



# Connecting Our *Learning & Our World* THROUGH Current Events

BY AMBER SMITH

**H**ow is your relationship with the nightly newscast? For many, it has been a rocky few months, but, as a family, we are talking about the news in our home on a regular basis. We created the habit of scanning headlines and reflecting on the daily news a few years ago, when we added current events as a regular subject in our homeschool.

Not since 9-11 has the daily news been such an important topic for the entire nation. This school year, make sure to create space in your school day to spend intentional time with your students listening and interpreting current events. It seems like every week there is another wave of setbacks, closings, and outrageous acts reported in a seemingly unending loop in the news. There is a great temptation to shut the news off, or, at the very least, to keep your children from hearing it. The fact remains that even if we limit our exposure to the daily news, there is a world beyond us that deserves our educated response. We have the opportunity to represent a community of hope in dark and troubling times.

## **We Are Members of a Larger Community**

We have a responsibility to make current events a part of our life for several reasons: First is the fact that your children are listening. You might not have the television blaring in the background, but don't naively believe that little ears aren't listening to the news broadcast in snippets and scanning across the headlines in stores. Children hear our conversations and those of adults around. We invite them to become active listeners when we offer appropriate explanations and the ability to ask questions. If we fail to make time for regular conversations about current events, our children are left to create their own conclusions.

## **As Parents, We Help Shape Our Children's Response to the World**

As adults, we use the broad scope of our education, life experience, and acquired knowledge to understand news, events, and portrayals of people groups all over the world. The second reason we need to address current events in our homeschool is that our children have a limited pool of knowledge and experience to draw conclusions from. When the news includes horrific conditions in another country, frightening claims, politically motivated editorial work, or an endless stream of negative news about the city they live in, we, as parents, need to be there to offer context and scope to the conversation. By doing this, we train our children to seek facts, balance arguments, and develop critical thinking skills.

One benefit of having current events as a part of our homeschool is that it leads our children to explore these topics in greater depth. Early in the year, China was at the top of the nightly news. On big screen TVs, some children had their first glance of China. As the nightly news showed empty cities, strange markets, and spoke of a threatening sickness, I knew that this is not a true representation of China as I know it. But to a child, this might be the only visual cue they are left with. This is not the last thought any child should have of China.

## **Current Events Can Show What We Need to Learn**

We use several resources to gather news stories weekly. (see caption) Students in the junior high level are asked to read and respond to three news stories every week. Often these "reports" are delivered in a less formal discussion format. It never fails that the stories our