

Ready to Make Your Own Home and Family Organizer??

By Cindy Rushton

Ready for a bit of help getting it all together and KEEPing it all together for your home? Well, my friend this companion may be JUST what you have been looking for!

Whether you are struggling with having information around you—ALL AROUND YOU... Or you are struggling with the stress of trying to remember details—ONLY to find yourself slipping on some days... Or you have had your information organized for some time, but it is simply breaking your back to carry it with you every day... THIS is for YOU! Today, we will make our own Home and Family Organizers!

Why ONE MORE Binder?

Wondering what the deal is? Why ONE MORE binder? I found that I have SO much information that I cannot lug around in my "BRAIN-IN-A-BINDER" (aka—personal organizer). Much of it needed its own "place." So, here I introduce you to one of my personal helpers! *My Home and Family Organizer!*

Mine holds those wonderful details, helps, plans, and ideas that I need close at hand when I am at home whether cleaning, planning, preparing a meal, or even sending out Christmas Cards! In the middle of our building project, this ONE notebook has kept my head on straight! I simply do not have the time to run down lists and menu plans while I am helping to run the family ministry AND building supplies!

Talk about a PRICELESS companion! My brain does not need to hold one more piece of information! This notebook takes the load! And, best of all! As I add my treasure house of ideas and information, it is there for keeps! RIGHT where I can find it!

As you build your notebook, you can use it to store away cleaning tips and how to's. This binder will become the place set aside for your shopping lists, gift lists, cleaning lists. You can include your family prayer lists, your family vision, your family wish lists, and your family goals! Oh, you can include anything else that helps you to manage your home and needs its special spot: menus, organization plans, schedules, travel plans, personal records, OH everything! Best of all, YOUR Home and Family Organizing Notebook CAN hold ANYTHING that helps make your job easier and more fun!

So, ready to set yours up??? Here are the quick steps to Make YOUR OWN today:

- ♥ **Decide on your type of notebook...** Everyone has their own preferences. Think through yours. What do you like? What size works nice for you? What type fits your budget...preferences...

basic needs? Since we use vinyl 8.5 X 11 inch 3-ring binders with presentation covers for most of our homeschool studies, we had extras on hand when I needed to set up my notebook. I made my own cover pages on my computer and made it completely "mine!" One quick hint! Mine is about packed full. I am almost ready to take out those pages that seem to be developing into a notebook of their own. This is FINE! As it fills, divide off the pages that seem to need their own notebook. For example, menus/shopping lists/baking hints may eventually divide off into their own binder. Or...you may be like me and quickly find that your home management section grows and grows with your chore lists, cleaning tips, or organization plans. There are NO rules! Just let this tool be your personal assistant!

- ♥ **Choose your style of dividers...** So far, my pick has been the see-thru plastic dividers with indexes for each section. You can mark on them with your Sharpie or print your own set of nice printed labels. I love these because I can easily thumb through to the sections that I needed. Oh, one more thing! I chose the tabs that are colored so each of my sections could have the "color" that would remind me of that section. Other options include printing card stock pages, laminating, and 3-hole punching. On those printed pages, you can include neat checklists, prayer lists, bible verses, etc.
- ♥ **Set up your divisions and set up your dividers...** Begin by brainstorming through your needs. Think about those papers that are desperately needing a home! Think about those areas that are constantly creating stress. Don't forget about those areas that you are working on right now. Finally, begin to keep lists that you may make only every-so-often such as travel lists... shopping lists... addresses for family, friends, business associates, or companies...school supply lists... etc.
- ♥ **Add your forms, information sheets, and personal information...** Add those goodies that are waiting for their new home. Feel like a never-ending job? It is OK! You will have this helper from now on, so as you find more, add them! Find information without a spot? Add more divisions/dividers! Make it yours! Let it continue to grow! Do you need forms to make your notebook more orderly? We have a whole line of great printables that you may want for your notebook. You can also find great printables in magazines like our magazines, or online at sites like www.cindyrushton.com, www.donnayoung.org, www.organizedhome.com, <http://www.getorganizednow.com>.
- ♥ **Find the perfect place for your notebook's new home...** Find the best place for your notebook. **Considerations:** Be aware of spills...where your information will be utilized the most (by the phone, in the kitchen, at your desk.)...
- ♥ **What goes in it?** Again, make it yours! Here are some thoughts: family calendar, family goals/vision, address book; emergency information, telephone and message section; a divider for church and outside activities; family memory ideas (Christmas, Birthday, Easter, etc.), travel lists and details (we keep our information EVEN after we have gone places so we can always go back for directions, hotel information, or contacts that we may need later); home management (chores, cleaning plans, organization lists, daily/weekly/yearly schedules, etc); finance (taxes, credit card information, banking information, etc), monthly menu plans, pantry lists, grocery shopping lists, medical information for you and your family members (and pets!),

gift lists, clothing size charts; home and vehicle repairs/maintenance, etc!

Ready? It's just THIS easy to get it all together and keep it all together! This tool will help you to compile and organize that information that has been right there, but sometimes just, well, out of place! No longer! Your information will now be in its OWN spot...right when you need it!

Oh! Socks! Help!

By Cheri Foss

Matching socks seems to be an ever-increasing struggle as the number of children in our household has increased. It is a duty that I would like to have more help on but no one ever seems to be able to match the socks as well as Mommy.

In the past, I have used mesh laundry bags for each person. It does seem to work. I purchase 2 bags for every person and he/she keeps it in his/her own closet. Once a bag is full, each person throws the entire bag into the wash. Once it is dry, he/she is responsible for taking his or her bag and matching up his/her own socks. The older siblings help with the younger siblings. The draw back to this is that everyone must be disciplined to put his socks in his bag when he takes them off. The system did work pretty well for us but I did find something easier and cheaper.

Now whenever I buy new socks for a member of the family, I mark that person's socks with small dots of fabric paint. I place the small dots on the toe of the sock so it will be less obvious. My first child will get 1 dot on each sock. The second child will get 2 dots, the third child, 3 dots, and so on. Be sure to let the socks dry for 24 hours before using them. You can use a different color for each child instead of or in addition to the multiple dots to make it even easier.

You can also use dots of fabric paint to mark the tags of clothing so that you will know what belongs to whom in your family. As an article of clothing is passed from one sibling to the next just add a dot. I have two boys that are just 2 years apart and everyone is always confused as to which items belong to which child.

Hopefully, by trying some of these techniques, you will be better able to enlist the help of the children in handling the massive job of laundry.

Quick Tips For the Perpetually Late, Disorganized, Stressed Out Mom!

By Cindy Rushton

Does this SPEAK to you? Nothing is more frustrating than great intentions but failure with the time management, organization, and gentle spirit thing! So, what can REALLY help? Need a bit of hope? Practical ideas? Well, beloved, here are a few tips that have made a world of difference for me:

- ⇒ **Be sure to slow down and have a quiet time EACH DAY!** Take time for God to fill YOUR cup each day. Let Him give you HIS peace, order, and best of all, schedule! Take time to hear HIS plans for your day. Throughout the day, listen to His gentle direction. Be sure that you are willing to let go of the things that God wants to prune away. Without this, all else is only a band-aid!
- ⇒ **Invest in a Planner!** I am the world's worst at trying to do it all while trying desperately to remember those incredible details that are doomed to slip my brain! I decided to take a long, honest look at the things that were creating chaos. Most often, the biggest culprit was over-commitment or an underestimate of time involved with commitments. Writing down ALL commitments, along with an honest look at the time commitment involved (even going and coming OR planning the details around that commitment!), has made an indescribable impact on my life! Not to mention, another breeder of chaos in my life was constantly looking for information that needed to be in a dependable place like phone numbers, ordering information, etc. Keeping ONE binder with my information included eliminates the chaos, but it does even more! It gives my brain a rest!
- ⇒ **Evaluate to find the BEST that God has designed for YOU to do!** Sure, there are many "little things" that must be done to manage our homes, but if you are really struggling with balance, discipline yourself to write down everything that you are doing for a little while. Pray over the importance of each and every thing. Time is so very precious. God gives us everything that we need to do all that He has designed for us to do, but He will not anoint those things that will choke out His best for our lives. So, really pray through...think through...weigh out everything. Listen to God for HIS goals for you. Prune those things that are not in line with His goals for you. Get rid of any time wasters. Prioritize every activity, every day! Combine activities that can be done together to make the most of time. Delegate those things that others can do to help you be a good steward of your time. Then, make the most of your time doing the very best things that God has designed for you to do!
- ⇒ **Write IT down!** Yep! Give your brain a break! This may seem to compound your problem, but trust me this will help more than you know! It is NOT another thing to do! Rather, once things are written down, the work is done FOR you! For example, keeping a calendar of events in your planner will help to alleviate conflicts in your schedule. Blocking off plenty of time for each en-

try will help you to give yourself enough margin left over for LIFE! I may live less than five miles from downtown, but if there is an appointment there, I KNOW to give myself 30 minutes to get there! Also, I cannot tell you how much my lists from years ago are beginning to really help me! I have lists for school lessons, shopping, traveling, producing the magazines, speaking, etc. I may have to add to my generic list, but I cannot tell you how many times my lists have helped me to be sure that NOTHING was left out or forgotten. Plus, now the planning process is simplified. I just pull out my list, go over the list, add anything that is missing, and get busy! Several of my lists are typed into my computer, ready to print. Talk about EASY planning! Find ways that you can simplify what you are doing—writing it down will probably be one of your first steps too!

- ⇒ **Keep your STUFF ready to use!** Whether your planner or your purse or even your Bible/journal for church, get things together and in their special spot, ready to go. I have a tote that includes all of the things that I need for Church. I keep it together, ready to go. Our school books stay in a milk crate (one for each child), ready to use at the table or to grab for our trips with the business. Everything that we need is ready at all times. My planner stays at my chair, ready to grab to leave the house. So on. Decide on what you need for planning, church, homeschooling, or your business. Get everything together. Find its very best spot for it to be easy to use, but not in the way or forgotten. You will be surprised at how much stress this will alleviate!
- ⇒ **Put limits on your day!** For years, I battled the different aspects of my day that tend to become monsters! Funny thing, I have never seen my family life ever become one of those monsters. My sweetheart and my children are so much more patient than my nasty kitchen! Memories will always wait for schoolwork to be completed. Laughter will always let the business monster rant and rage! The best (but most difficult) lesson of my life to date was that if I wanted the legacy that God had planned for me, then I had to diligently guard the different aspects of life. I had to consciously purpose to make memories and build relationships with those I love much, much more than a clean house or thriving business or successful homeschool. A whole day can zoom by just on the internet with the business...or working through our lessons...or even re-organizing a closet. Plus, those things wear me down till I am completely zapped! Oh, and then, I am not the nicest person on earth! (ouch—confessions hurt!) While these things are precious and wonderful in their boundaries, I have to CONSTANTLY place limits to insure that we have a balanced life that makes the most of each day AND builds a legacy.

Develop Your Own Plan For Easy Meals!

By Cindy Rushton

*Excerpted from our soon to be released **Mommy Menu Planner!***

I guess that everyone of us have at least one area in which we may find ourselves a bit "challenged" from time to time. Well, I guess that you should know that MY area is: **cooking!**

Humm...I am fine as long as I am ONLY cooking...but just add any other responsibilities and my brain begins to overload. From the very beginning of our homeschool adventure, this is an area that I have found myself battling with TIME the most. It has been either homeschool and eat junk food...or eat well and have "snack" style lessons! As you can imagine neither solution manages a home well!

What to do? What to do? Well, I recommend EASY meals as you homeschool the EASY way! Talk about looking well to the ways of our household! We CAN do it! But, how? Here are some quick tips:

- ♥ **Cook in bulk.** Actually I call my plan, "**Serve and Store.**" The first years of homeschooling I had a home business of sewing for the public. I would sew one day, cook one day. On the sewing days, we would have leftovers from my cooking day. In other words, I would cook and SERVE on one day...and sew and eat the food that we had STORED on the next day! It was a nice balance which enabled me to operate a successful sewing business while homeschooling and homemaking! From this, I developed a habit of cooking in bulk that has continued till today. It is easy to just buy double ingredients...usually it is cheaper! I just double my recipes and freeze the extra dish. Yesterday, I had the "fruit" of my labors as we had Lasagna already prepared last week that only needed to be popped in the oven and served with our fresh bread. You can be prepared at all times for those dropping in if you freeze a variety of foods as you cook them! Bulk Cooking redeems the time so you can stay busy with the important things in life...relationships!
- ♥ **Make Your Own Freezer Meals.** Same concept, except go ahead and put together a full meal on a microwave dish and freeze for those quick moments that you may need a full meal, but not have time to prepare the whole thing. OH! This also works nice for families with special diets, picky eaters, or even for those wanting to prepare meals for shut-ins or others needing a touch of ministry.
- ♥ **Make Your Own Monthly Menu.** I have a very good friend that has THE BEST plan I have ever seen for planning out her menus. She has ONE monthly menu that she has put together. Everyone knows exactly what to expect for each day of the week for the whole month. Can you imagine how much stress this alleviates in her life—not to mention, how she is building a legacy

in her home. Her children KNOW what to expect. Plus, they can easily help Mommy get the meals together, because they know what she does for each meal! Yep! I have decided to simplify my own plans to make things a bit easier in our home too. Not only does this save our BRAIN, but it also makes things so much easier for shopping (only ONE shopping list—she prepared hers on her computer ONCE and now only goes through checking off what she needs!) ...and storage (She only stores what they are eating regularly—she can buy in bulk, but she is not buying anything that is not used each and every week!!!!). See our section and forms included included in this issue for your very own *Monthly Menu Planner*. Of course, you can choose any system that works for you!

- ♥ **Don't forget EASY Meals!** Probably everyone can benefit from this! One thing that has helped me for those inevitable tights that I face almost on a daily basis—at least for one meal—was when I developed a list of our favorite EASY foods. I try to keep all of the basic ingredients needed for these “quick meals.” All I did to develop this was brainstorm through what we choose over and over again. Then, I grouped ours by mealtimes, although we LOVE eating a full breakfast with all of the goodies—biscuits, scrambled eggs with cheese, sausage, ham, bacon, honey—for occasional evening meals! After that, I made a list of what I needed to be sure to keep on hand. Then, I posted the list on the refrigerator and kept a copy in my *Meal Management Notebook*. All we do now is look at the list, grab the ingredients and devour! EASY! Why not make your own list too? Here are a few of our favorites...

Breakfast:

Muffins (my favorites are in Sue Gregg's Cookbooks)
Smoothies! (we make ours full of fresh fruit, yogurt, and even a spoonful of flax seed—yummy AND nutritious!)
Bagel/Cream Cheese/Fruit
Cold Cereal (go Sam's!)
Hot Cereal—grits, oatmeal, cream of wheat! EASY!
Fruit and Yogurt! (LOVE strawberries and vanilla yogurt/blueberries and vanilla yogurt!)
French Toast (another goody that you can buy at Sam's and just warm up in the toaster!!!)
Breakfast Quiche (there are SO many great recipes in cookbooks and on the web!)
Breakfast Burritos!
Pancakes (Sue Gregg's Blender Batter Pancake Recipe is the BEST in the world!!)
Southern Breakfast—Eggs, Biscuits, Breakfast meat...
Waffles! (Sue Gregg's waffle recipes are the BEST!)
Granola (LOVE homemade!)
Yogurt with Granola topping

Lunch...

Soup and Sandwich
Hot Dogs/Chips
Homemade Pizza (easy!)
Super salad! Mix in grilled chicken leftover from dinner!
Grilled Cheese/veggies and dip
Bagel Bites (pizza!—Go Sam's!)
Macaroni and Hamburger Quickie!
Tacos
Fruit Salad

Soup and crackers

Snacks...

Banana Bread

Smoothies

Yogurt with Fruit or

Granola Topping

Muffins

Cereal

Tuna and Crackers

Trail Mix

Homemade Granola

Applesauce

Sliced vegetables and Dip (we buy pre-sliced from Sam's—easy and fast snack!)

Jello

Fruit slices (either by themselves or with fruit dip)

Cheese cubes and crackers

Dinner Meals:

Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes or Macaroni, Salad, Dinner Rolls

Spaghetti, Salad, Homemade French Bread

Lasagna, Salad, Homemade French Bread

Loaded Baked Potato

Make Your Own Taco Salad Bar

Make Your Own Nacho Salad Bar

Nachos with Cheese Dip (and a movie!)

Homemade Pizza

Chicken and Rice Casserole/Steamed Vegetables

Chicken Stew/Cornbread or Crackers/Sandwich

Chicken Noodle Soup/Crackers/Salad or Sandwich

Chicken Tortilla Soup with Mexican Cornbread

Grilled Chicken Breast, a variety of Vegetables on hand, Rolls

Barbecue Grilled Chicken Breast, Baked Beans, Potato Salad, Rolls

Easy???

What do you think? Easy? Yep, make it easy! Choose whichever ideas will help you to make EASY meals while leaving you time to enjoy the journey! Not only will you enjoy meal preparation much, much more, but you will also have more time to enjoy all of little things during your journey!

Have fun!
Cindy

Some Funnies Just to Lighten Your Heart...

...He who has a glad heart has a continual feast [regardless of circumstances].
Proverbs 15: 15

Funnies

There was a very gracious lady who was mailing an old family Bible to her brother in another part of the country. *"Is there anything breakable in here?"* asked the postal clerk. *"Only the Ten Commandments."* answered the lady.

While driving in Pennsylvania, a family caught up to an Amish carriage. The owner of the carriage obviously had a sense of humor, because attached to the back of the carriage was a hand printed sign... *"Energy efficient vehicle: Runs on oats and grass. Caution: Do not step in exhaust."*

There is the story of a pastor who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: *"I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."*

Q: What kind of motor vehicles are in the Bible?

A: Jehovah drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden in a **FURY**. David's **TRIUMPH** was heard throughout the land. **HONDA**..because the apostles were all in one **ACCORD**. 2 Corinthians 4:8 describes going out in service in a **Volkswagen Beetle**: "We are **PRESSED IN** every way, but not cramped beyond movement!"

What the Bible Means...

A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, *"I know what the Bible means!"*

His father smiled and replied, *"What do you mean, you 'know' what the Bible means?"*

The son replied, *"I do know!"* "Okay," said his father. *"So, son, what does the Bible mean?"*

"That's easy, Daddy. It stands for 'Basic Information Before Leaving Earth.'"

REAL Life Want-Ads!

"Teacher—3-year-old teacher needed. Must be energetic and love children."

Lord...

Give me a sense of humor, Lord, Give me the grace to see a joke, To get some humor out of life,
And pass it on to other folk.

Ever Noticed???

People want the front of the bus, the back of the church, and the center of attention.

"Somebody has well said there are only two kinds of people in the world. There are those who wake up in the morning and say, "Good morning, Lord," and there are those who wake up in the morning and say, "Good Lord, it's morning."

Important Things I've Learned From Children...

- ♥ It's more fun to color outside of the lines.
- ♥ If you are gonna draw on the wall, do it behind the couch.
- ♥ Ask why until you understand.
- ♥ Hang on tight.
- ♥ Even if you've been fishing for three hours and haven't gotten anything except poison ivy and sunburn, you're still better off than the worm.
- ♥ Make up the rules as you go along.
- ♥ Ask for sprinkles.
- ♥ If the horse you're drawing looks more like a dog, make it a dog.
- ♥ Save a place in line for your friends.
- ♥ Sometimes you have to take the test before you're finish studying.
- ♥ If you want a kitten, start out asking for a horse.
- ♥ Just keep banging until someone answers the door.
- ♥ Making your bed is a waste of time.
- ♥ There is no good reason why clothes should match.
- ♥ Even Popeye didn't eat his spinach until he absolutely had to.
- ♥ You work so hard pedaling up the hill that you hate to brake on the way down!

OOPS!

A minister parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and

couldn't find a space with a meter. Then he put a note under the windshield wiper that read: *"I have circled the block 10 times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespasses."*

When he returned, he found a citation from a police officer along with this note. *"I've circled this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket, I'll lose my job. Lead us not into temptation."*

"He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." Proverbs 11:25

Taste and See!

By Heidi Kaether

As you know, this is the time of year for setting goals and making resolutions. Have you made any goals for yourself this year?

Five years ago, I resolved in January to read through the Bible in a year for the first time. Oh, how the Lord has blessed that time!

I had never gotten very far on reading the Bible before. Although I'd grown up in a Christian home, reading the Bible for myself was never stressed, but only mentioned occasionally as something I really ought to do. So, for the first time, I began to read the Scriptures all on my own.

I had a *One Year Bible* sitting round that was in the *New Living Translation*. I'd been a little leary before about reading it, because I'd been told that it was **not** a true translation of the Bible, but only a paraphrase, and therefore not even really the Word of God! But I was determined to do something, and that is what I had, so I began.

Perhaps one could make the argument that the NLT isn't purely the Word of God, but I can tell you that for myself, it "woke up" my sleeping Spiritual senses, and whatever was God's Word still in it, soaked into the dry ground of my heart. Not far into the year, I found I had a hunger for more and more of God!

Finally, THIS was that **"hunger and thirst for righteousness"** that I had heard about and prayed for, and wondered why I didn't really have it! I hadn't realized that my appetite needed to be whetted. No wonder the Bible says, **"Taste and see that the Lord is good!"**

Since then, each year I have used a *One Year Bible* and have read several different translations. This year I am reading out of the *Amplified* Version. And I have found an incredible blessing!

Check out <http://www.oneyearbibleonline.com>. There, I can not only read each day online and choose the translation I wish to read from, but I can even open up multiple windows with several translations and compare as I go! God is so good!

If you have yet to make a habit of spending some time each day in God's Word, why don't you check out the site <http://www.oneyearbibleonline.com>?

It doesn't have to be a requirement-just one more **should** in your day. Reading God's Word is not something to "check off" your list and "get done". God wants our time with Him to flow naturally out of our relationship with Him. His LOVE compels us to WANT to know more of Him. But at the same time, it is easy to get used to the diet of simply hearing God's Word in teaching from others, and never learning to feed yourself.

When my children were each babies, I used to be able to let them sit on my lap at mealtimes and they sat quietly while I ate. But once they got to be about eight months old, and I began to let them taste grown up foods now and then, look out! They couldn't possibly sit on my lap while I ate without getting their fingers into everything! They wanted to taste everything!

In the same way, we may not have a desire for God's Word or a hunger and thirst for righteousness, because we've never TASTED of it!

God's Word is FULL of vitamins that we need for our Spiritual growth. His table is set for you and He's calling you to the feast!

Taste and See!

Taste and See!

Not Yet *Unknown... Slightly changed by ME!*

There was a couple who used to go to England to shop in the beautiful stores. This was their 25th wedding anniversary. They both liked antiques and pottery and especially teacups. On this special day, they saw the most gorgeous teacup they had ever seen. They asked the store clerk, "May we see that one? We've never seen one quite so beautiful." As the lady handed it to them, suddenly the teacup spoke!

"You don't understand," it said. "I have not always been a tea cup. I have QUITE a story! You see I was once just a blob of red clay. My master took me...rolled me...patted me...over and over and over. It hurt SO bad! I yelled out, 'Stop! Let me alone!' But he only smiled, 'NOT YET.'"

"Then I was placed on a spinning wheel," the teacup said, "and suddenly I was spun around and around and around. 'Stop it! I am getting dizzy!' I screamed. But the master only nodded and said, 'NOT YET.'"

"Then he put me in the oven. I never felt such heat. I wondered why he wanted to burn me, why he would not stop this! I yelled and knocked at the door. I could only see him through the opening as he shook his head and I read his lips saying, 'NOT YET.'"

"Finally the door was opened. He took me out of the oven and put me on a shelf to cool. 'There... that's better,' I said. And...then...he all the sudden began to brush and paint me all over. The fumes were horrible! I thought I would gag! 'Stop it! Stop it! Stop it!' I cried! He only nodded and said once again, 'NOT YET.'"

"Then, suddenly he put me back in the oven. Only not like the first one. This oven was twice as hot! I just KNEW I would suffocate! I begged. I pleaded. I screamed. I cried. All the time I could see him through the opening nodding his head, saying, 'NOT YET.'"

"I knew there was no hope. I would never make it now. I was ready to give up. But at that very moment the door opened and he took me out and placed me on the shelf. One hour later, he handed me a mirror and said, 'Look at yourself.' And I did. I said, 'That's not me! That could not be me! It's beautiful! I...I AM beautiful!'"

"Then he said, 'I want you to remember that I know it hurt to be rolled and patted, but if I had just left you, you would have dried up. I know it made you dizzy to spin around on the wheel, but if I had stopped, you would have crumbled. I know it hurt and it was hot and disagreeable in the oven, but if I hadn't put you there, you would have cracked. I know the fumes were bad when I brushed and painted you all over, but if I had not done that you never would have hardened OR had any color in your life. If I had not put you back into that second oven, you would never have been able to survive very long because the hardness would not have held. NOW, you are a finished product. You are what I had in mind for you when I first began!'"

Women of Influence. . .

By Peggy Hostetler

Influence? What is a "woman of influence"? Who are they? Where are they? Just what does her life "look" like?

You are either a woman of Godly influence or a woman of an ungodly influence? Is there a woman near you that is in need of a Godly influence upon her life? Maybe she is someone that needs help with her children, to catch up her housekeeping, who longs for a submitted heart.

Our walk and salvation is connected in a beautiful working pattern as we carry on every day of our lives. Our relationship with our husbands, the way we raise our children, the way we keep our homes, our dress, our speech, our actions, our deeds are just some of the many examples to a world full of women who are hungry for Godly influence.

Oh! I found beautiful meaning to the word influence. Words like *"to cast shade upon, to envelop in a haze of brilliancy, to overshadow."* Oh, I just thought these to be such very lovely words, words that fully show the meaning of influence. This speaks loudly to me of what MY influence does to and for other women. My influence can overshadow, it can cast shade upon and it can envelop in a haze of brilliancy. To "envelop in a haze of brilliancy!!" MY life can surround another's in a shadow or haze of light OR my life can surround another's with a shadow and can cast shade or in reality darkness upon another's. Wow! That speaks volumes to me and convicts the very soul of the "woman" in me. My God-given instinct is quickened, made aware, brought out to a fuller deeper meaning of what my influence can do. Praise the Lord for the light of His influence and in His words of light.

I also found some words in that meaning that were distressing. Influence in the Greek means a "token of control, authority, jurisdiction, liberty, power, right, strength." Let us look at these for a moment and see where they fit in with our influence.

"Token of control" is that little piece of us that we use to wield in our daily lives. In relationships women often use this token of influence to undermine husbands or to navigate around his will in their marriage. They can use it as a "quiet" authority, where it will erode and rot the marriage core. Our liberty, power, right and strengths are found within submission to our husbands. It is God-given, but has its place and is a blessing within the perimeters of the marriage fiber.

We also use this influence in our relationships with other sisters and daughters. I think of those little day-to-day things. They may seem small, but reflect a heart that is satisfied in living a simple life for Christ. I think of a few of those times when I may have been an influence. A smile to a grocery clerk who is frazzled by the lines of people yet to come after me, an encouraging word of hope to a tired mother working long hours with children in daycare searching and grieving for a better way, crying with a sister over tea who just needs a hug and an ear to listen. There have been many, many times when I have been both a good influence and sadly times when I have not.

The following is an on-going study of women of the Bible and that of their influence. The influence they had on their husbands, their children, their sisters around them and the wide far reaching influence they have on us even today. Generations will be touched by influence. I have wept at times as I studied for this writing and what the Lord has shown me with one tiny word that He so gently placed upon my heart. The word Influence.....

May we press forward to the prize and the high calling that we have in the ultimate influence..... that of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lord. Ready?

Eve: A Failed Helpmeet

Just imagine a beautiful garden home, a beautiful new body with fresh skin and a strong intelligent spiritual head of the home who adores you. Sound familiar? It should. This was Eve's world. A world God created for Eve, placing her in a beautiful garden, with a beautiful new life and a wonderful husband, Adam.

I love the account of how God took a part of Adam to create Eve. A part of his very own body. How close and intimate is that picture in trying to show you how God created the woman "for" the man, not the man for the woman. Eve was not made from Adam's heel, nor was she made from his head. She was made from his side, not to be above him and not to be below him, but certainly to be right beside him. Beside him to become part of him for her entire life. Beside him to be closer in love with him--being eye-to-eye, cheek-to-cheek, breath-to-breath and heart-to-heart! What a beautiful image this brings to my mind.

Eve was to be all these things. It was the duty and honor she was to bestow upon her mate, Adam. She was to complete him as a helper, suitable and fit. God created the perfect example of a woman who was to become a great woman of influence, but sadly Eve will be remembered as one of the worst role models for the Christian woman of today. But, we can learn much from her. We can go back in time to watch as she makes grave mistakes. She can influence our lives to the highest point and help us in not going down the same dark path.

We find in Proverbs 12:4 that ***"A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay or rot to his bones."*** Eve was to be a crown, a sparkling jewel of fine and precious stones to Adam. To bring him to his finest...and, in turn, bringing Eve to her shining place of respect and duty. I have always likened the submitted life of a Christian wife to her husband as an example of a submitted life to Christ Jesus. When we come in humility to the Lord, we submit to him and his authority. We are now lost to him, only to be completely now found. So it is with a Christian wife. The nation's feminist society would tell us to go out and find ourselves, but little do they know (for they are deceived) that when we submit ourselves to our husbands, to his love and authority, we are already found, beautifully and wonderfully found. We then enter into our place, a sacred sphere of promise, provision and blessing. Blessings rain down from heaven when we are in the place that God has purposed for us. Eve got out of her place, her place of promise and lost her blessings. She got out from under God's perfect will and purpose for her life, straying from Adam's leadership and safety and bringing herself into deception.

What happened to Eve? Could it be that she became increasingly bored and discontent with her

role as "just" wife. Maybe she strayed too far from home, maybe "things" became important and things she wanted and desired became so very important. Did she linger and stare too long? The longer she looked, the better the forbidden areas looked to her. Did she stop listening to God the Father? Could it be she did not talk with her mate as often as she once had? Maybe she just needed to "get away" alone, and away she did, once too often.

Do any of these thoughts sound familiar to YOU? Have you ever reaped dire consequences in your marriage? Have you "created" sin in your home life and has it caused you husband to stumble over it and fall? Is he bruised? Or does he just bleed a little from time-to-time from hurt that may have come from you? Is your influence on you husband a positive one? Do you make an impact on his growth in the Lord? Or maybe...are you a hindrance? Do you have a serpent's tongue lashing to and fro with no consideration to having a meek and quiet spirit?

Maybe now is a good time to evaluate your heart. A good time to take inventory of your influence and how your husband sees you. Dear sisters the potential is always there in the next breath for an apology and for healing... Our knees sometimes get stiff from not being bent by our bedsides. Today is the day to set yourself free from the forbidden fruit!! It will leave a bitter aftertaste in your mouth...or with humility can leave you more sensitive to the "sweet" on the end of your tongue!!!

Let's stop eating from the apple and throw away what is left on the core. It has become brown with rot. Let's set our sights on becoming a woman of Godly influence and let it begin in our own homes, modeling the attributes of a wife set on the rock, Christ Jesus! Hallelujah!

Mary: A Woman Who Found Favor

As I ponder Mary, the mother of Jesus, I think of a maiden, sweet, fresh, pure and simple. I see her small stature busily going about her daily tasks with no thoughts as to what her future will hold. Oh, I am sure her dearest Joseph crossed her mind though from time-to-time. Her impending betrothal must have given her great joy indeed.

It tells us in Luke, Chapter 1 that God found favor with Mary. The angel that visited Mary said, "Hail! Thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." I would like to look at those precious words "you have found favor."

She was beloved of God, He saw in Mary a woman who was after His own heart. God wasn't a stranger to Mary. She knew of the promised Messiah and no doubt longed for this "promised one."

Do you have that same longing? Are you looking for His return? Does God find favor in you? Do you become one with Him in sweet intimate fellowship? Just imagine the encounter Mary had with the angel ringing out his salutation of "Hail!" Mary must have been caught off guard with surprise or was she? Certainly she was with a lot of mixed emotions, but could it be she was in communion with God in prayer at the entrance of the angel appearing in her room?

What has your response been to the Lord when He has found favor with you? When He has given you a higher calling? Did you follow through with the directions the Lord gave to you or plodded,

questioned and mucked your way through. Maybe you are following through, but you have done so begrudgingly! Mary's heart must have been full at the undertaking of carrying and birthing the Messiah, Jesus.

It was no mistake that God gave Elizabeth as a special confident sister to Mary. Elizabeth was past childbearing years and Mary was a virgin. Only our Lord could use these two examples of impossibility to show us that absolutely nothing is impossible with God!!

Dear sweet Mary's response of ***"Behold the maid servant of the Lord! Let it be unto me according to Your Word"*** is so precious to me. Oh! Sisters her response should rock the very foundation of our souls! She was saying, ***"I am here Lord, I am your servant, humble and willing to be used in any way and for any purpose according to Your will!!"***

Do we "allow" God to use us? Do we give ourselves to Him--wholly and completely with no holds? Fully trusting? Fully laying ourselves down at His feet? When was the last time you have gone into your prayer closet and said, ***"Behold! The maid servant of the Lord! Let it be unto me according to your word!"***? Do we surrender our will so that God's will and purpose can be fulfilled?

He has a will and purpose for each of us if we would only surrender to him. Mary was a woman who found favor with God and indeed a woman of influence to all of us living today.

Are you a woman who has fond favor? Are you a woman of influence?

Hannah: A Woman of Sacrifice

When was the last time you sacrificed? Sacrifice means *to devote, bestow, present or gift, to slay*. As Christian wives and mothers, we know what it means to sacrifice. Most of us give of ourselves, devoting and bestowing our gifts of time and self each day. When we peek in on the life of Hannah we see an example of great sacrifice...that of "losing" a child and of "slaying" one's own desires to give to another. Hannah was a woman with a great emptiness in her heart. That emptiness could only be filled by a child, a son whom Hannah longed.

Hannah's husband Elkanah was a Godly man. It tells us in 1st Samuel that ***"Year-after-year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord at Shiloh."*** During this time of sacrifice Elkanah gave portions of meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. These were sons and daughters she bore to Elkanah. But, to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her. Could it be that Hannah held a "special" place in his heart, could it be that they grieved together at not creating children from that love. It tells us in the word, ***"the Lord had closed her womb."***

Here we see God's plan as it unfolds and how He had a very specific purpose in not willing blessings to Hannah and Elkanah until the precise time--His time.

Peninnah had used the barrenness against Hannah and wielded her influence purposefully in badgering and hurting Hannah. This thorny pain went on year-after-year. I believe that Peninnah did this behind her husband's back. Hannah being of a meek and quiet spirit did not want to gossip or

display the same hatred toward Peninnah to her husband that had displayed to her, so this went unchecked. Elkanah would say to her **"Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted?"** It was clear that Elkanah had no awareness of the torment Peninnah was wielding at Hannah. Holding onto this torment and not sharing it with her husband was another sacrificial way in which she gave sacrificially. She did not want to show any disrespect to the other woman because of the love for Elkanah. Surely, he was quite aware of the grief of carrying an empty womb as he said to her **"Don't I mean more to you that ten sons?"** Oh! I am sure that this question was one of bitter sweetness. I can feel the torn heart Hannah must have felt at that moment. Bitter that she had never suckled a child at her breast, bitter at the pure emptiness of being barren. On the other hand, sweetness that her husband had wanted her to adore only him, to see him as fulfilling her needs, and at the deep love the two of them shared.

Hannah remained steadfast through her trials, but things came to a head during one particular time while they were in Shiloh. It was there that Hannah let the dam burst and the river began to flow. Eli, a priest at the temple door saw Hannah weeping bitterly and praying out to the Lord. At this point she made a vow saying, **"O! Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant, but give her a son then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."** As she prayed silently only moving her lips, Eli though she was drunk and said to her, **"How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine!"** Hannah replied that she was not drunk, but a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I believe that dear Hannah was consumed before the pouring out of her spirit that day and the very act of "pouring out" and fully emptying that Hannah found relief. Eli answered and told her to go in peace and blessed her petition. It was then that Hannah left with a renewed joy in her heart, was able to eat, and had a smile upon her face. It was the act of "giving it" to the Lord that brought renewal.

The next morning they rose early and worshipped the Lord and returned to their house to Ramah and the Bible says, **"Elkanah knew his wife."** I love the use of the word "knew" here as it shows the beauty of the intimacy that they shared together. Imagine the release that Hannah could now have in her marriage bed with her precious husband without the worry of bearing a child continuing to steal her joy. The influence of worry no longer overshadowed the love she shared with him. She had given it to the Lord and placed it in His will and fully capable hands.

In due time the Lord blessed Hannah with a son and she named him Samuel. Samuel's name meant, **"For this child I prayed."** Indeed it was right and good that it was the name given to him, for he was exactly what Hannah prayed for.

The time came once again for Elkanah to take his whole house to offer his yearly sacrifice and his vow. Hannah stayed behind for she said unto her husband, **"I will not go up until the child is weaned and then I will bring him that he may appear before the Lord and remain there forever."** Elkanah told her to do what she thought was right and keep Samuel until he is weaned. So Hannah continued suckling her babe until the time came. Hannah kept her promise to the Lord and gave Samuel back as a sacrifice of her obedience. Hannah took Samuel to the house of the Lord in Shiloh and the Word says that Samuel grew and worshiped the Lord there.

In 1 Samuel Chapter 2, you can read Hannah's beautiful prayer of praise. Hannah is a lovely woman

of influence. In her, we see a determined woman who believed in a God that was bigger than a barren womb. She was a woman who knew to pour and empty herself out to the Lord and to leave burdens with him. She knew where to go and where to find peace. She was a woman who gave of her first fruits--the child of her womb.

Can we not learn from Hannah's example? Most of us have given sacrificially for our children at one point or another. No matter if our sacrifice is big or small, our God sees. He is still a God that answers prayers and will bless that sacrifice. He will use those sacrifices to influence others as we live out our lives in front of others. Are you a woman of sacrifice? Are you a woman of influence?

How to Destroy Your Man In Just Five Years!

By Cindy Rushton

Ok! Got your attention? Wondering if I have gone off the deep end? No...this one is JUST FOR FUN! No ideas shared in this article are intended to be used in any way! We guarantee results—so beware of implementing them unless you want to fail in marriage and totally ruin that man of your dreams!

- ♥ Make it your ambition to NOT notice him!
- ♥ Disregard what he says- Look the other way, bring something else up to talk about, DO NOT listen!
- ♥ Reject Him...his ideas, his love, his protection, his wisdom, his opinions, his leadership!
- ♥ Tell him ALL of his inadequacies AND how YOU can correct them!
- ♥ Feed any of his insecurities WITH TRUTH about his weaknesses!
- ♥ Each night when he comes home, go about your own business-it helps to be on the phone and keep right on talking! Don't even get dressed, wear makeup, or brush your teeth!
- ♥ Belittle him in private and especially in public! Let him "have it" when you think different than him!
- ♥ Compare him to other men AND your daddy!
- ♥ Get on the phone and tell ALL about him! Don't forget to complain and belittle!
- ♥ Dishonor him in public and private! Let the whole world know what a wimp he is!
- ♥ Disobey him—what do guys know anyway?
- ♥ Don't put much value in him or in what he has to say—you know best!
- ♥ Correct him in front of others—especially the children!
- ♥ Find all his faults and tell him about them constantly!
- ♥ Push him to get your way!
- ♥ Never let him know he satisfies you (physically, spiritually, emotionally, mentally...)—don't ruin a good thing!
- ♥ Lead him on!
- ♥ Frustrate him ANY way you can!
- ♥ Nag! How ELSE do you get a man to do anything? How ELSE will they ever HEAR you?
- ♥ Complain! Make him suffer too!
- ♥ Whine! Isn't he SUPPOSED to encourage you?
- ♥ Don't waste your time understanding him!
- ♥ Respond to him! ESPECIALLY to his offensive behavior!
- ♥ Despise him for being such a weakling!

Don't want this? Well, look on the NEXT page! We want to help you as you seek to help your husband become ALL he can be!!!

How To Help Your Husband to Be All He Can Be!!

By Cindy Rushton

NOW we are talking! OH! Beloved! If there is ONE person that has made ALL of the mistakes on the last page and can only thank God for His grace, it is ME! I praise God every day for the blessing that I have as the wife of my very best friend. It can only be described as AMAZING GRACE! I am so thankful that Harold KNOWS me inside-out and still chooses to love me. Just TOO awesome! Makes ME want to help him to become ALL he can become. Well, that is exactly what these tips are all about—helping our husbands become all they can become. Check it out and see if you find some ideas along the way!

- ♥ Become VERY BEST friends! Enjoy his companionship. Endeavor to become a good companion!
- ♥ Find things that you can enjoy TOGETHER. Breakfast each day...walks at sunset...hobbies...work...etc. Constantly tie strings!
- ♥ Look for his strengths...share them over and over! He can never hear them enough!
- ♥ Show gratefulness! Let him KNOW that you really appreciate what he does for you and your family.
- ♥ Get rid of any seeds of disrespect, jealousy, and comparison! You are in this thing together!
- ♥ Help him! God created woman to be a "help meet" for man—meaning that she is the one who "completes" him and is "fit" for him. Find ways that you meet your husband's needs. Find ways that you help him to fulfill his life purpose from God.
- ♥ Pray for him! Circle him in prayer. Pray and fast when things are tough. Celebrate and praise when God breaks through. Seek God with him. Constantly build hedges of protection around him through prayer.
- ♥ Support him! Become his personal cheerleader! Believe in what is on his heart. Cheer him along when things are tough and not looking too good! Cheer him on when he makes the mark!
- ♥ Respect him! Respect comes through in little things: our tone of voice, our facial expressions, our words, our behavior. Respect your man! You will in turn build your man!
- ♥ Admire him! Let him know the things about him that you really love. Let him see how you admire him by the way you look at him! Enjoy him!
- ♥ Encourage him! Literally INFUSE courage into your sweetheart! You KNOW the things that really mean a lot to his heart. Be sure to do and say those things that will bring courage and strength into his heart and soul!
- ♥ Promote him! Become his very best marketing agent! Be the one who knows his worth, his gifts, his talents, his strengths and shares them with others! When the whole world "feels" as though it is crashing in, be the one who believes in him and continues to help him keep on keeping on!
- ♥ Inspire him! Be his sounding board of ideas. Listen and help him brainstorm when he is void of ideas. Ask God to help you see all that he IS and all that he is becoming!
- ♥ Catch his vision! See those things that are not existing now! Be the one person who can see

what God has in store for him!

- ♥ Strengthen him! When he is tired and weary, be the one to undergird and support him. Pour all you have into giving him his second breath! Use all of your gifts, talents, and strengths to make him whole!
- ♥ Work with him! Be his "partner." Find ways to help him work and build the family name and legacy. Constantly consider ways that you can help him make the most of the finances that you have. Follow the Proverbs 31 model by creatively finding ways to make the most of the resources that you have.
- ♥ Submit to him! Submission has great power! It unleashes your husband to take the lead and become the man God created him to be. It also unleashes God to use your family in a mighty way. Submission is not weakness. It will not create a monster in your husband. It will bring the peace and unity that will make your relationship everything that God had in mind when He designed marriage! Plus, submission will help your husband to become all that God designed for him to become!
- ♥ Defer to your husband! Always defer back to your husband. Have a decision to make? Unsure about what to do? Need help pruning your life and your schedule? Defer to your husband. Let him be your first place that you run to for counsel. Let him give you his wisdom and viewpoint. Not only will you become all you can be and find great contentment, but you will find that he will show himself as your knight-in-shining-armor!
- ♥ Reverence your husband! See him as precious! Fall passionately in love with him! Revere him and his position as your precious husband. Watch him blossom!
- ♥ Pour all of yourself into him! There is no accident that YOU are married to your husband! So often it is easy to focus on what they are not—probably because that is what WE ARE. Yet, as we pour ourselves into them, we find how incredible we are TOGETHER! Pour all of yourself into your husband--Your spirituality, strength, power, prayer power, support, lifting him up, gifts, personality, intelligence, insightfulness, communication skills! The true secret to building a godly spiritual leader is to pour all of yourself into him. To get under him, to support him, to build him! Pride will want to push ahead or push him aside. God's Spirit motivates us to get behind our husbands and let him succeed as God's mighty man!

*So, what do you think? Ready to build your man? Oh! Become the student of your husband and watch him become ALL God created for him to become!
You will DEFINITELY enjoy the journey!*

High School... Wrapping It All Up!

By Cindy Rushton

Reprinted from *The Old Schoolhouse Magazine* 2004

Looking back over our family scrapbooks is such a treat! Can it be that this time REALLY has gone so fast? It is unbelievable to look at those pictures from our "First Day of School." So many great memories! So much fun! Funny to see Matthew as an eager 5-year-old kindergartener—in one picture all dressed up, complete with his shirt tucked in! In the next few moments he transgressed to his "water-boots" ON THE OUTSIDE of his pants...shirt untucked...and his "standard" camoflaue baseball cap! So funny! Yet...now...

Now, this little boy has turned into a young man right before my eyes! Shirts are tucked in—probably because he now works so hard to exercise and keep fit! Those water boots have lonnnnnggg been traded in for BIG tennis shoes that I "lovingly" trip on as I cross the room—lovingly because I REALLY know it won't be much longer that I will get the treat of tripping over his shoes. And...no more baseball caps either! Matthew is now as particular as his father about his hair, even though this year we found his very first GRAY HAIR like his mom! Now...

Now, we are wrapping it all up after 12 years of homeschooling. High School is reality now! But only for a little while longer!

Days are full working through those last few school requirements, learning real life skills alongside of Mom and Dad, and best of all--much more of real life companionship than ever before. While Matthew finishes his last required credit before graduation and a full slate of extras that we wanted to be sure to include in his curriculum, we have been looking back and looking ahead with a whole host of emotions. We are wrapping it all up to get ready to pass the torch!

So, wondering about what Homeschooling High School is like? What it looks like? What really needs to be taught in these last few years at home? Come home and join us right-smack-dab-in-the-middle of our journey!

Family-LIFE! Wrap High School Around Your HOME Not School!

As we enter into the High School years, we enter into a time of great pressure! Not only do we want the very, very best education for our children, but we find that our days are more limited than ever to accomplish this great task. Then, add to this the external pressures that come from every angle. It gets VERY tough to discern which way to go or what homeschooling in the high school years should really be like.

Instead of cramming "school" into these years, God has a better plan!

During these last few years it is even more vital than ever that we develop our homes and our family lifestyle. These are the years that we must continue walking step-by-step into the great design that God has for our family! More than ever, we need to include our children in our daily life, mentoring them so they will be prepared for their life. As we do, all else will fall in place...the choices, the schedule, and the struggles...all will fall into place.

Want to make learning a lifestyle but have no idea how to begin?

First, *look at ways to encourage RELATIONSHIPS.* Wrap all around your family. Set a priority on family life. Set up a family schedule that begins by wrapping the day around your husbands' schedule. Balance all else to fit in around their daily schedule. Then, it will be easier to gage whether other things such as extracurricular activities, studies, work, or apprenticeships can work into the family schedule. With our family many, many good things have not fit in because we simply could not balance the demands with our priority of a strong family-centered life. These are small losses in view of eternity!

Secondly, *find ways to work together.* Academics in high school only take a small part of the day. It is easy to either let them get out of hand, monopolizing life OR lose track of every day. Make a concentrated effort to work together, teaching them what you know.

In our family, this means that Harold includes the children while he builds, repairs, or welds. For me, it means that Elisabeth and I are spending hours sewing, crafting, and baking. No one is stuck off working by themselves. When we added our new offices for our ministry onto our home, we planned the offices so that everyone could work together. These are just a few of the little things that we are doing to work together and learn together. Find ways to work and learn together in your family!

Finally, *think of how YOU learn?* We have noticed through the years that the very same ways that Harold and I continue to learn topics of our interest as adults are the best ways to encourage our children to learn..

When either of us want to learn something new, we read all that we can find on that topic. We research the topic using all reference materials that we have available to us (books, magazines, newspapers, Internet, Encyclopedias, reference books, PEOPLE, etc.). We access people who KNOW and LOVE the topic that we are interested in. We get busy "doing" hands-on what we want to know.

If you think of how we learn, you find that these are the OLD WAYS that students used to learn before education became so progressive ☺. These are the OLD PATHS. If you are like Harold and I, you will find that some of your learning techniques are as old as the sun. But, these are some of the best ways to teach your children how to learn now and--even better--encourage your children to become lifetime learners.

Train Them Up In The Way They Should Go...

I love Proverbs 22:6 in The Amplified Bible. Take a look at it...

“Train up a child in the way he should go [and in keeping with his individual gift or bent], and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

The word *train* in Hebrew *means to disciple or dedicate our children*. This gets good, so stick with me... What are we to train them up for? We are to be discipling and dedicating them in the way they are to go, which is using their spiritual gifts and natural bents.

Great calling, but this is TOUGH! So much battles against us! Curriculum. Trying to prepare for college. Tests. Lesson plans. Eek...where is the time? Oh, and how on earth do we even do it?

Sure, we KNOW that our primary role as parents is to train our children up in the way they should go. But, this mandate is a life-calling! It requires, first of all, getting to KNOW our children! Really knowing them! Studying our children to find their spiritual gifts, natural bents that they gravitate toward, and “the way they should go” so they will be prepared for that call in which they will not depart. One of life’s greatest blessings is getting to KNOW our children!

Their gifts and bents are not that hard to spot if they have ANY time to themselves at all.

My daughter has always been the one to spot anyone’s needs and find ways to encourage or serve them. My son is never happier than when he is researching a topic or sharing what he has learned along the way! Getting to know them and their special gifts has enabled me to do the NEXT thing—let them develop their gifts and bents!

Talk about scaring a parent! This can terrify a homeschooling parent. You probably have heard the debates: should education be teacher-directed, curriculum directed, or delight-directed??? I believe that there is a debate because none of these is complete! Our ultimate goal is to be a purpose-directed homeschool!

God wants for us to become balanced. He wants for us to seek to pattern our homes and homeschools after His design.

Think for a moment how He leads us spiritually. He uses the *Bible—curriculum directed*. Oh, but that is not all! He also uses His *Holy Spirit—teacher-directed*. Oh, still not done! He also uses our delights and desires—aha! Even *delight-directed*. Confused? The whole purpose of education is not to determine a philosophy of education, but to lead our children toward *living a life of purpose*.

God wants us *purposed-directed* all of the days of our life! That is not all! He also wants for us to get back to His design for the godly homeschool. One aspect of that design is leading our children to live a life that is purpose directed! Let’s dedicate this time to train our treasures in the direction of their life-purpose, looking to see who they are, what they are called to be, and how we can disciple them each and every day toward what they are called to do!

Prepared for Life!

What is it that our children REALLY need for us to teach during these last few years? What do they really need to be sent forth from our homes? If they were arrows, being shot forth to hit a

mark, how would we prepare them?

Harold and I have thought and prayed about this over the years.

What is really needed? We first had to discern what on earth we were preparing our children for.

Growing up, all of my classes were "college prep" courses. The "goal" was to prepare me for college! Perhaps that is why I had NO idea how to boil an egg when I married! (No laughing out there now!)

Our children need preparation for LIFE, not college or even a career. College is not the end result! College is designed to prepare students for a particular career. Not all careers receive the best training in college. However, it seems that we all have a tendency to work, without question, toward preparing our children for college, even if they cannot receive any training at all for their particular field in those colleges. Not to mention the effort that is placed on preparation for college to the detriment of learning real life skills. Our children need a wide and varied course of study in the high school years.

They need preparation for LIFE. They need for all of their studies to sharpen them to make a difference in our culture. They need answers to the tough questions. They need to study the different worldviews and how they affect behavior in our world today. They need to study and prepare for their roles in their own families. They need to do the things that help direct them toward their life purpose, whether those things are mission trips, apprenticeships, jobs, family ministry, life studies, hobbies, business opportunities or even time spent with us (or the grandparents). These are the very things that tend to get "in the way" of the traditional homeschool schedule. Yet, these are some of the most important things our children need for a full education.

Go for it! Give your children preparation for their life. Don't be in bondage to the credentials that our culture has set for completion. You can have a higher standard! When our children are in the midst of their daily duties, there will be just a few things that really matter. Make those things your focus. As you do, God will make homeschooling easy as you wrap it all up!

Seize this Time...Pass the Torch!

One of my favorite "parenting" passages in the whole Bible comes from 1 Chronicles 28-29. Just for space, I will not clip it in. I recommend that you read it now...

In my opinion, this is one of the most tender and precious passages of Scripture between a parent and child in the whole Bible. In this passage, we see David, the man after God's own heart, passing the torch to his beloved son, who would assume the position of king over all of Israel. No small calling there.

From his early years, David had a vision for a tremendous work for God. As David stepped up to his call, he was faithful to hear God step-by-step. He begged God time and time again to allow him to build a temple of worship. God had a different plan. He wanted David to BUILD HIS OWN