

# The Godly Home- School...



"The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs  
in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose  
waters never fail."  
Isaiah 58:11

# Help! I Have NO Idea WHERE To Begin Homeschooling!

By Cindy Rushton



Gearing up for yet another big homeschool year? I treasure this time of the year! A time to look back and praise God for where we have come from... A time to sit at his feet to get a glimpse into His vision for our tomorrows... A time to set goals and make plans that will help us today to step toward that tomorrow.

For me this is convention season. We travel extensively all year long, but most of the year is spent in different areas teaching seminars and hosting our retreats. Convention season takes us into the vendor halls and at the feet of those that only see us in the midst of their most confusing moments they face all year long! At convention, everyone has "the best" materials...THE way...oh, you can see why it is all so confusing. Some conventions with over 150 vendors—all with THE WAY to go! This brings me to a cry that I have heard time and time again, "OH, if I could just go home with you and have you walk me through getting started step-by-step!" Well, this is for YOU!

My only instructions to go along with the following are to pour yourself a nice big pot of tea...go to a nice quiet, "thinking" spot...and carry your homeschool planner! This one will be a girl-time to walk through some yearly planning!

**Go To God for His Direction...His Way...His  
Word for YOU and Your Homeschool!**

God has a word for every problem, every need, and every step of our way. The best news that I have for you is that God has a word for you on homeschooling as well! He cares about every single detail. If you have a concern, it is HIS concern as well! He does not leave you alone. He will never leave you or forsake you in life, but even more so, He will never leave or forsake you in this homeschool journey!

As you begin your new homeschool year, begin your year seeking for His word for your year! Search out His direction. You will probably be like me, completely surprised to find His specific details on the most unbelievable areas...writing, Notebooking, Scrapbooking (NO kidding...HE keeps a memory book AND commanded His people to keep stories in a "book of remembrance!") Whatever need you have,

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draw close to Him! Dig in and find direction to go His way! You are sure to find this year to be the best year yet!

### Get God's Vision!

Seek to know God's vision for your homeschool and for each individual child. Our vision is tainted and very, very limited! I don't know about you but I constantly have to remind myself that we are not ALWAYS going to be where we are. The children WILL GET THERE—potty trained, reading, writing, and even multiplying! The struggles of today will eventually become yet another story of God's faithfulness tomorrow! The frustrations we face today will find their solutions. Even today's successes will pale in comparison to the glory that God has in store for us to behold in our tomorrows. Things will not always be as they are today. Getting God's vision helps us to see through His eyes to how things will be! Then, our perspective will certainly change!

Today, right where we are, we can rest from all of our struggles, fears, and frustrations KNOWING that God sees where we are and knows where we will end up! He says over and over throughout Scripture that He has a good (sufficient, satisfactory) plan. In fact, we read in Jeremiah 29 in *The Message Bible* that God says to us, *"I know what I'm doing, I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I'll listen. When you come looking for me, you'll find me. Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, I'll make sure you won't be disappointed."*

We can rest knowing that God has a very good plan for us. He KNOWS where we will end up! All we have to do is cling to God, seek to hear Him all along the way, and trust Him with those details that can scare us (especially if WE had to do it on our own) but are NOTHING to Him!

We can trust Him with every detail. He knows exactly what they will need and what it takes NOW for us to get where He has planned for us to be! He is there each step of the way. He faithfully leads those that are His own and gently teaches us what our children need for their calling. Listen! Look! Hear God all along the way! In the meantime, enjoy the journey. Get to know your children! Look at WHO they are and seek to see them from God's perspective! Look at their giftings...begin now to use them. Walk along the way teaching them who you are and what you know (remember Deuteronomy 6 and 8??). Instill in them a passion for God and a heart for ministering to others. Stick to the main thing and God will give you glimpses along the way of the plan He has for their lives!

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### Set Goals!

Don't set out on the homeschool journey without a plan! Even though you must be yielded all along the way to what God wants, you will get more accomplished if you have an overall plan, long-range goals and heart desires.

We have asked God to give us direction and vision through a verse (or several verses) for each thing that we do in our life—homeschooling, marriage, parenting, so on. Even in my writing, I have a mission statement. I did not make this up, I prayed for 6 months until the Lord gave me a passage that defined my long-term objectives. Now, all that we do as a ministry is weighed against that passage. It keeps our family restrained, helps us to judge how God wants to enlarge our ministry, directs areas that are to be pruned all along the way, and helps us to be more productive.

We have found the same thing to be true in our homeschool. I challenge you to go before the Lord to ask for His vision. Then, make sure your goals to move toward God's plan--God's vision. Perhaps, now you may want to get a notebook for YOU. Jot down a list of long-term goals...then short-term goals (5 years...1 year...1 month...1 week...tomorrow). The further you are looking, the more brief and abstract. Oh, and if you are like me, it does not have to be a fancy planner, it can be a simple list in the back of your prayer journal or a simple three-ring binder with lists of you can add to as you go along the way! ☐

Does this "goal setting" seem too vast...too overwhelming...too formidable to even begin??? Let's make it easy as A, B, C! Ready?

- ♥ Determine what is your purpose? What are YOU really called by God to do? Why ARE you homeschooling? What compels you to homeschool your children? God has equipped us to complete all that we are called to do, but He dose not commit Himself to anything that He has not called us to do. There are many reasons to homeschool. However, there are many reasons to homeschool that are based on the world's system and not on God's design for the godly homeschool. Want success in this call? Take a good look at your call—your heart's desires—your purpose. Then, you will be ready to set goals that can help you move step-by-step toward the mark. Of course, we cannot even set a goal if we are not aware of our calling or life purpose. As we shared in the last section, this step takes seeking the Lord. Then we are able to set goals to reach toward the mark!
- ♥ Decide which goals need to be set to help move toward your purpose? Goals actually put you on the path toward reaching your purpose! Goals are the

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steps we work toward as we reach toward the call. The best way to set goals is to discern the following: What can help you to get where you are going? This year? This month? This week? Today? Pray through these goals. We can use goals to reach toward our purpose and consistently work toward our goals! Does this make any difference? Sure it does! As we continue our journey, we can monitor our progress much easier! When things get a bit frustrating, we can re-evaluate to see if our goals are—reasonable and helping us to reach toward our purpose OR if our goals are just a bit too unreasonable. Goals are the stepping stones toward the high call!

- ♥ Look at all existing goals. Are your existing goals helping you reach toward your purpose? How was last year? What have you reached? What can continue to help you? Are there things that need to be eliminated or pruned back to help you reach toward the mark? Are there things that you have been doing that are REALLY helping you more than ever? Keep those things that work and eliminate those things that are a hindrance!
- ♥ Set goals for this year. It is NOT too late! So often it is easy to just sail by without making goals OR to think it is TOO late to set goals. Goals must be constantly evaluated and monitored so they can help us work toward our purpose. I set a priority to look at my goals and keep them in check on a monthly basis (at minimum!). Looking at our goals on a regular basis is the very best way to hear God all along the way! How are you doing at this? Look back over last year...How did you do? Did you meet your goals? Have you set any goals for this year? What are YOUR goals this year? How would you like to grow? What would you like to see or where would you like to be at the end of this year?
- ♥ How are you doing this year? Are you on track? Meeting your goals? What one thing could help you to reach toward your goals? How much more do you want to stretch? Are you reasonable in your expectations and plans? What works? What doesn't?
- ♥ Are you monitoring yourself along the way? Goals are most commonly missed simply because of not following up! So, how are you doing at this time? Are you where you want to be? If not, how can you make up? Do you even NEED to make up? Have you met your goals? (YEA!) If so, want higher goals?

Ready? Look at your purpose! Set goals to help you reach toward your life purpose and GO FOR IT! This journey is full of abundance and life! ENJOY IT all along the way!

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### Set Your Schedule!

How on earth do you set up a schedule that can really be done??? Do you feel as frustrated as I am when you read the samples of schedules that other homeschool moms share? Do you find that those schedules sound good, but simply cannot work with your family? Well, beloved friend, you are NOT alone! Yes, we do need a schedule—a road map—for our day. But, I find that it is more than just the schedule on paper that makes a difference. Here are some quick tips for you to consider in your quiet time as you ponder how to set up a schedule that can REALLY work to make homeschooling easy:

- ♥ Look at your life...Really take a look! What is going on? What is your husband's schedule? What time of the day is the best for the different aspects of your life? What are each of your children needing? How much CAN you balance and still be effective? What is most important for each and every day—to help meet your goals, to help you teach the most needed studies, to help you balance teaching each of your children?
- ♥ What are your goals... Goals are different for each and every family, each and every child. Honestly take a look at your goals to see: what is most important for your family? Where do you want to be next—potty training? Obedience? Reading? Writing without tears? Multiplication tables? What do you need to help you reach your goals?
- ♥ What does EACH child need? To learn to read? Write? Play? Chores? Time to research a topic of interest? Let this be the "main thing" until they "get it."
- ♥ What needs to be done each day? Think through and possibly discuss with your husband what YOUR family "should" get done in a day. Harold and I decided that our priority was for the following to be done EVERY DAY: Quiet-times, Chores, Table-time, Family time, Free time to pursue interests, Ministry/Business/Apprenticeships, and Read Alouds. Having a general idea of what we found to be MOST important helped us to relax when we had "interruptions" and "distractions" that are inevitable in a real home. On those WONDERFUL days (don't think there are MANY of those in one year!), we can get up earlier and get all done early in the day, allowing more time for Family Time and Free Time. On those days that the morning is shorter than desired, we can roll into the basic frame work without stress and frustration throwing us off. Oh! We also have our family schedule flexible in consideration to our traveling schedule and Harold's always changing work schedule. Look at what needs to be done and how it can RELIABLY be accomplished in a day. SCHEDULE in those naps...plenty

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of play time...and most importantly, your quiet time!

- ♥ Most importantly! Go to God and see what HIS priorities are for each and every day! Everything can be on paper and still not work. If there is one thing that I have learned DEEPLY this year it is that each day is truly the Lord's day. He has a perfect schedule for each day. While He wants for us to have our days ordered, He still wants complete surrender to Him for those days that He has a special "lesson" for our whole family (including MOM!) to learn! Sooo, most importantly go to God each and every day with your schedule on the altar! You will have the best year yet!

### **Get Organized—from Home-to-Homeschool...**

Friend to friend—this is the time of year that will make or break our whole homeschool year. Nothing frustrates me more or distracts me more than a dirty home. (Could be the reason I am frustrated and distracted at times...hummm!) When homeschooling, my home has utterly sent me into a flood of tears as I felt it pang me on the head for my attention when we would rather learn about volcanoes—yet another study that further messes up the house MORE!! With this dilemma, I arrived at the easiest plan I could come up with to balance homemaking with my busy life. Here it is for your consideration. It is definitely as close to **HOMEMAKING THE EASY WAY** as I think I can legitimately get!

First, use this time over the summer to *re-organize your home*. We usually take a couple of weeks off from lessons, life (I look so scummy that I DEFINITELY do not want a human to see me!), and the regular routine to clean out everything. We work from one room to the next until the whole house has had a complete overhaul. We pull out everything from every crook-and-cranny (An expression of my mom's...have no idea what that really means...we just DO it!). We get rid of the "unnecessaries" by throwing away or giving away. We put away all of those papers and books that have piled up over the last six months (We do a clean out twice a year, spring and fall!). We wash down the walls, windows, pretties around the house (I have a huge collection of tea cups, tea pots, linens, and other beloved pretties that need that tender-loving-care on a regular basis or they go funky!), and put away seasonal clothing. Usually we are so exhausted by the end of this clean up break that no one has the energy to mess up for several months! This tends to only require daily maintenance until the mess builds up again...usually about six months. Take an honest inventory of your family life. Find a way to manage this homemaking monster so you can enjoy your family and your lessons. Need more help, check out the pros of homemaking like [www.Flylady.com](http://www.Flylady.com), Emilie Barnes, or Mary Carney. Also take a look at our **NEW *Make Your Own Brain-in-a-Binder Printables, Ultimate Mommy Menu Planner, and Let's Get Organized*** books.

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- ♥ Second, use this time to *re-organize your Homeschool*. Yep, I know that the time goes by way too fast. If we want to have the most efficient homeschool, we need to plan ahead. Take this time to do your planning. Set up a "Mommy Journal" with a log of what God is teaching you (last section), your plans for the year, your supplies that you will need, your schedule (re-evaluate it in the light of your new year and all that will be going on in your home—extra-curricular activities, lessons, lifestyle changes—babies, traveling, care of your parents, job changes), even your recipes that will make each day a bit easier. Scope out the curriculum that you would like for the New Year. Of course, don't forget to include the fun stuff that we tend to put off. Plan that in. You will have a much better school year. Gather up your supplies. If you are on a budget, the best way to bless your husband is to buy those supplies bit-by-bit, while they are on sale. Scope out the different things that you will need and buy them when they are on special. For example, we buy truckloads of 3-ring binders when Office Depot puts them on special for "Buy 7, get 5 free." That is one key to encouraging our young writers as we have plenty for them to use AND we have them on hand when they need them. Plus, it helps our family budget tremendously to save that money along the way.

Summer is also the perfect time to clean out and re-organize what you already have. We pull out our notebooks and supplies to re-organize and inevitably this sparks interest as the children finish those studies they forgot about or beg to do a lesson just to use the paints that we have (that are NEW again now that they are found!). It also helps us to take a look back over the things that we have learned over the past year. Oh, seize this time to re-organize. Getting started on the right track will be a lot more fun and a whole lot easier!

### **Make Record-Keeping Easy (Beginning NOW!)**

Record-keeping! Does your hair stand up when you think of record-keeping? Do you begin to grind your teeth? Or do you feel like just running to your bed and hiding under the covers because you know that if there were ONE thing you would love to throw out of your homeschool for good, it would be record-keeping!

Of all of the very frustrating aspects of many homeschools, nothing seems to match the frustrations of record-keeping. The models that are set before us seem so much like bondage that even the most organized mom gets to wondering about the purpose and meaning behind keeping records. There is a better way!



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Record-keeping has been as frustrating to me as it probably has been for you. However, when I to got past the "one size fits all" systems and plans that are so common—and aggravating—then, it all began to mesh. Record-keeping does have MUCH purpose and meaning--from really helping us to get a good look at what we ARE doing to helping us see obvious and not so obvious holes in our studies to helping us look back on the true legacy of what we are building through homeschooling by God's design. Through record-keeping, we can truly record an heirloom detailing the homeschool journey all along the way. No, there is not a perfect system for every mom or even every child! However, that is OK! My prayer is that if you are in need of some ideas to make a couple areas a little easier or if you have no idea of where to begin, that you will find a few ideas as you come home with us to see how simple record-keeping CAN be. Ready for some quick tips??? Here we go...

- ♥ Use What YOU Like Best! Every mom has her favorite method that works JUST for them whether a planner with reproducible pages... a ready to use planner... a simple spiral notebook... binders... a filing cabinet... computer... etc, etc, etc! Before you consider anything else, look at *who you are*. What makes you feel more comfortable? What helps you to feel more accomplishment? Whether formal or informal... detailed or not even written down... YOUR way is the best way! Decide what works best for you!
- ♥ Keep a Record-Keeping Journal... Talk about Record-keeping...The EASY Way??? For years, we simply bought a new spiral notebook every year and kept a log of all we did in it. I journaled the pages that we covered each day in Math, Latin, Language Arts, etc. I journaled the books that were read each day and all of our extra-curricular activities. This may work great for most of you. It is CHEAP and EASY! Just pick a spiral notebook and begin logging each day. When we kept records in this manner, I simply dated the top of the page with the date and jotted in a somewhat abbreviated fashion what we did each day. It was something like this:

September 17, 2000...

Quiet Times

Chores

Bible: MER and ELR: Romans Chapter 3, reviewed Memory Work, Looked up new vocabulary

Math: MER: SAP 33, ELR: SAP 29

Copywork: MER and ELR: The Star-Spangled Banner

Spanish: Lesson with Dad

Latin/Greek: MER/ELR: Copied from ERU

Family Time: MER/ELR: Helped Dad with Staining Wood for Sailboat;

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### Picnic Lunch Afterward

Free Time: MER: Research on Sailboat Racing; ELR: Played dress-up like "Dolly Madison"

Ministry: MER/ELR: Helped pack orders for RFM; Coffee at the coffee shop—ELR helped them clean all of their tables.

Family Reading: ELR: Read Aloud to Family from John 5; BOF, Ch. 3-4; MER/ELR both narrated from Bible and BOF.

Since our children have gotten older, I have transferred this process to them. It really helped me keep up with those books they read in their free time and those extra studies that I never would have considered in my own record-keeping.

In order to make it EASY for them, I designed Record-Keeping Journals that are 5.5 X 8. These also give them a nice product to work with. They think that they are "professional." (See our reproducibles on our Companion CD to this book if you have no idea where to begin with any pages!!)

They keep their pages in nice leather binders (We found the leather binders at Office Depot. Elisabeth uses my old leather purse/binder—it was perfect for her, but too packed and heavy for me!). They prefer these so that they can also include their pages from their Discipleship Journal (find out more about these in our products) and all of their planning/record-keeping pages all in one place, that can also go everywhere with them. One of the keys to any record-keeping is **HAVING THE SYSTEM WITH YOU ALL OF THE TIME**. This works for us. Our *Record-Keeping Journals* have made record-keeping and planning part of their lives early. It not only takes a load off of me now as we homeschool and helps us to **REALLY** document **ALL** of their learning that is taking place, but it is training them with very practical skills that they will need for the rest of their lives.

Throughout the years, another thing that has helped me was having a separate spot in their Notebook for logging their extra read alouds. If you are like us and find that your children seem to read **TOO** many books for you to keep up with, you may want to keep a separate Notebook or a special section in your Planning Journal with a list of books that each child reads in addition to the journal entries of your daily read alouds as a family. It is amazing to see how much is being covered that I would have missed just recording the books that involve me or that I assign for lessons. When I look at the lists, it is amazing how my children **NATURALLY** cover all of the sub-

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jects of study just by following their interests and reading widely during their free time!

One other thing that we log is our REAL LIFE. I have found that we had SO many wonderful events that take place just because we are AT HOME (or on the road). I simply have this very simplified system of logging each day so we are sure to include REAL LIFE as part of our education.

Not only do I simplify my record-keeping for all of these reasons, but you must know that if I am not careful, I would be writing all day in my journal and NOT enjoying the journey at hand (I am intensely inclined to waste time on planning for what I would like to do and recording what we are doing instead of DOING IT!J Know what I mean??).

Finally, one other thing that we do for our Record-Keeping Journals is MY MOMMY JOURNAL. As the children got older, I decided to keep my OWN "day timer" or organizer (whatever you would want to call it) with all of my yearly, monthly, weekly, and daily goals and plans. I jot down bookings, extra-curricular activities, family events, Harold's off days, and special events. I also take time throughout each year to "retreat" and really hear God for our new school year (or even the next week...if we need a re-vamping or re-filling!). I record this part to help remind me through the year of the MAIN THING that God has put on my heart for my children. Since I have been writing it all down, I have been much less inclined to stray from the priorities that keep me on-target!

Just as I have encouraged my children to keep their Journals with them, I do the same. This helps me to snag those fleeting moments I would normally lose. It is great to review my goals to see where we are along the way...or plan for another issue of our magazine...or plan our family menus for the week...or pick up my Bible Study/Bible Reading during a free minute! Just as my children keep a variety of our forms in their Journals, so do I. Of course, they keep our School Records (the daily logs), but I have the overall plan for the year and the lists of resources and activities. Plus, I have our business and personal family calendar on hand for all planning that needs to be coordinated for the family.

This is where the "real" world meets "school records." I have made it all work for me. The reason that I think we have to look at what is out there and make our own system that is just right for us is that we all have our own

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mix of the "real" world that influences our homeschooling schedules. The one thing that we all need for organizing it all is a way to keep things together so we have access to what we need at any time.

I don't carry 12 years of plans with me all of the time. In fact, after I have planned out our school year, I have binders (shocked?) that I keep on shelves at home with all of the "used" information. This helps the children as well. They can store away records each month to lighten their binders and add room for more pages. We keep all of our homeschooling records in one "family" binder. I simply store the old calendars away with my journals and the children's work. Talk about helping me to REALLY see what we are accomplishing...this has helped me to put into perspective WHY we may have missed "table time" for two weeks or why it took so long for a book to be finished! Sure helps chase away that self-condemnation!

The children also keep small notebooks for their sermon notes and their other work in Notebooks on those topics—more on that in a bit! The Sermon Notebooks are really awesome. Our preacher teaches on topics, so as he finishes a series, we add them to our 5.5 X 8 Notebook in sections that are based on each of the topics. The Bible Reading Logs are added to their Life-long Discipleship Notebook after they complete all of the readings through at one time!

As you can see this goes on for years, but the neat thing is that we see ALL of the education taking place in our home. But, of course, this is not our only way of keeping records. Stick with me, there is more!

- ♥ Make Timelines! These are some our favorite treasures! We recently revamped our timelines so we could begin new ones—since the children are now so much older than when we first began. Timelines are excellent for recording what we are studying in our lessons/read alouds, but they are much, much more. We use ours as much for review as we do for recording. The children remember MORE than they ever would by a test. Not to mention, all of history and all of the other studies come together perfectly as we see History fall together into place. The reason that I mention timelines here is that they are great for record-keeping and evaluation. As you see a timeline coming together, you can see subjects or time periods that have not been covered yet, or not as extensively as you would like. You can easily plug the gaps, while bridging all of history and all areas of life together. You may not get to a certain time period in YOUR timing, but you

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will see where you need to work toward in the future. Sure makes planning easier!

- ♥ Scrapbooks-Yearbooks! These are some of OUR favorite projects. You have probably noticed by now that we will use Scrapbooking for ANYTHING! Yes. We are hopelessly addicted! We have found that making Scrapbooks/Yearbooks for our school year is not only fun, but it helps to preserve the memories of ALL that we are doing in our family. One year we even made copies for the grandparents so they could see all that we were doing. They LOVED them! The last few years we have made "Scrapbook Calendars" for gifts. They are so easy to put together and our family loves the truly personal gift that keeps on giving. This past year, my mom told me that it helped her SO much to know more about what the children were interested in as they grew older. Living away from parents is hard but this "record-keeping" idea even helps keep relationships strong across the miles! So, you have fun... keep memories of what you are really doing...AND have great gifts! Ready to pull out the stickers??
- ♥ Make Notebooks...Ideas for record-keeping would not be complete without one of my BEST methods for teaching my children AND keeping truly accurate records of all they learn through lessons and real life: NOTEBOOKING! We keep ALL of our written work in a binder of some sort. Then, we take it further... we keep ANYTHING that can be pressed in binders. Anything left?? Yes! Then, we take pictures and keep THEM in the binders! (Hehe!) ANYTHING and EVERYTHING that can be studied can also be kept in Notebooks in some way. We keep anything that would expand a study and build a great collection of information on topics we study... great quotes, definitions about a subject being studied, diagrams, character sketches, pictures, coloring sheets, art prints, poems, Bible verses, narrations, Bible word studies, on and on! Our main reason for Notebooking in this way is that if our children are going to spend their time DOING something, it ought to be worthwhile enough for us to KEEP IT. This teaches them to value their work, do a great job on all they do, and that ALL areas of life are truly educational. *(More on this later! See the articles on Language Arts or Notebooking for more help and details!)*

Record-keeping! Just think through YOUR OWN way. Try your spin. Use what is easy, simple, and will give you more time with your little ones while helping to keep things in place for you. Most of all, find a way that can capture all of these precious memories of these days for you so you will have them to look back upon tomorrow!

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Have fun! EVEN with Record-keeping!

### Easy Meal Ideas for BUSY Homeschool Moms...

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, cooking! Hummm...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

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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 form in this issue for our 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

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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



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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

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

### **Have a GREAT Year!**

Ready for a great year? My challenge to you this year is to have the BEST YEAR YET! We are not looking at "another method of education." We are not looking at another thing "to-do." Rather, I believe that God has a very, very special plan for homeschooling. I believe from the bottom of my heart that His plan for families is to use "the vehicle" of homeschooling to carry us on a journey back to His design for the godly family and godly homeschool!

In fact, I am often asked to summarize my message for the year into one sentence. If I were to summarize the theme for this year, I would have to say that God wants for us to know that there is more to education than the methods that we use to teach our children or the curriculum or approaches that we use to meet our goals. God wants for us to see His design for the godly home and get back to the basics of the Christian life!

I may be a bit more sentimental this year, but with ONE credit left before Matthew graduates from this season of his life, I feel that as never before it is vital to make sure that we are making the most of every day of our life. I want to be sure that we get back to the MAIN THING in life! I want to be sure that we make the most of each moment that we have before us. I want to be sure that we slow down

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and let the world go on by. I want to be sure that we have a LOT of fun! That we laugh more...play more...get alone regularly as a family to truly commune with them and pour our hearts into them. I want to let go of my agendas, desires, and "ways" to be sure that I am hearing God for each step that we take and to be sure that we grab onto ALL that God has set aside for us in life!

Beloved, make the most of each day! Make this year the best year ever! Walk in freedom! You won't have fun...or laugh...or play...or take time to enjoy those little ones if you are bound in the shackles of our enemy. He wants for you to be too bound in the traditions of man to enjoy this journey. He wants for you to be stifled by fears...intimidated by the "success" you see in others...wore out by frustrations...and too busy "winning the world" to disciple your children. Don't let him devour you! These days are too short to waste!

Enjoy the journey...all of it! Enjoy those hours of reading aloud those storybooks for the umpteenth time...those are days that addict your child to great literature. Enjoy those bedtime stories that go on and on...those are the days that forge memories and friendships that can carry your child through a lifetime. Enjoy each moment when you are delayed in traffic...those will be some of the most precious teaching moments as your children catch you slowed down enough to listen, really listen. Enjoy homeschooling... these are the best days. This is what homeschooling is all about.

Ready to begin the greatest year of homeschooling yet? God has treasures in store for you! So, sit at His feet...get His plan...get ready for the best year yet...and don't forget! ENJOY the journey!

"Come to ME, all you who labor and are heavy laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] Take MY YOKE upon you and learn OF ME, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief, ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. For MY YOKE is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and MY BURDEN is light and easy to be borne."

*Matthew 11: 28-30, The Amplified Bible*

# Getting Started Homeschooling On the Right Track!

By Cindy Rushton



Welcome to another year! Can you believe it? Another school year! Are you ready? Are you on track again? Are things starting to settle in? Are you still waiting on some of that curriculum? Still working in new things into your daily schedule? Still trying to make everything fit together?

I remember the *hours* that I spent in our first few years of homeschooling just pouring over catalogs, magazine ads, curriculum belonging to my friends...yes, it was HOURS! You would all get a great laugh out of my first look at a curriculum fair. I was so bewildered by it all!

I did not understand at the time that there *is not* a magic formula for choosing curriculum or for Homeschooling for that matter! I had no idea that Homeschooling would be a constant process of growth. That it is an individual process that constantly changes and grows with the individual child and family. I found myself frustrated when I would get home and begin to teach only to find that things were NOT settling in to be as natural and easy as I would like. This continued on until I began to see that God planned to use Homeschooling to revive and restore our home for His calling for our family! As you can imagine, it took years before I found myself truly free to follow the Holy Spirit as He led me in the way we were to go with OUR family!

I am so thankful for the freedom now that we have to follow His gentle leading in this area of our lives. My prayer is that God will help you move toward YOUR own philosophy of education so that you will not only have His direction in education, but also so you will be free to follow Him each step of the way in this wonderful journey! Let's take a look at how to develop our own philosophy of education...

## How to Develop Your Own Philosophy or Approach...

There are two steps in developing your own philosophy of education. The first one

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is to determine your own beliefs. The second is to get to know the various approaches.

Did you know that you *already* have your own philosophy of education? Yes! You *could* write your own book...design your own curriculum...and, of course, teach your own children! This tells me that if you could do your own...you should be able to use other pre-published curriculum too??? The struggle is not with your ability or qualifications, the struggle comes as one mixes curriculum of one philosophy with people of another philosophy of education. Let me give you some examples of differences in philosophy that really affect the success of applying philosophies and curriculum effectively...

What do YOU believe about education? How are children made? What are your children's natural bents? Gifts? What should a homeschool be like...formal, informal, student-centered, teacher-centered? What should be the focus? How do YOU teach best...with lots of preparation, as you go along, teacher's manuals, exploring, hands-on, reading...reading one book or many at a time?? What creates the most interest for you and your children? What gives you a peaceful, relaxed attitude? What would you do if you were completely without the influence of ANYONE else? What is the most natural for you? How can you best use your gifts within your home? What best develops the gifts and purpose for your children? What is God's best for your family? What is God's plan here?

Think through your ideas. Do some soul searching. Decide how that YOU teach best. Decide on the way that YOUR children will learn best. Find help from the various approaches! Go for it!

### **Working Out Your Own Philosophy of Education While Choosing YOUR OWN Plan...**

We have looked at the need to develop our own personal philosophy...now what?? Well, now let's work out OUR own philosophy!

#### **Compare with Scripture!**

First, compare all with Scripture! Take what is laid out in Scripture as your model. Don't be afraid to tear away the old foundations of education and begin your homeschool on the foundation of God's Word. All approaches say they are based on Scripture. What do you think?? Are they? Do they really match up with ALL that God says? What DOES God have to say about teaching and training children? Go back through the different approaches and note whether they take into consideration HOW God made you and your children? Do they take into consideration the demands

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of family life? Be sensitive to God's leading! Keep relationships and child training as primary! All else WILL fall into place!

### **Compare with Your Lifestyle...**

What does your year look like? What would create balance? Consider whether each approach or technique is really "do-able" with *your* lifestyle? Would it take too much preparation? Would you need too much time at the table? Is it what you need for this particular year? What will work best for you this year?

### **Consider Your Money...**

We all know that choosing curriculum is confusing. Let's simplify by first choosing resources for our basic skills...Reading and Math! Once children learn the basics of Reading, all they will need is practice. There is no greater text for Reading than the Bible. As for Math, choose a curriculum that is home-friendly...challenges the children to think and reason...and can be done without swallowing up a large portion of each day! Then, consider ways to teach that are inexpensive and fun for the other studies. You could use anything from your local library, your own library, and other educational options that are free like museums, historical sites, festivals, and so on!

### **Take The Ideas From Each Approach That Will Help You Meet Your Goals!**

Don't feel that you have to identify yourself with one approach for life. Although we are primarily using the Charlotte Mason/Lifestyle of Learning Approachs, we still use many resources from the Classical Approach and Principle Approach for original source documents. We occasionally do a Unit Study. Plus, we have a text for Greek and Math. We combine the aspects (that FIT US best) of each approach to make our own Simplified Approach to Real Learning. You can do the same! Use what is most comfortable and most natural for you and your family! Feel free to use the best resources from each approach! Glean ideas from all...especially the ones that you see in EVERY approach...Whole Books... Real Life ...Character Training!

### **Choose Resources That Will Appeal to YOU and YOUR CHILDREN!**

The first thing I learned when we began homeschooling was that learning would have to be a lifelong process. Just because I hold a diploma, did not mean that I was finished learning. Rather, it meant that I had the ability to continue learning for life. As you select curriculum, decide to become a lifelong learner! Become a fellow student with your children! Choose resources that will appeal to your whole family... YOU and YOUR CHILDREN. C.S. Lewis said, "*No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally (and often far more) worth reading at the age of fifty and beyond.*" Pick the greatest resources...those that your entire family will enjoy while they build wonderful memories!

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### **Adapt What You Have In Your Home To Meet Your Needs!**

I have shelves and shelves of books from our childhood. Some are beloved stories that my mother read aloud to me as I grew up. Some are old textbooks from college. Some are resource books from the years of homeschooling. We need not feel that we need to purge our shelves of all that we have because we use a few ideas from a certain approach. For example, although I am completely confident of approaching language from the more natural methods of Copywork, Dictation, and Narration, I still have my old resources from College for reference. Although I primarily teach History and Science through Real, Living Books, I still have textbooks when I need an outline! We can all use EVERYTHING that is in our home to make homeschooling fun and workable!

### **Not Wanting To Go All The Way With A New Approach?**

If you are not interested in completely changing from the your way of doing things but you would like to bring a breath of fresh air, try just implementing one idea at a time. You might not want to jump entirely into the Charlotte Mason Approach, but you might want to establish a family reading time using whole, living books. Or you may want to begin Picture Studies once a week!

Another option that often gives a much needed break is to try using the approach over your school breaks. You might try Nature Study during the summer...Whole books during Christmas...Unit Study during Spring Break! If you find that this approach is what you want, you can learn more and adapt more into your home bit by bit!

### **Be Sure to Get Support...**

There is a lot of priceless support available to homeschoolers today. Use your support! I treat myself to subscriptions to kindred newsletters/magazines. You will find mine with water spots from coming along for long hot baths at the end of the day...or sand from our many trips outside...or pressed flowers tucked inside from moments stolen away at our local park! These are my dear friends that I can take along with me to cheer and encourage me along the way!

I also must admit that I am a "Hopelessly Addicted Conference Attendee!" I get weary just as you all do! I have been amazed at the way I am ministered to through the wisdom of others shared through conferences and workshops! I am *always* that person on the front row!

One other "addiction" is our monthly Mom's Study Group. Just as my children need a constant supply of ideas, so do I! My mind is fed as I consider great ideas and as I

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feed on the simple how-to's that are working for *real* moms in the trenches!

If that did not sound like enough, we have just birthed another addiction! We began a list for Time For Tea online! It's purpose is to encourage and inspire women to enjoy their calling.

Take a look around you at all the wonderful options to encourage you along the way! You will find many practical ideas, specifics on teaching, and inspiration and encouragement along the way!

### **Keep In Mind That GOD Gave Your Child To You!**

This is probably the most important point I could share with you! This is probably the most important point I can ever make. We have to keep in mind that God gave us our children.

God has confidence in our ability to teach our own children. His desire is not for us to give them all the best that money could buy. His desire is for us to give them contact with Him through His Word and direct contact with our own heart through deep home relationships! He wants for us to give OURSELVES...Our FAITH, Our LOVE, Our NURTURE, and Our WISDOM!

The gift of yourself is more precious than anything that money could buy. Choose today to trust yourself, your interests, your child's interests to make your own individual approach to education! Choose today to be humbly submitted to God for His plan for your child! Then, you *CAN* make homeschooling great!



*Excerpted from **Homeschooling! Digging Into All of the Options**  
Companion tapes are ALSO available!*

# Quick Tips for Making Homeschooling Great!

By Cindy Rushton



*Special Note...I thought that this part of a chapter in our new book **Homeschooling...Digging Into ALL of the Options** might be a big help for some of you as you begin organizing your homes for another big Homeschool Year. My challenge is for you to really think out your own approach **JUST** for your family. This will make planning easier...day-by-day implementation easier...and continuing the journey for the "long-haul" much, much easier. Hope you enjoy!*

*Oh! If you want more details about this book, look at the end of the manual or on our website!*

- ♥ **Go to God...** God really cares about what we do in our Homeschools. No matter where we are...what our needs may be...or where we are in the journey, we can listen to hear the Lord gently beckoning to us, **"Come to ME, all you who labor and are heavy laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.] Take MY YOKE upon you and learn OF ME, for I am gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart, and you will find rest (relief, ease and refreshment and recreation and blessed quiet) for your souls. For MY YOKE is wholesome (useful, good—not harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, but comfortable, gracious, and pleasant), and MY BURDEN is light and easy to be borne."** (Matthew 11: 28-30 (Amplified) The first thing is our foundation. All begins by going to God, seeking Him and His way. When things get to going awry, the first thing I do is compare all to this passage. This simplifies what I am doing. If what I am doing becomes a labor, heavy, or overburdening, it must go! If the yoke I am carrying begins to feel harsh, hard, sharp, or pressing, I immediately begin to re-evaluate. It may be that what I am doing is ok, only going at an unreasonable pace (slow OR fast). It may be that what I am doing is not ok...it must be sacrificed so we can have the best that God has to offer. The only way I can know which way to go is to come to the Lord and let Him give me His perfect plan! This has been key in finding just the right way for me and my children.
- ♥ **Make Homeschooling a lifestyle!** As I have come home--all the way home--to teach my children, I have found that God has riches in store for the family teaching their children as a lifestyle. Those riches can be missed if we do not take the time to be a family. Oh, there are the sweetest memories that directly



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result from learning together as a lifestyle. It is so much more than just the lessons. The sweetest memories are built around the relationships, with one another and our studies. However, this doesn't just happen. It takes time for relationships to be built. This time is only available as we set up learning as a lifestyle not a block of "school." But, this can only happen when we begin to view education as a lifestyle of discipleship...all of the time, with all of life. A legacy. How? Seize every moment. Teach your children along the way. Develop a lifestyle that passes down to your children a deep love of learning and most of all, a deep love of family.

- ♥ **Take the best of ALL the approaches to weave together a FULL education!** One thing that I loved about homeschooling was that I could weave together the best of all that is available. I loved the thought of using the best books. I have found some of the greatest treasures through recommendations found throughout all of the different approaches. This really helped me since I had no idea what I should read to my children when we first began homeschooling. I loved the thought of using original source documents. I love how they are right at your finger-tips courtesy of some of the different writers for homeschooling! I loved the easy tips for teaching children. As a Mommy who had NO idea where to begin as I began this journey of homeschooling, I have treasured the writers who have walked me through each step of how to teach language... math... history... geography... nature studies... art... music... so on! It has been priceless help so that I could get on to enjoying my little ones! These are only a few of the ideas that we have taken into our Homeschool, but I recommend this to you as well. You don't have to do it all today. Just take a look at where your greatest need is and hunt down that help that will breathe life into your Homeschool.
- ♥ **Develop YOUR Philosophy of Education!** This was one of the things that has been most beneficial in setting me free to enjoy the journey of homeschooling. It was not until I could see God's ways, God's will, and God's plan for education that I was completely free to enjoy the little things along the way. Until then, I felt guilty when we got lost in a great book. I would feel so defeated if we took longer on a lesson than I was expecting...forget how FUN it was! As I drew closer to the Lord, I found that all began to fall into place. I began to devour studies that I only dreamed of pursuing. Did you notice that "I" devoured studies? As I continued my learning, my children caught the passion! It was contagious! Not to mention as I dug into studies, I began to find easier ways to learn topics. I found neat ideas just from the way that I learn (Notebooking, research techniques, writing techniques...) that helped my children to find practical ways to learn their lessons. This was what brought an ease and relief to the pursuit of education in our family.