

to just prepare for those standardized tests? This is one myth that we desperately need to hit hard! Let's do it!

What are you looking for as you educate your children? For just a moment, make a list of what you would like to accomplish as you educate your children...

Now, how CAN we ascertain when our children learn or how much they are learning or when they have attained our goals?? If you are thinking that testing can let you know how you are doing, think back to your goals. If your goals are similar to my goals, you will find that testing is certainly unable to show progress. For example, some things that testing cannot detect or measure...

- ...Delight in learning
- ...Responses to real life situations
- ...Real educational skills
- ...Real life skills
- ...Real knowledge
- ...Self-determination
- ...Self-sufficiency
- ...Motivation
- ...Relationships with God and others!
- ...Self-education
- ...REAL EDUCATION!

Want to know the downside of testing?? Take a look at the following quotes...

"High test scores can give us a false sense of security and success, and low scores can give us a false sense of failure and low achievement... Those who believe they are doing poorly at educating

their children just because of poor test scores are in the same state of delusion as those who believe they are doing well at educating their children if the test scores are high!"

Barb Shelton, *Guide-a-log* (page L-9)

"If I were to have to label much educational material today, I'm afraid a large percentage would definitely be twaddle. How colorfully and scientifically our generation talks down to the little child! What insipid, stupid, dull stories are trotted out! And we don't stop there. WE don't respect the children's thinking or let them come to any conclusions themselves! We ply them with endless questions, the ones we've thought up, instead of being silent and letting the child's questions bubble up with interest. We tire them with workbooks that would squeeze out the last drop of anybody's patience. We remove interesting books and squander time on a clinical procedure called "reading skill testing," using idiotic isolated paragraphs, which nobody would dream of choosing to take home to read. The recording of testable features of a child's taught tricks ('Skills') is held to be more important than the mysterious, exciting growth of a person."

Susan Schaeffer Macaulay, *For the Children's Sake*

I have to agree with Charlotte Mason who wrote in her book *Philosophy of Education*, (page 55)...

"It is the use of test of this kind that we turn out young people sharp as needles but with no power of reflection, no intelligent interests, nothing but the aptness of the city gamin."

If this is our heartbeat, our ultimate goal, then we need not fall under the pressure that abounds simply due to the myth of testing, even in the high school years.

Myth #6...Children need to be in schools to carry the gospel to the lost!

Of all of the myths, perhaps this is the greatest lie that Christian parents fall prey to in all of the myths of education! Christian parents really do have the right heart. We want for others to come to know our Lord. We want for the whole world to hear about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ AND the great hope that He has for them! Yet, there are some things that must be known before we fall prey to the pressure to evangelize the world through our children.

First of all, **schools allow very little time for fraternization**. In fact, class changes last only 300 seconds as John Taylor Gatto notes, "*To keep promiscuous fraternization to a minimum.*" What is included in this "*promiscuous fraternization?*" You have got it! Carrying the gospel to the lost.

Many of you bringing your children home can share of stories after stories about

red lights in the lunchroom for noise control...play time structured so strictly that children are not allowed to play IF THEY TALK (uhum...isn't talking necessary to share the gospel???)...classrooms time packed full of lectures and quiet seat work. Where IS the time to share the gospel? There is no time because schools offer very little time to develop relationships or to share beliefs.

Now, a greater reason. Children are not the instruments that God chooses to carry the gospel! If you look at Psalm 1, you will see that our children are much like trees. In their SEASON, they will bear fruit! Rarely will this be at the young, tender age of 5...or 15. Even Jesus did not enter into ministry until the age of 30. Scripture seems to infer that He was in the care of his parents until that age.

Isaiah 54 gives an awesome picture of ministering with a worldwide impact. How do you do it? By "*enlarging the place of your tent...*" In other words, our children are not to be sent forth at five or even fifteen to "evangelize" their peers. Rather, God's plan is for our priority and emphasis to be upon building our home. As we focus on enlarging our influence, focus, and ministry within our home, God has a treat in store for us. We reach others.

The way that our world will come to know the Lord is by each family discipling their children and then enlarging their influence as the Lord leads others into the home. God used families in the Old Testament and the New Testament to share the gospel. He has not changed. Nurture the giftings of your children in your home. Give them a strong foundation in the Word of God and in practical ministry in and through the home and family. They will carry the light to the world, a light that will change lives!

Myth #7... Schools give the best education for children...

Perhaps it is already obvious to you that schools are not offering the best education or you would not be reading this book. However, if this is to completely renew your mind and re-educate you to truth. Let's look at the difference in the fruit produced by each of our options. Note that artificial learning can seep right on into the homeschool, especially during the high school years. So, you may want to check what you are doing if you see any fruit that you do not want in your children.

The Fruits of Artificial Learning...

- ...Head knowledge not learning for real knowledge or from a heart of delight
- ...Full of facts and information that does not relate to the child
- ...No intimacies (family relationships or with studies)
- ...Dulls the soul
- ...No interest in learning
- ...Learning sources are external-entertain and stimulate the senses but do not promote or give time for real thinking
- ...Student is passive and desperately dependent (all is done for the student... dependent upon others to dictate time...non-thinking OR thinks as told to think)
- ...Develops an appetite for passive/entertaining media
- ...No sense of purpose
- ...Contempt/indifference for the adult world
- ...Results in boredom, frustration, conformity, exasperation with learning, addictive/dependent behavior
- ...Mentality is consumption rather than producing independence and self-reliance! (Breeds materialism and entertainment mentality)
- ...Puffed up with knowledge

The Fruits of REAL Learning...

- ...Deep love of learning
- ...Delight in learning at all times and as a lifestyle for their whole life
- ...Strong relationship with what they are learning
- ...Alive with enthusiasm and HOPE
- ...Self-directed learning
- ...Reasons a Biblical Worldview
- ...Develops an appetite for learning in all areas of study
- ...Mentality will be one of production and self-sufficiency
- ...The child will sense God's purpose and call for their life at an early age and will use all their energy to work toward that goal
- ...The child will be an island in the midst of the ocean of uncertainty and confusion for our culture

The focus of school always changes. Doing is changed to mastering skills. Personal initiative is changed to schedules and assignments. Discussion is changed to listening to lectures for hours—no room for personal expression!

Books are changed to "weak, watery, insipid" books that dull the mind of the child, bore the child, and starve the child from the mind food that is needed for nourishment of the mind. Liberal Education is changed to learning a few trivial facts, sticking to a Scope-and-Sequence, and just scoring OK on SAT's and College Entrance tests!

Myth #8...Schools teach essential information that ALL children need to know thus plugging all the holes...AKA: Scope and Sequence/Gaps!

Did you know all that there was to learn when you graduated from high school? College? What about now—do you know *all* there is to know? Burdens and stress abound as parents fall under the pressures of the mighty "Scope and Sequences" and "perfect curriculum." Let's look at truth...

- ♥ At the very best they assume that every child needs the same preparation for life when what our children really need is an individual, focused education!
- ♥ Actually there is no set plan. Scope-and-Sequences commonly differ from company-to-company...year-to-year...district-to-district!
- ♥ Nothing relates. The idea is that children need a bit of information about as much as possible. No logical order. No relationships between subjects or even topics.
- ♥ Teaches confusion! Don't believe it? Read what public school teacher John Taylor Gatto wrote in *Dumbing Us Down* (pages 2-3)...

"A lady named Kathy wrote this to me from Dubois, Indiana the other day: What big ideas are important to little kids? Well, the biggest idea I think they need is that what they are learning isn't idiosyncratic—there is some system to it all and it isn't just raining down on them as they helplessly absorb. That's the task, to understand, to make coherent. Kathy has it wrong.

The first lesson I teach is confusion. Everything I teach is out of context. I teach the un-relating of everything. I teach disconnections. I teach too much: the orbiting of planets, the law of large numbers, slavery, adjectives, architectural drawing, dance, gymnasium, choral singing, assemblies, surprise guests, fire drills, computer languages, parent's nights, staff-development days, pull-out programs, guidance with strangers my students may never see again, standardized tests, age-segregation unlike anything seen in the outside world...what do these things have to do with each other? Even in the best schools a close examination of curriculum and its sequences turns up a lack of coherence, full of internal contradictions. Fortunately the children have no words to define the panic and anger they feel at constant violations of natural order and sequence fobbed off on them as quality in education. The logic of the school mind is that it is better to leave school with a tool kit of superficial jargon derived from economics, sociology,

natural science, and so on, than with one genuine enthusiasm. But quality in education entails learning about something in depth."

- ♥ Actually full of facts and information that does not relate to each other OR the child!
- ♥ Does not allow for intimacies to develop!
- ♥ Teaches dependence rather than training for independence and self-sufficiency!
- ♥ Does not equip with any skills to learn on their own! Remember: schools are not teaching 3R's, they are teaching a worldview!

In other words: SCHOOLS inevitably leave HOLES!

The TRUTH is that we will never KNOW everything! The myth is that we are "all-knowing" with a high school diploma. That is the beginning of a lifelong pursuit of knowledge not the end! This mindset is a fruit of the fact that the parent has never begun his or her own lifestyle of learning. A mom excited about learning KNOWS that she will never learn a portion of knowledge available on any one topic much less EVERYTHING!

Relax. Barb Shelton says, "*Every parent has an internal scope and sequence.*" Instill a love of learning that continues all of life. Depend upon your "internal" Scope-and-Sequence given by God! God's way of learning is precept-upon-precept. Remember Isaiah 28:10? "***For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little.***" Dare to follow GOD precept-upon-precept! He will give you EACH step of the way for each of your children—JUST LISTEN! Focus on HIS 'process of learning' (2 Peter 1: 5-6) rather than the world's Scope-and-Sequences. Focus on teaching SKILLS, developing their character, and instilling a love of learning so that they can develop a strong love of learning and continue learning their entire life! The greatest gap occurs either when a child CANNOT learn on their own so that they can pursue learning independently...OR when they do not CHOOSE to learn. God's way will not let these gaps remain in the child's education. He constantly moves on our hearts showing us what they need to know so they are equipped to learn. He moves on their hearts infusing excitement over new areas of learning. It becomes a life journey—ever learning. Ever exploring. Ever growing.

This does not insure that they know EVERYTHING! They never will know everything. There WILL be gaps. We get to choose where they will be—in the Scope-and-Sequence of the world...in test scores...in godly character...in ability to learn...in love of and delight in learning...in life purpose. Truly IF a child has the skills to enable them to learn, a love of learning, AND the character to inspire them to seize opportunities to learn, there are no real gaps in their education! They have the beginnings of a full education!

Myth #9...Children need qualified teachers for all or certain subjects!

We all have to admit, if we are truthful, that we feel unequipped for our call to teach our children from time-to-time, especially as your children enter high school! Often the very first questions that comes from people first introduced to the option of homeschooling are "Can YOU do that?" or "Are you qualified?" Yes! You ARE qualified to teach your children. You CAN do it! God has called and HE will equip you each step of the way.

I love what John Taylor Gatto wrote in his book *Dumbing Us Down* about the common accusations from the world that parents are somewhat to blame for the woes of education and child raising. He writes...

"...it appears to me as a schoolteacher that schools are already the cause of weak families and weak communities. They separate parents and children from vital interaction with each other and from true curiosity about each other's lives. Schools stifle family originality by appropriating the critical time needed for any sound idea of family to develop—then they blame the family for its failure to be a family. It's like a malicious person lifting a photograph from the developing chemicals too early, then pronouncing the photographer incompetent."

True education begins with a strong family life, with lots of time to explore and learn on their own, with parents who really KNOW the child, with parents teaching WHO they are and what they know and love. Yes, if we want for our children to have REAL education, then we must forsake the myths of education and step up to the call to disciple our children each and every day of their life!

It is a MYTH that teachers of children need to be certified OR must be knowledgeable about what they are teaching. The REAL need is to realize that WE will NEVER know it all, but OUR Teacher does. Yes, with any deficiency, we can go to GOD! He is with us ALL the way!

What do we need to teach our children? I believe that we need a **daily, intimate walk with God**. We need to depend upon Him every step of the way. We need to trust Him and follow His plan. Then, He can show us how to present living ideas that will feed the minds of our children. Then, He can show us how to teach the skills that are needed for them to learn. We will learn how to make our home an atmosphere of learning. We will learn how to encourage our children!

Charlotte Mason has encouraged me as a teaching mother to have confidence in my calling and qualifications as a teacher of my children. She wrote in *Home Education* (page 2)...

"The mother is qualified...and qualified by the Creator Himself, to become the principal agent in the development of her child;...and what is demanded of her is a thinking love...God has given to thy child all the faculties of our nature, but the grand point remains undecided—how shall this heart, this head, these hands be employed? To whose service shall they be dedicated? A question the answer to which involves a futurity of happiness or misery to a life so dear to thee.

Maternal love is the first agent in education."

Parents love their children more than anyone can! We care intensely about the future of their children! Yes, parents are NATURALLY the best and MOST QUALIFIED teachers for their children!

Walk with God—Let HIM be YOUR teacher and pass that down as an inheritance to your children! Constantly re-evaluate—rethink what you are doing and why you are doing what you are doing! Learn from your children! Homeschooling has polished my skills and helped me to finally understand MUCH of what I was taught! I think that THIS TIME is better because education is REAL and being gleaned from the ultimate Teacher—God Himself!

Renew Your Mind!

Let homeschooling be a time that God renews your mind, giving you a glimpse into His vision for your home. Become transformed by renewing your mind! Homeschooling is not just another method of education. I believe that homeschooling is one of God's ways to bring parents into a lifestyle of discipleship.

If these myths have kept you struggling as you have tried to have faith in God

and His call to homeschool, take time to be renewed in your mind day-by-day! You will get to know "**His good, acceptable, and perfect will for you!**"

Need a Peek into Our High School?



Ok, ready now to hear God for each step of your path—even homeschooling throughout high school? Are you seeing more clearly the lies that our enemy uses to hit us? To thwart God's awesome plan for our children? Ready to take a peek into a home that has (and is!) homeschooled through the high school a little different? Come into our high school at home...

First, let's look at some really practical helps. These have been our "life-line" through the years. My prayer is that they will give you some easy tips for getting on the right track for high school while you take a peek at what we have done (our son has graduated and now owns his own business and ministry) and what we are continuing to do with our homeschool during the high school years.

Decide What Needs to be Taught!

First, thing that must be done is to *prayerfully seek God about what HE thinks should really be taught to your child*. The greatest myth of education is that if we follow a set "scope-and-sequence" or use a certain curriculum or even attain a certain number of credits, that our children will have an education that does not have gaps AND is "complete." There is an illusion that gaps can be eliminated if we just find the "right" way or if we will just do the "right" thing.

To find what we really need to be teaching, we must first realize what a "gap" really is. Stick with me. You will see how important this is.

Often, we hear that if we use the "right" curriculum, our children will not have gaps. However, a gap cannot result from a certain curriculum or the whole world would need to be using the same "perfect" curriculum. Also, we no sooner commit to homeschool in the high school years, than we find someone who scares us out of our mind about high school credits. A gap is not the result of a deficit of a certain number or kind of credits or the whole world would have a SET requirement of credits using that set perfect curriculum. Truth is that curriculum AND credits are different everywhere we go. In fact, no two school systems have exactly the same education.

So...wondering, "What IS a gap?" Great question!

What is a gap? Where did the fear begin? Is it legitimate?

My dear friend, this fear began way back at the beginning of time. I believe that it is a tool of the enemy. He wages war against the Lord the very same way he always has. This fear is one of his biggies!

Yep, the myth of gaps began back in the garden when satan tempted Eve with one forbidden quest, *to know as God knows*. His temptation was for Eve to do SOMETHING that could ensure that she knew EVERYTHING that was to be known—just like God. Sound familiar? Truth is, this is utterly impossible for any human. This is a GOD thing. Only our awesome God can know the most minute details of EVERYTHING. Anything less would be a gap.

What we REALLY need to reach for as we educate our children is a FULL education. That is really what most parents want deep down inside. We all want for our children to be fully educated. We want for them to be fully equipped for their life call. We want for them to be introduced to a wide and varied curriculum. We want to end the journey knowing that our children had the very best education possible. A full education.

SO, how can we give our children a full education? What should be taught? I would propose that again we go back to Scripture for a model of education that is planned for and pleasing to God.

Lifelong Disciplines...

First, if we were to study the models from Scripture, we would find that **lifelong disciplines** should be set up in our children from an early age. Bible Study and personal discipleship, reading, writing (I love that the Bible has models of copy-work, notebooking, narration modeled before us...models that have stood the test of time!), mastering other languages (Latin, Spanish, Russian...), researching, math/thinking skills, notebooking, practical skills.

Our children need from an early age two basic things. They are the foundation to a full education. They need to *learn how to learn* and *how to use the skills that they know*. This should be taught from an early age. Then, as they enter high

school, they need to *deepen* these studies and make them part of a *lifestyle* that can carry them into their adult lives.

Love What You Do...

Secondly, if we were to study the Biblical models, we would find that the great men and women of Scripture grew up to work in professions **that they LOVED**. Their passion became their call. Actually, many of them apprenticed under their parents or under the tutelage of other godly teachers/mentors. They were trained to serve God in their every day life, doing what they loved to do.

If we want to really see what God is going to do with our children in their lives, it is going to wrap around their spiritual gifts and their natural bents, talents, and interests. Anything else will make them perfectly miserable. Is that what we really want? Or, do we want for them to live every day of their lives making every day count?

I cannot express the amount of pressure that we felt as we graduated our son. I really did not realize how much others imposed "their" preferences for our son's life until I look back. It was very amazing! Everyone had an opinion...and they SHARED it! Of course, very few were in step with what God was impressing upon our hearts that HE wanted for my son's life. Very few took into consideration his gifts, talents, bents, interests...much less, his life purpose. I could not tell you how much our culture has come to expect for children to be trained up in the same exact method reaching for the same exact end. We do not see the same individualized, unique training that we saw even 150 years ago. It is easy to think that this is how it has always been.

My friends, this is a time that it is imperative that we not give in to the pressures to conform to our culture. We must step up to the call to train up our children for God. Anything less will never work. These years are certainly not the years to back off of training them up in the way that they should go. We need to be very focused and committed.

We can push and try to control them and their lives into fitting into the expectations of others, but in doing so, we will lead them astray from God's good plan for their lives. If we want to encourage them to hear God, then the best way is to encourage them to love learning and to make time in these precious years to

learn what they love. This is the time that we need to encourage them to dig into those areas of study that intrigue and delight them. You never know exactly which one may be their life calling. These years are not years to crowd out what they love for what is "usual and customary." They need to be introduced to a wide and varied curriculum so they can fall in love with learning, but even more so that they find their niche.

Our role during these years is to come alongside of them encouraging them in their journey. We need to help them to develop a passion for life by pursuing areas of interest and delight, living a life of ministry, using their gifts and talents, and just loving life! These years are too important to just fill with the typical high school education. Make the most of these years. Give them a vast array of opportunities. Take time to discuss great ideas from books and real life. Encourage SELF-education by developing their abilities to learn on their own and direct their own education AND by encouraging a lifestyle in your home that naturally lives out constant learning.

Holes? Gaps? They won't be there. At least not the way you think! Sure, your children will never know everything that *could* be learned. The comfort comes in knowing that no one else will either.

So, what about those holes and gaps? If your children have the skills to learn and the love of learning, they can learn anything that they want for the rest of their lives. If they do not have the skills to learn, then no amount of love will help them learn. If they have skills but do not love learning, they will not choose to learn, much less, *use* those skills. The real gaps in education result from artificial education. A real, living education prepares the child for a life of learning that does not end with a diploma or a college degree!

Set Up Your Day...

Want to know what the greatest hindrance to hearing God in the high school years is? Throughout the years, parents have shared an underlying hindrance to hearing and trusting God through these years. Want to know what it is? Overwhelmingly, the greatest hindrance is not knowing what each day should look like. Not having a "picture" of a learning home to pattern after. Oh, beloved, I certainly understand this one!

As I have read books and articles that describe the typical day in a homeschool, I have to admit, I usually HATE them! Inevitably, I (ugh, I know I am going to have to be very, very blunt here!) find myself jotting down ideas for studies that MY children would love to pursue (when they would rather have a stomach bug!). I instantly question whether I am doing enough. I hunt all throughout the article or book for THE REAL STORY of how many children, whether they have a maid or not, or what the rest of their lives look like. I always come away thinking that I cannot match up.

I am going to get even MORE mom-to-mom here because, quite frankly, I am tired of trying to keep up with the "super-homeschool-moms" that seem to always get their lessons done to perfection with the bread baking in the background providing the aroma-da-homeschool while the toddler sits quietly at their feet during Latin and never pitches any fits or burps and her always-punctual schedule even includes SEWING HER WHOLE FAMILY WHITE CLOTHES FOR THE BEACH and WRITING BOOKS!

A few years ago, a dear friend gave me a wonderful book on organizing my home, homeschool and schedule...hummm got the first warning that I missed? I was on the road, so I took the book with me while I sat by the pool with my little ones (PE, you know!). I must have got that "condemned" look on my face because Matthew got out of the pool and came to sit by me. He asked me, "What are you reading?" As I showed him the book, I asked him if HE thought WE could have a schedule like the "perfect" one in the book. He sat there, very serious. (Now, there is someone who is about to bond with him and want to claim him for her daughter to marry!) He piped up with the best revelation that I have ever heard. He said, "Mom...this is a lie. Look right here...this book would not be finished IF SHE only had 30 minutes a day to write on her books AND sew!" I sat there, humbled at the honesty and discernment of my very own PRECIOUS (got even MORE PRECIOUS at the time) child. Yep! It was a lie! Questioned later, the author said that her schedule was just "an example." JUST AN EXAMPLE!!!! For heavens sake! UGGGHhhhhh!

Why do I tell you this? I think that we all need to let ourselves off the hook before we set up our schedules. First, there is NO perfect schedule. There is no perfect time of day for lessons. There is no perfect length of each individual lesson. Not to mention, I have not met ANY woman who gets everything in her plans done every single day. So, there!

Relaxing? I am not done yet!

Second, **each and every family that homeschools is completely different.** If you can think of the differences, it is absolutely impossible for us to begin to set up the "perfect" schedule for everyone. I will go one step further, EVEN in my home, we constantly deal with change and rotating schedules. Each day is really a little different from the one before or after it. Each week meets new demands and "stuff" that can throw us out of whack. If there is one thing that is the same for every homeschool family every year, it is that we are all different! Completely different.

My best advice as we look at setting up our daily schedule is for you to really take a look at who you are as a family. Think about what you must get done each day in order to meet your goals. Think about what each day should include. Think about how you can best make things work together to fit all into your day.

For us, our days are wrapped around *my husband's schedule*. In fact, our whole homeschool...our whole business...and our whole ministry are all wrapped around his schedule. On the days he works, we work at the warehouse and around our home. On the days he is off, we either travel with the ministry OR we take family days (the WHOLE staff). I learned early in our homeschool journey that God blesses us richly when we have our priorities in order. Being available and "all there" for my husband not only keeps my marriage on fire and models a godly home for my children, but also sets a pace for my life that I can continue with great productivity without getting out of balance or wearing out.

Also, we wrap our days around *what God has called us to be as a family*. That includes developing our relationships, building great memories, and ministering to those who come along our path. This makes our lifestyle quite "different" from anybody I know. At first, that bothered me. I was insecure about whether what we were doing was really OK. Now, as the years have gone by, I really see that there is no freedom or abundance until we really set up our homeschool to be a HOME...a FAMILY! So, let me encourage you to really set up your homeschool unique to your family and all of the areas that you are having to balance within your home.

Inevitably, I have one other question that we hear A LOT in our ministry. What do you do IF you have a large family? Are large families destined to use the tra-

ditional methods because of their responsibilities? NO! NO! NO!

A while back I was asked these questions and the Lord finally gave me the answer to this one. (You have to know that these questions really threw me a "curve ball" for a LONNNG time!) The hardest part homeschooling is setting up the homeschool and home life YOUR WAY. A sweeping excuse of "more" children is just that, an excuse. You can hear God regardless of your family size. You can bring REAL EDUCATION into any family, any size. I know that we have two children in our daily homeschool lessons, but we are also balancing my husband's "boys" that work for him in our business (many of them join us daily for our meals and drop in just to hang around our family) AND we are constantly available for my "gals" (Is the number of homeschool families up to 1.75 Million families now?) I think our quiver is about as full as a quiver can get. YES! Great books... entrepreneurial education... notebooking... real people... real life... discipleship... family ministry... and hands-on learning work for a BIG family. ☺

Kidding aside, we ALL have our differences. All it takes is a bit of planning, prioritizing, and sometimes, plodding until we have the lifestyle that will work for us. Now, want a look at a REAL LIFE schedule from a busy, BIG family? Come home with us!

Welcome Home...

We have a VERY slow pace at home because most weekends we find the doors to our lives wide open for the world to come in and be encouraged by our whole family through our retreats, seminars, and conventions.

Harold retired a few years ago from working in Law Enforcement. Since we balance our three family businesses, our days tend to fluctuate more now than ever before. Each day is very different, depending upon his schedule with his business. Of course, we try to work very hard to have the same flow to each day. We began this when the kids were young and he worked in Law Enforcement. His scheduled shifts would change and days off would rotate each week. It was perfect training for these years, when nothing is set in stone.

Our life off of the road is wrapped around him and his schedule. Each morning when he is home, he and I begin our day with breakfast together, just us. I get dressed and go to town for a nice, private breakfast together (There are perks

to having teenagers—yes! I survived those VERY demanding younger years.). We usually spend those precious moments discussing our day ahead, pouring out our hearts about any struggles we are facing, and working through a daily devotional for couples. This has been a cementing time for our relationship.

We usually get back in time for Harold to work with Matthew (now graduated) and for me to get back to teach Elisabeth. If the guys have an early appointment or if they are out of town, I use that time for my quiet time and to work on my to-do list.

Our children use this time to wake up, get dressed (teens take a bit longer now, you know!), and have their quiet times on their own. They quickly pick up and get the chores going while they have breakfast. After breakfast, the children work through their daily table time while I tend to any responsibilities that I need to look to. The rest of our day is very flexible based upon my husband's schedule or whether we are traveling. We try to always have the same schedule/flow to the day:

⇒ *Quiet Times...*

This was one area that is so easy to neglect. If I do not set this as the priority of every day, we get too busy doing things that really, deep down, mean much, much less to me.

My real goal in homeschooling my children has always been to give them a deep passion for God. The time for academics and the busyness of life easily replace time for true discipleship unless it is the very first thing in each day.

Now, I am not saying that this is easy. The early years were a training ground that took much out of me. The fruit now is REALLY worth it! They each have large print Bibles (my recommendation) in their favorite translations, journals (NOTEBOOKS!), and access to all of our Bible Study tools. Because this is a priority of mine, I believe it has been a more natural thing for me to pass on to my children. I simply had to make it a priority, give them time with me to see how I study from the Bible, and then give them the materials and specific time to sit at the feet of Jesus.

⇒ ***Chores...***

In our home, everyone pitches in and does their part with our housework. For a long time when the children were little, I did EVERYTHING and found myself very irritable, busy, and distressed over every mess and my lack of time to relax or even do anything to take care of myself. I remember the day that I finally realized that if they could mess up, they could clean up! The rest is history! Not only is this the only way for a mother to survive SAINLY through the years of homeschooling, this is a perfect way to teach our children that they are to do the "little things" for others regardless of whether they are ever appreciated or noticed. Chores help us to give them a ministry within the home for those that they will love the most in life. It is the way they learn that "we do for one another just because that is WHO we are." There has never been a greater tool to prepare them for greatness later: to serve others with a right motive (if it is "to be seen," you know they will be shot down...no one ever seems to "notice" that thy have clean towels because of someone else's sacrifice), to do the little things that *someone* has to do (not wait for some other mythical being to do it—AKA, in most homes this being is an exhausted mother), and to see that even a very busy mom, with a public spotlight, considers the greatest ministry of all to be those little things that I do for them.

⇒ ***Table Time...***

This is the time that we work on SKILLS that need to be learned so our children can learn all of their lives about any topic of interest or need. By skills, I am not talking about "subjects." I mean basic skills that help them "*to subdue and have dominion over the world.*" (Genesis 1) Skills such as Bible study, reading, researching, recording/writing, mastering other languages, math/thinking skills, computer skills, etc.

A sample ***Table Time*** includes **Bible Study** through a book in the Bible with me, **Copywork and Computer Work** into their notebooks from an area of interest or from resources that we provide for them to choose copywork from at any time they draw a blank, the next **Math** lesson in their books, and working on **Latin/Spanish** (the

two languages they are currently studying).

I focus more on the skills than subjects, yet as I have taught them how to learn, God has blessed our home by giving our children a delight in learning from all areas of study. I think this is because as humans, we all need meaning and purpose. Children understand that they need to learn skills. The problem comes in when we exchange real needs for artificial learning, which really does not make sense to us either. When else do we learn information by studying the various "subjects" rather than the topic or theme? Real delight in learning comes as learning makes sense AND as we give them some choice in what they use to learn those skills. Composition, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and a whole other host of skills and information can not only be learned, but learned with delight, when our children care about their studies and are allowed time to look, notice, think, and ponder details that are hidden in great literature and real life. In turn, as they study areas of interest, they actually learn subjects with greater depth, understanding, and interest. They are prepared to take these skills into any area they would like to pursue for life.

⇒ ***Family Time...***

Of all the things that we do, THIS is the MOST educational for my children! In the early years of homeschooling, I really struggled with my ideas of what education was really "supposed" to be. I really did not like the product I was seeing coming out of institutional schools. I felt that it was not the product that God had desired from the beginning. I definitely felt that He was calling us to train our children with a different path. But, in spite of what God wanted for me, I battled with what the world says we are "supposed" to do. As a result, I had much bondage when life (building a house, a death in the family, moving, illnesses, etc.) got in the way of "school." God began to really teach me about His plan for education from the beginning, but it did not really "gel" until we went through a season of crisis situations. The story is soooo long, but as I look back the message was clear that I needed to understand education from God's perspective. He wants for me (and all of you) to come to the point that I can sit at His feet and learn from Him without any

hindrances. Things began to change.

First, I stopped striving to make homeschooling happen myself. God showed me that He wanted for me to be a vessel that He could pour through into the lives of my children. Second, He wanted for me to offer MYSELF to Him as an offering to Him every day! He did not want for me to hold back any area of my life. He wanted everything I have and everything I am and everything I want daily, without conforming to the world (even the homeschool world), renewing my mind so I could hear His perfect, acceptable will for my family. (Romans 12: 1-2) Finally, He wanted for Harold and me to use what was "in our hand" to teach our children. (Remember Moses at the burning bush?)

As God did this work in my heart, I began to realize that the more time we had to be a family, the more God could teach our children. The things that I use daily in my life have very little to do with the lessons I learned in school. Sure, I use the skills that I learned on a daily basis. But, those skills without my parent's heart for learning as a lifestyle in our home mean very little. It was my parents that instilled that ANYTHING you wanted to learn, you could learn from a book or from people who loved that topic. Sure, I learned information in my education, but most of that was not correct and has been relearned as I have homeschooled. So, what did I really learn growing up? Much. But, that which lives on in my life was snuck in during those moments my parents were just being themselves in real life. I learned lessons that I live in my calling today. This is what God really wants for families.

God wants for us to have a vision for what we are really to teach our children and how they best learn those lessons. Just as in the life of Abraham, we are chosen not because we have a gift for selecting the best curriculum or for setting up the best schedule. We are chosen because God believes that WE will command our children after HIM. Oh, that we use the majority of our day to give our children a heart for God! All other education is in vain. Of course, I do want to emphasize that we are NOT talking about a fake-faith. We are talking about family time that instills the lessons that our

children need to make a difference in our culture (writing, entrepreneurial skills, cooking, sewing, car-repair or maintenance, carpentry, computer skills, on and on).

Harold and I have found fullness in our relationship as man and wife as we each teach our children with *what is in our hand—WHO WE ARE*. God has such a beauty in marriage. Two parts making a whole. Each incomplete without the other. We joke in our home about how desperately Harold needed me as his "spell-checker." Of course, he and my father laughingly call me their "computer crash dummy." We each have blaring needs AND blaring strengths. God did not make a mistake in creating us with blaring needs. Instead, as He brought us together, He did a miracle by putting the pieces together to have blaring strengths (complimentary to one another) that He plans to instill in the lives of our children. As I said at the beginning of this, the most critical lessons that I believe our children are learning come from our family time. That un-planned, un-restricted time that God prepares our children for His ultimate call on their lives.

⇒ ***Ministry/Business Work...***

Although this is a large portion of our life as the others, I will share more on this later. This is the means that we use to train our children up for their callings. More on that later! ☺

⇒ ***Free Time...***

Our children spend this time pursuing areas they would like to study, reading, playing (yes, they are REAL kids!), businesses of their own, and pursuing hobbies. It is neat to read back over things that they have done through the years. When I first wrote this book, Matthew was "into" researching his genealogy and compiling stories from our family. Elisabeth was working on several writing projects and studying through ENCYCLOPEDIAS (for real! ☺) She would spend HOURS *copying* neat information into her notebooks!

Now, Matthew still loves researching—although he has graduated and is no longer "required" to do any lessons. He CHOOSES to continue to learn. I love it! He is now working full-time as a full partner in our family businesses and our ministry while planning another ma-

ajor investment (to be announced in the near future). Although "school" no longer dictates his daily assignments, he continues to learn. For life!

Elisabeth is now in 10th grade. She plans almost all of her lessons. I love walking through this journey with her. It is still funny how she continues to have a more "educational" free time than even her table time—which is set apart to be very academic. She spends hours a day reading and studying through the Bible. Some of this time is during her quiet time, but most of it is during her free time. She loves to write. Beyond her regular assignments, she writes and edits articles for young teens in her own email magazine. All of her work on those is during her free time. ☺ One of her passions is writing songs. She loves to write praise and worship songs to God. Her heart cry is to lead worship—she loves to sing and minister through song. She snags every spare minute to write down her songs. Her other passion for her free time is web design and blogging. She cracks me up when I hear people ask her if she is going to be taking the torch of my ministry and she answers that she feels called to minister to girls HER AGE...humm!

Why do I share all of this? I believe that probably one of the most important aspects of our homeschool has been our free time. So many students have every minute of every day planned for them when they would really LOVE a little time to develop a lifestyle that is REAL and LIVING. If I could recommend that every family include one aspect of our homeschool in their own homeschools, I think that free time would be it!

⇒ Family Read Alouds...

This ends the typical Rushton day. Through the years, we have really treasured our family time in the evening before bed. Even as the kids have grown up and become very busy in their own lives, we really insist on family time in the evenings. We snuggle up together before bed. Some may watch TV. Others of us read or research. Others work on their laptops. It is not what we do together, but the main thing is that we settle in together. Through the years, we have made this a very important part of our day. After everyone is set-

tled, we take time to allow the children to read from the Bible, then we read from a family read aloud. We are very selective about what we read. Our choices are based upon a standard of, "IF this were the last book that we were to read as a family, would it be THE ONE that we would want to leave our children with??" We want for family reading time to challenge and inspire our children toward greatness.

I know that there is A LOT of debate in the homeschool movement about what "should" be read and studied for a "full education" especially in the high school years. Harold and I have prayed, researched, and come to the same conclusion. There is just TOO little time left to blanket-ly accept the standards of our culture as our book list. We are not even very impressed with the material we see recommended among many within the homeschool movement. Books just have such a powerful influence upon our minds and hearts!

Think of some of the typical reading selections from public, private, and sadly, even homeschool book lists—every sin imaginable is not just mentioned, but placed almost as a "given" in life. Books and stories have plots of youthful romance ended by suicide...dabbling in homosexuality...illicit affairs...murderous scandals...overthrowing of God-ordained leaders. As the years have gone by, we have noticed that many of the "recommended" books on booklists are actually doctrinal foundations for other religions. Hummm... All of these plots and beliefs vie for the time that our children could be reading great literature that could inspire them toward greatness!

We have looked at the options and we have chosen to spend these last moments with our children introducing them to the very best literature that is available. We want to take our time with them to share the very best out there. We want for every single resource to be worth the time that we invest as we read it.

What we read together becomes part of our memories of this time together. We want it to count!

What we read with them should under-guird, not under-mind, the values, beliefs, and convictions of our family. There are too many awesome life-changing books for us to read for us to blindly adopt the book lists that could lead us to books that could waste the time we have left together.

In consideration of the time and how short the remaining time of discipleship is, we want for the literature that we choose to undergurd, not undermine, our training and teaching. We want for our children to leave our home with the preparation needed to offer our culture answers and truth. There is no greater tool for this preparation like literature read and discussed as a family. Not only does this time wrap up our day, but I see it as a nice bow on the package of our homeschool. It further educates our children on a wide variety of topics, but that is not all. Family reading forges relationships, instills discernment, introduces our children to those of all walks of life while comfortably at our knee, and builds precious memories that can never be taken away. A perfect end to our homeschool day!

Now...think about your life. What does your day (week, month, year) look like? What are the most important priorities in each day? How can you make them happen? How can you arrange your day to fit in the MOST important lessons for your high schoolers?

Yes, this will take some planning and much forethought. But as you set up your daily schedule JUST for your family, you will find the burden lifting, the yoke loosening, and homeschooling becoming EASY and LIGHT!

Count it ALL!

If there is one thing that homeschooling mothers need to learn especially when their children enter high school, I think it would have to be *how to document all* that goes on in the lives of their children. Life is where REAL education happens.

A few years ago, I interviewed a college admissions official. We were very interested in his college for our son. We wanted to be sure that we were including

everything that he needed for admission to college and that we were documenting it well along the way. I asked him what we should do to prepare for college admissions and how we should document their education. I also asked what we could do to set our children apart from the crowds competing for admissions and scholarships. He shared some of the best advice that I have heard.

First, he shared that he is now seeing some very competitive transcripts from homeschooling students. He said that while they looked nice, they did not communicate the REAL education that he knows from experience that most homeschool graduates receive in their years at home. He said that one thing that would help is for the extracurricular experiences such as business opportunities, apprenticeships, life studies, etc. to be documented in the application of the student.

Now, my dear friend, what is our temptation? Even if we provide an education wrapped around real life, few communicate the fullness of their child's education out of fear that it will not look "legitimate" or "professional" on the transcript. COUNT IT ALL! DOCUMENT EVERYTHING! God does. Document real life: work experiences, life experiences, and studies. Document the real relationships: apprenticeships, relationships with great people. Document their real education: All of it!

What is included in a real education? What should be taught in a homeschooling high school? Harold and I have prayed about what our children really needed. I cannot say that this is a WORD from God for all homeschool families, but as for OUR family, we feel that our children need a very well rounded, full education in preparation for their life callings. Some of the areas that we feel God wants for our children to know are:

- ⇒ **Knowledge that prepares our children to subdue and have dominion over our world.** Bible, Art, Music, History, Literature, Science, Computer Skills, Foreign Languages, etc. We want for our children to have more than just a nodding acquaintance with a lot of stuff. We want for them to be prepared to offer our culture ANSWERS and WISDOM. We want for their education to be so full that they are prepared to stand before kings...or walk alongside of the indigent and hopeless. Now, do not think that knowledge has or even should be limited to courses that are commonly taught in high schools. Harold and I have felt that there are many