and immediately felt embarrassment over your own? Have you ever spent time with someone else's family and found yourself mentally filing an entire list of grievances against your own? Have you ever considered someone else's circumstances and suddenly despised your own? Or are none of you like me?

bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. (Psalm 116:7–8)”

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

What does God tell me? He tells me that His goodness and wisdom are always in His plans for His children. Therefore, they must work hand-in-hand, never arguing or opposing each other. They are always in perfect harmony and unison.

Thinking back to the Garden, I was recently reminded that the first sin occurred after Eve doubted God’s perfect wisdom and goodness. The serpent enticed her to feel as though God was withholding goodness from her, keeping back something healthy and desirable.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5).

I often feel the same way when I operate based upon my senses rather than based upon God’s Word. Yet, the fruit was not hers for the taking. God had designed that tree to bring Him glory through another purpose. God has given me an entire garden of fruit trees to from which to eat—fruit that was designed for me to enjoy. His blessings are rich.

One of my favorite books of the Bible is Philippians, in which Paul says, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope,

that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Paul was being persecuted for his faith, and none of us would call his physical situation a bed of roses—or anything close to it. But he was full. His contentment came from knowing Christ and from bringing God glory, both of which (through Christ) can be successfully accomplished through the most unenviable circumstances imaginable. True contentment comes from things which can never be taken away from me. God has poured out spiritual blessings on me. No matter what I walk through, the joy of knowing and serving Christ only grows deeper. Why would I despise His goodness and sabotage my joy by presuming that I need or deserve more, disbelieving what He has labeled “good” for me?

Emily Selander is a 2013 homeschool graduate who lives near Silver City, Iowa, with her parents and two younger sisters. Her goal is to glorify the Lord each day of her life by serving and loving Him to the fullest. She spends much of her time helping her family manage their home and ministry, serving at church, and being involved in the discipleship of younger girls through various avenues, such as leading a Bright Lights group. She also spent the past year organizing and facilitating the home education for a family with younger children.

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Baby Shower



I WAS RECENTLY ASKED to speak at a baby shower. My youngest is fifteen, so it has been a long time since we had a baby in the house. Working on the devotional for the shower brought a rush of memories from my childbearing years. Since this is a column for homeschool moms, many of whom might be expecting or have new babies, I thought I would share the devotional from the baby shower.

Being a mom will probably be the hardest thing you will ever do; you will make more sacrifices than you ever thought possible. But motherhood will also be the most rewarding thing you ever do. You will love your children more than you ever thought possible. You will cry more than you ever have. You will laugh more than you have ever laughed before. You will learn to depend on God more than ever. God uses your motherhood for your own spiritual growth and sanctification.

I remember looking down at the sweet, tiny face of my first-born son. It was at that moment I realized my heart would never be in my own body again: instead, my heart would be walking around in the form of this little boy and all my future

children. It would be walking around in the form of this little boy and all my future children. Their joys would be my joys. Their heartaches would be my heartaches. I will worry or, to phrase it in more spiritual terms, “be concerned” for them until the day I died. Nothing makes you depend on the Lord as much as knowing a little life is both physically and spiritually in your hands.

One of my favorite quotes when my children were little was, “The days are long, but the years are short.” Treasure each moment with your children. Trust me when I tell you that you will blink, and they will be twenty-four years old and married.

Do not sweat the small stuff. The small

fact, a big deal. Taking a child out of the church service to discipline them seems to go on for years. The tenth time you correct your child for snatching a toy from his sibling, you will wonder if they will be snatching things from people when they are twenty. But to keep it in perspective, such struggles are a short season in your life, even though it doesn’t feel like it as you are going through it. Your baby will eventually sleep through the night. Your child will eventually sit through a whole church service. They will learn to not take toys away from their sibling. I remember going through times that were incredibly difficult with my children. Now I cannot even recall the details of those struggles.

Trust me when I tell you that you will blink, and they will be twenty-four years old and married.

stuff can seem like a huge deal in the moment. Getting up multiple times a night with a baby and being sleep deprived is, in

They were huge deal at the time, but over the years of parenting, they truly are a very short season.

Do, however, sweat the big stuff. Be like Timothy's mother, Eunice. Scripture does not tell us a lot about her, but we do know that she instilled God's Word in Timothy's heart, because Paul talks about this in I Timothy. Teaching your child God's Word, helping them memorize Scripture, praying with them and for them ... these will be the most important things you can ever do as a parent.

You won't get everything done! There will always be more things to accomplish than there are hours in the day. It is easy to be a Martha instead of a Mary. However, this is a time when you need to be in God's Word and prayer more than ever. It is better to go to bed with a sink full of dishes, than to not have spent any time in God's Word and prayer that day. When you are feeding your baby, you can read the Bible aloud to him. You can keep your Bible in a place where it is easy to reach it and read a verse every now and then throughout the day. Then meditate on that verse as you go about your duties. Pray throughout the day: as you change the baby's diaper, as you do the dishes, as you clean your house.

Having children can put a strain on even the best of marriages. People have a hard time believing this because we were married for nearly five years before we had a living child, but Jeff and I did not have a serious disagreement until we were parents. Part of it might have been our personalities, but I think a lot of it was that day-to-day life just isn't quite as stressful without children. My children are a huge blessing, and I am so thankful for them and would not trade them for anything! Having young children is a lot of work. You lose sleep. You and your husband may not always agree on the best way to handle each situation that comes up. I was not prepared for this at all, and it really threw me when Jeff and I had our first major disagreement when our oldest was a few weeks old.

Make sure that your marriage is your top

priority. Marriage is your most important human relationship. This is something that is easy to know in our heads, but often hard to put into practice, especially when you have a baby. Practically speaking, when your child is very small, there will be times your husband may need to take a very temporary back seat. It is hard to gaze romantically into your husband's eyes if the baby is screaming from hunger. However, as the child grows, help him to learn that "Daddy comes first." Children feel much more secure when they know that their parents love each other and that nothing comes between Daddy and Mommy, not even them.

What I am about to say now is politically incorrect, but I believe it is biblically correct. If your husband doesn't want to handle a parenting situation exactly like you would, submit to how he would handle it, provided his approach is not unbiblical. Obviously, it is fine to lovingly communicate your opinions, but if you can't reach an agreement, do it his way. Even if it is not the "best" way to do it, it does far more damage to your family and marriage if you contradict how his conscience leads him than it does to have your way.

Children are far more secure if they know nothing comes between daddy and mommy, not even them.

Teach your children to love and respect their daddy. Talk about him throughout the day. Never say anything negative to your children about their father. Have daddy's arrival be the highlight of the day.

Ultimately, it doesn't matter in the least how smart, athletic, musical, or creative your child is. Whether your child reads at four or starts reading at nine won't impact the big picture of his life. What truly matters is that you teach him from an early age to apply this verse to his life:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

If your child can do that, he will have everything that matters in light of eternity.

***Kim Stilwell** has been married to her best friend, Jeff, since 1987. They have five children: Joshua (married to Alissa), Joseph (20), Josiah (18), Jessica (17), and Jennifer (14). They live in Des Moines and have always homeschooled.*



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IN HIS BOOK *POINT MAN*, Steve Farrar shares a powerful illustration of the importance of fathers throwing a rope to future generations and not thinking so short term. He uses climbing Mt. Everest as the example. Like almost everyone who has ever lived, he also has never climbed the world's largest mountain. But plenty have written about it.

In order to climb Everest, one begins with a 120-mile trek over a couple of weeks

That's when Jimmy slipped on a rock and fell into the fast-rushing river. He tumbled and twisted down the river like a rag doll. He tried to grab on to a rock, but the river was simply moving too fast. Suddenly, he stopped. His backpack had caught on a rock in the middle of the river. And just four feet away, the river tumbled over a cliff and dropped one thousand feet to the valley below.

Jim says of his son, "I couldn't help him. If I started toward him, I might dislodge another rock, I might change the direction

put his weight on them. Now he needed a way back upstream. "Throw me a rope," he called over his shoulder. They did. And by the very slim margin of forty-eight inches, he avoided falling a thousand feet to a sure and swift death.

Christian dads have a sacred responsibility, metaphorically speaking, to "throw a rope" to this generation, as well as the ones to come. Life is too short to simply do "fly by the seat" parenting/discipleship. It's not that there needs to be a 300-page manual we diligently work through with our children which encapsulates every shred of information we think is important to transmit to future generations.

What is important is that we live with a continual awareness that we are in fact passing our lives on to future generations. Every time dad wrestles with his little girls or plays ball with his boys, something important is being transmitted. Every moment spent in a posture of worship, prayer, praise, interacting over eternal truths, or listening to the Word of God preached is also transmitting important information into the lives of impressionable souls.

Likewise, every time we trivialize eternal truths, bad-mouth the pastor behind his back, find yet another lame excuse not to attend church today, or yell at our children for no good reason (a good reason being that they are in imminent danger), we also pass on our own sinful baggage.

For what it's worth, I have read that if you yell for eight years, seven months, and six days, you will have produced enough sound energy to heat one cup of coffee. Not only is yelling an ineffective mode of heating coffee, it also tends to be an ineffective mode of parenting.

Someone once said that the best thing in the world that parents can do for their children is to love God with all their hearts. Sounds like a solid and biblical aspiration to me!

The old Preacher in Ecclesiastes (3:1-8) reminds us that there is a time for every matter under heaven. Our times are in God's hands and we would do well to ac-

throwing a **SOLID ROPE** *to future generations*



that enables the team to become acclimated to the altitude. Any hike that begins at 13,000 feet and goes to 20,000 feet is tough. Various camps are established and then the real ascent can begin.

In 1988, Jim Hayhurst, along with this twenty-year-old son, Jimmy, was part of the Canadian team that was making the ascent to Everest. As they were trekking across the Himalayas on the first stage of the climb, they had to ford one of the many rivers flowing down the lower part of Everest.

or pressure of the water and he might slip off the rock that was holding him above the waterfall. I had to stand, twenty feet away from my son, and watch him hang at the edge of a 1,000 foot cliff, and I couldn't do a thing to help him."

His son Jimmy slowly reached back, looking for a secure handhold. His hand found only loose rocks, nothing that could support his weight. After minutes of grasping, Jimmy finally found some rocks that didn't shift when he grasped them. He would be able to

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cept this fact. There is “a time to keep, and a time to cast away ...” (v. 6b).

Most of us reading these words are still primarily in “a time to keep” with regard to our children. But there probably will come a day when they will be lovingly “cast away” to begin their own stories; some to marriage, some to educational opportunities and/or apprenticeships, still others to begin their own businesses. The very thought of my children experiencing the inevitable pain and varying degrees of failure apart from their mother and me is difficult to accept. And yet we will be with them in the sense that, for good or ill, and probably both, they have seen us endure trials and have learned how to respond in adversity.

In Ecclesiastes 3:11–13, the Preacher writes that God “has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.”

No scientific poll here, but I suspect that most men don’t find great joy and satisfaction in their work. Neither do most of us thrive in times of great adversity. Yet Ecclesiastes makes the application throughout this book that we should, in fact, be content with what God has ordained for our lives. We can be joyful, content, and do good as long as we live, even when doing menial, unsatisfying labor, but only with an eternal perspective.

This is not to say that a man should not have dreams and aspirations. He should. It seems to me, however, that God has a way of making our dreams and goals sprout most rapidly in the fertile soils of true contentment. Do not let the disappointments of life rob your children and future generations of a rock solid trust in God’s plan for your life.

We fallen beings tend to worry and fuss over all the wrong things. In Matthew 6, Jesus promises to take care of His children. The best thing we can do is to “seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”

Men who model this are throwing a rope to future generations that cannot fail.

Whatever we do, we dare not simply “assume” that this and future generations will turn out okay. We need to set our faces like flint toward Jesus Christ and His Word, diligently pray, be constantly aware of the little eyes around us watching, always watching and listening. We must be diligent in our commitment not to become complacent.

Several years ago, I clipped out an article from *The Des Moines Register* that provided a wonderful picture of the importance of keeping our heads in the game. Shortly be-

Do not let the disappointments of life rob your children and future generations of a rock solid trust in God’s plan for your life.

fore his Aero-Peru Boeing 757 crashed into the Pacific Ocean in the fall of 1996, pilot Erik Schreiber complained that he had lost all of his navigation instruments.

“The computers have gone crazy,” he said. Moments later he said, “What’s happening? What altitude am I at? Why is my ground crash alarm on? Am I over land or sea?”

Schreiber tried to make it back to the Lima airport in the early morning darkness, but his plane crashed into the ocean 28 minutes later, killing the pilot and 69 others on board. This was not the first time air traffic controllers had heard such chilling words. Cockpit computers played a role in two other 757 crashes in the previous year, claiming 349 lives. While investigators do not know what caused the trouble with either plane, there was a similar symptom: a breakdown in the plane’s revolutionary “glass cockpit.” This is the area that houses the computerized panels, color television screens that inform pilots about their plane’s course and mechanical functions.

I don’t know how things have changed since then, but even back then they had redundant electronics backed up with several tried and true manual instruments. What investigators found out was that a sudden

loss of the computerized images can stun pilots. Some critics say that the very same electronics which allow pilots to plot their entire trip, including the landing, also can cause them to lower their guard.

A veteran 757/767 pilot said this: “What happens is, guys get focused on the magic and forget the plane is still flying.” He went on to describe that pilots are instructed to turn off the electronics when a problem arises and simply use a compass and mechanical airspeed indicators. He said the switch is sometimes more difficult for the younger pilots to make. “They forget that

as long as the wings are there and there’s no problem with the power plant, you can still fly ... you just have to make the mental shift” (*The Des Moines Register*, Oct. 10, 1996).

Fellow fathers, let’s not be lulled into thinking that autopilot is going to get us or our families where we need to be. Rather, let’s commit ourselves once again to glorifying God and enjoying Him forever, even if the temporary is not always pleasant.

At the end of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher summarizes it all in this way: “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandment, for this is the whole duty of man.” And don’t ever forget that in doing so, you, too, are throwing a rope, not only to your own children, but also to the generations yet to be born. Let the legacy begin!

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Mike Evans of Earlham and his wife, Karla, are homeschool parents to five children: Luke (23); Benjamin (21), a student at the University of Northwestern—St. Paul; Elisabeth (17); Gabriella (13); and Jared (10).



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