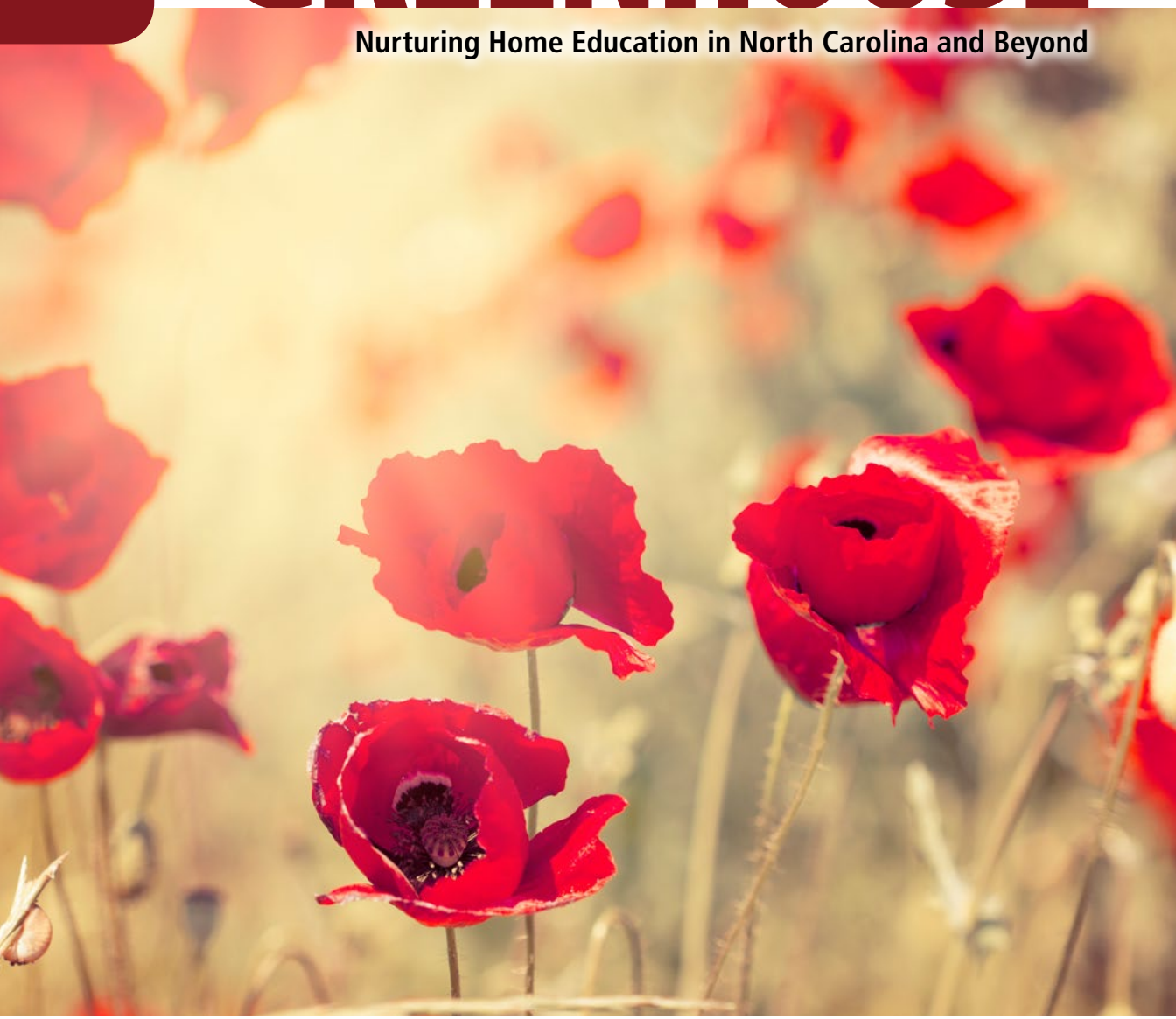
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GREENHOUSE

Nurturing Home Education in North Carolina and Beyond



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- The Two-Fold Task of Writing

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About GREENHOUSE

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It's Starting Again—— Thinking Rightly about Trials

by John Kirkland

It's starting again! Yes, indeed it was. It was 9:00 AM on Thursday, June 2, 2016. Summer was finally here, and with it, the 2016 NCHE conference. In a mere one and a half hours as we excitedly looked out the front window of our car, we would be checking into the hotel, ready for three days filled with hard work, great speakers, fun and fellowship.

But this year would be different. Our excitement was a bit tempered with a big dose of business reality. Due to construction delays, the convention center had informed us that the first floor vendor hall would not be ready in time for our conference. *What? It wouldn't be ready? But we had a contract! We had plans already drawn up on where each vendor would be located. We had already decided where and how we would conduct the teen activities and where we would assemble the graduates on Saturday afternoon before they lined up to walk into the big room and hear "Pomp and Circumstance."*

In short, we had our whole conference planned in every detail and now we get this news. Our detailed plans had been derailed. So, now we had to start over with all the same vendors and activities, but somehow adjust and adapt to half the space.

We had some questions to answer and actions to consider—fast. Why had this happened? What would we do? Where would we put the vendors? How would this impact the workshops and teen dance? What if it rained?

All of these questions and the accompanying emotions seemed valid in this situation. We didn't want this to happen, but it had, and we had to take action, and more importantly, we wanted to honor the Lord in our actions and attitudes. Did God's Word have instructions for us? We'll see in a minute!

Step forward a week and a half. The 2016 NCHE Thrive! Conference was now in our rear view mirror, and my wife, Lorie, our youngest son, Peter, and I were finishing up three wonderful days at an incredible church retreat. We had been refreshed with great teaching and great fellowship. It was almost time for dinner, and Lorie had her taste buds ready for the fried chicken and a special strawberry pudding dessert. What a great finish that would be! After dinner, we would pack up and with bellies full, head home to get moving with our plans for the summer.

But something derailed our plans yet again. Lorie started having some significant chest pains and trouble breathing. She quietly expressed, "I can't breathe really well right now. My chest hurts a little and my arm is tingling. Just let me lie down a few minutes, and I'll be okay." Well, actually, it wasn't okay, but we had no idea just how not okay it really was.

A sweet nurse friend at the retreat thought it best for Lorie to go to the emergency room to be checked. Some bloodwork results convinced the doctor that Lorie should stay overnight for observation and a few more tests in the morning before going home.

It was now 1:15 AM on Wednesday morning, June 15, 2016. As Lorie settled down to rest in her hospital bed, and I attempted getting comfortable in my hospital recliner, she reached up and started rubbing the side of her neck and arm and jaw. Moments later she called out to the nurse and uttered three words that would begin a string of unexpected events that would become a defining moment in the life of our family.

"It's starting again!"

Within a few minutes the pain escalated throughout her chest as she described it, "someone has tied a rope around my chest and keeps pulling it tighter and tighter. "Within a few more minutes the pain had peaked, and her blood pressure had bottomed out.

The cardiologist arrived just in time, asked a bunch of questions and did a quick assessment of Lorie and the medical data before announcing to an already intense room filled with nurses, doctors and technicians, "This girl is having a heart attack, and she is in cardiogenic shock. If we don't get her blood pressure back up, we will lose her!"

While I stood there and observed, I did not understand all the medical terms, but I did understand the intensity and urgency of all of medical folks taking care of my sweet wife of thirty years. I also understood Lorie's tears and words as she begged them to please make the pain stop. *What was happening? What did all these medical words mean? What did he mean when he said she was in cardio-something shock? What is a code blue? What do you desire of me at this time Lord?*

All of these questions and the emotions that went with them seemed valid in this situation. We didn't want this to happen, but it had, and I had to take action and, more importantly, I wanted to honor the Lord in my actions and attitude. It was very clear that this was serious and completely out of my hands. I did the only thing I knew to do and that was to go before my Heavenly Father and petition Him on behalf of my precious wife and our family. Was this real? Did His Word have instructions for me in this situation? We'll see in a minute!

Now those were some very real and personal stories in my life in the last few months to set the stage for this article. But before we look to God's Word for instructions, ask yourself, "What about me, what is starting again in my life? What happened or is happening to me that derailed my plans?" Are you getting ready to start another year of homeschooling, and you secretly wonder if you can really teach your kids well? Is it another health issue or financial issue that's starting again? Is it a job loss or wayward child, a discouraged spouse or close friend? When you wake up in the morning, is your first thought, "Oh no, it's starting again!" Whatever the *it* is, does God's Word have instructions for you and me? We'll see in a minute!

Of course, now you are thinking, "I picked up this GREENHOUSE to be encouraged, and this guy just took me the other direction. I did not want to think about all those negative things he just brought up." But wait. Before you turn the page or, worse yet, throw the magazine on the table and vow to cancel your NCHE membership, be assured that the sole purpose of this article is to encourage you in the great adventure of life and the great adventure of homeschooling. But sometimes to be encouraged means that we have to change our thinking about things that seem to be all negative. We have to do what I call *thinking rightly*.

You see, what I shared above are real stories to get you thinking about trials. That's right, trials. A mentor once told me that every person you talk to is going through one or more trials, whether they share it with you or not. Whether physical, mental, emotional, financial, spiritual or other, we are all constantly walking through trials. Some of us will respond to those trials in the flesh and get angry and fretful and some will respond in faith. How we respond to trials will reveal what we know and truly believe about God. Some of us will be crushed and fall to our knees before Christ, and some will just be crushed[1]. So let's ask the question again, does God's Word have instructions for me in this situation. The great news is a resounding answer of *yes it does*!

As God has graciously allowed Lorie and me to walk through many flavors of trials throughout our marriage, we have counseled with those wiser than us and have intently studied God's Word to better understand. While your trials may be different from ours, I trust that many of the things the Lord has taught you along the way will encourage you and your family, as you walk through the trials of life God provides for you. So here is some food for thought from *Kirkland's Korner*; I hope it blesses you like it has us.

We were recently having lunch with our friends and mentors Hank and Shelia Erwin, whom many of you got to hear and meet at the NCHE conference. As we discussed the topic of trials, Hank shared a few thoughts that grabbed me and refocused me back to God's Word. He made these two statements:

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1. In the Bible, when God wants to build a man, He always takes him to the desert or some type of desert experience.

2. Trials are what God uses to mature us spiritually and make us more like Him. We will have divine trials until we die. *The key is how we think about trials* and how we *understand them in light of God's Word*. According to God's Word, *trials* are good, and our thinking about them should be thankfulness that God is using them to make us "complete and not lacking anything."

Wow! I thought, *I think he may be right.* Look at what God did with these men:

- Moses was in the desert for forty years as God prepared him to lead the children of Israel for forty years.
- David was in the desert and other trials for at least fourteen years after being anointed King while God prepared him to be king of a nation.
- Daniel was in the lion's den, and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were in the furnace as God was building them.
- Elijah lived in the desert under a small tree getting fed by ravens as God built him for the showdown at Mt. Carmel.
- Joseph spent over eleven years as a slave and in prison as God built him to lead Egypt through a terrible famine.
- Paul had a desert experience for three years as God built him to become a great missionary.

If God used the desert to build these great men of the Bible, it makes sense that He will use it to build us as well. When God takes you to the desert, don't grumble and complain; ask Him why He has you there and how He wants to build you while you are there (Philippians 2:13-16). None of those men knew what was ahead and why they were going through these trials, but God did, and God wants us to trust Him in the middle of the desert.

We must remember that *there are no accidents with God!* All that happens in our life as believers is sifted through His Omnipotent, loving hands. In fact, according to one commentary[2], early manuscripts of Romans 8:28 record this verse as, "and we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him..."

His second statement was right out of James 1. In the NIV, this reads, *"Consider it pure joy my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."*

What does this mean? Well here are some thoughts from my studies.

First of all, *what is a trial* as discussed here? The Greek word connotes trouble or something that breaks the pattern of peace, comfort, joy and happiness in someone's life. The verb form means "to put someone or something to the test, with the purpose of discovering that person's nature or that thing's quality."[3] So, the kind of trial this passage is referring to is not a temptation and is not a result of sin. It is divine and intentional with a specific desired outcome in our lives.

I can assure you that both of the trials above broke the pattern of peace in the lives of all involved and certainly tested our nature. A test is hard. Sometimes it hurts terribly. When a military recruit goes to basic training, it is very hard, and it puts that individual to the test. Part of thinking rightly about trials is to understand that just because it is hard does not mean it is bad. All of the men mentioned above went through hard things with a divine and intentional purpose attached to each trial.

Secondly, *what is the purpose of a trial?* The verse states it is for testing, which implies proof or proving. God brings such test to prove and increase the strength and quality of one's faith and to demonstrate its validity.[4] So, God brings us trials to show us where we really are on the faith meter and to "increase the strength and quality of our faith."

The verse also states that the testing produces perseverance, which is defined as, "continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition."[5] Part of the picture here of perseverance is that of an individual underneath a heavy object straining to support the weight. When this happens, we generally want to get out from under the object as quickly as we can, but God challenges us to "abide under in the midst." I am reminded of 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, where we see how God allowed a thorn in Paul's flesh for a specific purpose and specific time in his life. Paul says God's grace was sufficient (for his trial), and if it was sufficient for Him, it is for us also.

So the testing produces perseverance, and now the verse tells us that the perseverance must finish its work so we will be (spiritually) mature and complete (all the portions whole), not lacking anything." Boom! There it is. Divine trials are a good thing, not bad. God want us to be spiritually mature and complete with no lack as He prepares us for eternity with Him.

Now, the first part of the verse, "consider it pure joy" makes sense. Thinking rightly means we understand that the purpose of trials, regardless of how hard or how much they hurt, is for our good and His glory. I can be joyful in the midst of trials when I understand the goal.

Yes. It's starting again. As you begin another year of homeschooling or even your first year of homeschooling, be encouraged and be joyful. God will provide divine trials in your life and in the lives of your children. Yes, they may hurt, but He says He has a specific purpose for each one. The Bible encourages us to bring our thoughts captive. Don't let Satan hijack your trial and make it a temptation for fear, anger, anxiety, fretfulness and distrust. Think rightly about trials and God promises the peace that passes all understanding.

God knows exactly where you are and where He wants to mature you. Stay under it for as long as God leads you. Pray, "Lord please don't stop until you are done with me. I want to be mature in You and not lacking anything." Ask the Lord to produce in you the fruit He is trying to produce. James 1:5-8 instructs us to ask Him for wisdom if we need it. Sometimes the trial is so intense that we are not even sure what to pray. Romans 8:23-27 gives us guidance for that. His Word also instructs us, "to give thanks in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." When we understand the goal, it is much easier to thank Him for trusting us with a trial.

I would also encourage us all to be sensitive to God's hand on our children. He builds them the same way. Ask the Lord for wisdom, and do not be too quick to jump in and remove trials from your children. Sometimes as parents, we do not recognize the trial as a gift from the Lord to grow our children. Sometimes the Lord even gives parents trials for the benefit of our children so they can observe how we face trials, so they are prepared to walk through their own.

On the trials mentioned at the beginning of this article, I am proud to say that it was a joy to watch our conference director, Debbie Mason, and her hard-working team pray, encourage each other, put in long hours, adjust and adapt as needed and put together a successful conference that blessed many families all traveling on the road of this exciting adventure of homeschooling. It was hard, but I believe they definitely honored the Lord in both attitudes and actions throughout the process. We are all stronger as a board for having walked through this together, and I hope we all look more like Christ.

On the home front, Lorie is progressing well from a nine-hour and five-bypass surgery. This surgery was an unexpected answer to prayer as we have been praying for the Lord to show us what has been the culprit behind many of Lorie's medical issues. God has also used this trial to build our faith in many areas. While the process has certainly been physically tough for Lorie, it has been a blessing to her and our family, and we have thanked the Lord for His provision. We also learned that because Lorie's situation was so unique, at least two hospitals are now researching her case further, and one has asked to use it to share with other cardiologists who may then potentially save the lives of other patients.

So next time God trusts you with a trial, recognize it for what it is, think rightly about it and, as a result, consider it pure joy that God is growing you so that you will be complete, not lacking anything.

[1] Shelia Erwin; Book of James Bible Study. Circa 1995
[2,3,4] John MacArthur Bible Commentary
[5] Webster Online Dictionary



John Kirkland is the husband of Lorie and father of Joshua (twenty-five), Lucas (twenty-one), John Mark (seventeen) and Peter (fourteen). He and Lorie have been homeschooling for twenty-one years. Professionally, John is the president of the management consulting firm, JF Kirkland, LLC. John joined the NCHE board of directors in 2007 as secretary and has also served as IT director. John is the newly elected NCHE president. John and Lorie think that many parents may start homeschooling for the great educational opportunities it provides but believe the most important benefit to homeschooling is that it offers the absolute best model and environment for biblical discipleship of our children as taught in Deuteronomy 6.

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SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR WINNERS

Davidson Good, age eleven, and Joshua Robertson, age eleven, both of Wilmington, received exemplary status and were named winners of the International Science and Engineering Fair at the elementary level for the state of North Carolina. Their award-winning project, "Sweet and Salty Dreams: Will Taste Affect Human Heart Rate?" tested human heart rate that followed ingesting a series of food flavors in an effort to recommend appropriate bedtime snacks for children who need to gain more sleep by achieving sleep sooner at night. Subjects were tested using the palpation method on the radial artery. The young scholars followed all ISEF rules concerning proper safety requirements and documentation with their project. After winning at both local and regional levels, they competed at the state level among eighty-one other competitors, presenting their project with both oral and written reports to a series of ISEF judges. As elementary winners, Good and Robertson achieved the highest level of honor attainable. Good and Robertson were the only homeschooled students at the 2016 fair. The event was held April 2, 2016, at Meredith College in Raleigh. Both students have been homeschooled since kindergarten and have been in the same homeschool group for seven years—Classical Conversations, directed by Good's mother. The young men are involved in volunteer work, church work, music and sports—including basketball for Robertson who plays for the Wilmington Basketball Center Elite team, and soccer for Good who plays for the Wilmington Hammerheads 2004 Elite White team. Both boys are avid readers and pianists and spend their free time playing with their siblings. Davidson is the son of Ashley and Gina Good, and Joshua is the son of James and Monica Robertson. The families of both boys give all glory of this award to God.



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Nine Solid Ways to Engage Your Child with the Bible

by Christina Brown

While homeschooling my three daughters, I have found it is critical to start them early learning about God and His Word. Here are nine ways to do this in your own homeschool.

1 - Pray together.

Create a prayer photo album of the people for whom you are praying. This can be done simply by printing off pictures from Facebook and inserting them into a notebook or by elaborately putting together a photo album using photo quality paper. After several months of praying in this way, go back over past prayer requests and see how God answered your prayers. Show your children examples of how prayer is used in the Bible and discuss prayers that God answered.

2 - Read the Bible consistently.

Read with your children. I prefer using an adult version. It is also okay to tell the story in your own words. Think about it. These are God's words to His people. Express to your child the magnitude of that. There is something about closeness and developing a special time to read the Bible together that will make your child want to do it. Have them all climb up on the couch to snuggle or consider reading during a meal when you have their attention. Don't be concerned if attention wanders, just keep bringing them back. God will honor your efforts. Try short paragraphs of Scripture at first. Keep it interesting.

3 - Learn through Bible characters.

Learning about Bible characters shows how God can use anyone He chooses, even sinful and imperfect men and women. Act out stories. Tell the story and have your child narrate it back to you. There is power in a child owning his own telling of the story.

Bible story characters can paint a picture of how God used that person and how He can use us.

4 - Engage your child with character traits.

Learning about compassion can be lived out through serving others, such as in a nursing home ministry or helping a neighbor. Gratitude can be taught by keeping a gratitude journal. Showing affection teaches children to be affectionate. Giving to others teaches generosity. Point to the Bible to show where God teaches us about these character traits. Go to my blog, www.AKAHomeschoolMom.com, for a free biblical standards chart you can use.

5 - Engage your child with God's Word through art.

You can use Christian symbols, such as crosses, lilies, etc. Teach your child how God is an artist and as children of God, made in His image, we are artists, too. To keep little one's attention, I would often print out free printable coloring sheets of the story that they could color as I read Bible stories.

6 - Read about personal stories of missionaries.

I remember when we learned the story about the missionary George Muller and the orphans in his care. We learned he had no food for several hundred children but trusted God to feed them. He had them get dressed, sit down at a set table, pray and wait. Imagine the look on my kids' faces when I told them how a milk man's truck *just happened* to break down in front of the orphanage with milk for all the children. The knock on the door from the baker who listened to God's request and brought bread to the children taught an important lesson on faithfulness!

7 - Go on a field trip!

Visit the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte or other Christian museums and see what a modern day prophet looks like. Take the family to a Creation Museum. Go and see a replica of Noah's Ark. To make your child a part of the experience, get some chalk or a yard stick and have your child walk or measure the length of the ark on your street or in a park. You can google biblical discoveries or interesting pictures and videos right in your own home. When you hear about discoveries that confirm that the Bible is true on the news, share these with your child.

8 - Make Scripture personal.

When reading a passage or story, ask or tell your child how this applies to their life. Give examples from your own personal life or your child's. For example, in Matthews 5:44, when Jesus says to pray for your enemy, explain how this can be hard when that enemy is the bully who is bullying your child. Ask your child to imagine they were a Bible figure such as David, Joshua or Peter. Ask, "What would David do?" when your child is facing a challenging situation.

Try placing your child's name in the place of the word "*love*."

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, love is not puffed up; love does not behave rudely, love does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth; love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NKJV

9 - Memorize Scripture together.

I cannot speak enough of the importance of storing God's Word in your heart. As I memorize and learn with my kids, we have an arsenal of God's Word as a weapon and tool against the adversary's attacks. My children learned huge chunks of Scripture by age four. Start small and add a sentence a day or memorize a verse at a time. Memorizing Scripture together is a humbling experience. As an adult, I know that those words have brought me comfort in the dead of night or during a conflict. I can only imagine what those same words will do for my kids throughout their own lives.

Homeschooling intentionally is a good priority. This time is precious and short lasting with your young children. Your influence is huge. Prepare your kids for the world by engaging them with the Bible early.



Christina Parker Brown has been a homeschool momma of three since 2000 and is the author of AKAHomeschoolMom.com and just released, Alphabet Smash. *Her work has been featured in* Proverbs 31 Magazine, The Old Schoolhouse Magazine, Home Educator Family Times, GREENHOUSE *and others. She is the NCHE region 4 liaison and co-moderates CCHNet (Charlotte Christian Homeschool Network) which is an information portal for homeschoolers in the greater Charlotte area. Christina's passion is to encourage others to intentionally connect faith, family and fun.*

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A Natural Opportunity for Teaching American Government

by Evelyn Bickley

It's 2016, and it is happening again.

It has social media abuzz. Everyday people, as well as celebrities and international leaders, voice their opinions.

It has actually been making the news headlines for more than a year.

It is that once-every-four-year cycle in the United States called the *presidential election*. Despite what your opinion might be about this round's politicking and candidates, it creates a wonderful opportunity to teach American government.

In October 2004, a friend in Cleveland County invited my children and me to participate in a mock election that her co-op was hosting. The students there had been participating in a short unit of study about the upcoming election between John Kerry and George Bush. Depending on their ages, they had been learning everything from how to count in multiples of four to the history of political parties, reading the Constitution (particularly Article II which deals with the Executive Branch), participating in debates about the merits of the 2004 candidates and thinking about larger issues such as how morality and worldview help voters decide whom to vote for. They were learning about opposing opinions and knowing how to respectfully voice their own views. They were investigating the different kinds of governments: monarchies, dictatorships, democracies and oligarchies. The mock election was the culmination of the group study.

The 2008 election afforded me the opportunity to host a mock election in my own county. Although I wasn't part of a co-op, I was part of an online community and issued a general invitation to that group to join me in studying about government and celebrating the upcoming election. A local church offered the use of its gymnasium; a date was set for about ten days before the real election, and homeschoolers began studying and preparing.

Families were invited to participate in any of the ways that best served them and the ages and abilities of their children. Students were invited to be creative in various forms of artistic endeavors. One mom had her son study the symbols of America. He then wrote a short report about the Pentagon and built a model from Legos. Some brought salt dough relief maps of the United States and clay models of the Washington Monument. One of my sons built the Liberty Bell from Legos. Other children took the opportunity to design campaign posters for their favorite candidates. There were drawings of American flags by the score!

Upon arrival, each student had to *register* to vote. After setting out their artistic contributions, students then had the opportunity to display their public speaking skills. Any student who wished (or whose parent insisted!) was permitted to give a report on a topic related to American government or history—an historical figure, a war or other event or an election. Two sisters came dressed as Michelle and Barack Obama and told the others what their presidency would be like if elected. Another brother and sister duo arrived dressed as George and Martha Washington and reported on his life. We especially encouraged students to research that year's candidates at any level—national, state or local—and give a campaign speech as if they were that person.





The speech portion of the event concluded with the Pledge of Allegiance and a blessing on the potluck lunch. Hot dogs (What's more American than that?) were provided and families brought and shared what they wished. As students finished eating, they were invited to vote. Mock ballots were provided, offering limited offices to vote for: president/vice president, senator and governor. Older students served as election judges handing out ballots and "I Voted" stickers that had been donated by our local board of elections. (Google your county board of elections to find your local office and then find the correct names for your ballot.) While election results were being tabulated, the rest of the students sang patriotic songs and played an historical trivia game (check out sites such as Funtrivia or Triviacafe). Election results were

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then announced and we called it a day.

With the opportunity once again before us, I hope to organize local homeschoolers to participate in learning about the election process and U.S. government. With older students, I will concentrate more on the full structure of government—the three levels of government (federal, state and local), checks and balances, the three branches and their roles, Supreme Court rulings, the role of the bureaucracy and, most importantly, the Constitution. Using a website like Quizlet helps students learn the vocabulary of government.



I urge you, together with a few other families, to celebrate this special season in American life. If you choose to get together for the study weeks prior to your mock election, you will also fulfill that *socialization* need that is increasingly important to students as they get older. A mock election is a fun way to share what your family is learning with others and can cover many subjects: history, civics, music, public speaking, writing, cooking, art, costuming and sewing to name a few. Participation is available for a wide range of ages, making it ideal even for families with multiple children.



We all know that repetition is a necessary teaching tool. So, begin early with your younger learners so that by the time they are of voting age, they will be used to participating in the peaceful process of the transition of power in America. Teaching American government in this way is valuable for all students—not just those who may be eligible to vote in the 2020 election.



Evelyn Bickley is a homeschooling veteran of more than twenty-three years. She has served on the boards of several support groups, as adviser to the Zeta Epsilon chapter of the National Homeschool Honor Society and currently activities director for NCHE. Wife to Barry and mom to four homeschool graduates, Evelyn enjoys traveling, public speaking, leading a Gavel Club for teens and advising other homeschool families on their journey through high school.

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American Heritage Girls and Homeschooling

by Ruthie Lloyd

The year my son went to Alaska with his Boy Scout Troop, I earnestly began to ponder how we could offer a comparable adventure experience for our three daughters. That same year, we learned about American Heritage Girls (AHG) and helped start a troop in the area.

AHG is a Christian scouting program for girls that was started in 1995 and was modeled after Boy Scouts of America. AHG's mission is "Building women of integrity through service to God, family, community and country. "Faith-Service-Fun" in AHG is played out through bi-weekly meetings, service projects, social events and outdoor activities.

AHG is for girls ages five to eighteen, and while inclusive and non-competitive, the programing offers the individual girls the opportunity for achievement, leadership and skill development, and mentorship from Christian adult leaders. The opportunity to be with friends and enjoy activities together, however, is by far the biggest draw. Family campouts are a highlight for girls and their families and provide yet another venue for gaining practical life skills and opportunity for forming and deepening friendships.

Focus on service exposes girls to a wide range of possibilities and experiences for how to be of service to God and others. While service is recognized and rewarded in the program, the emphasis and expectation suggests incorporation of service, not just as an activity, but as an attitude and way of life that girls will hopefully embrace and embody in their lives even after they no longer receive stars to place on a uniform.

Badges earned individually or in unit meetings provide practical and enriching experiences. Completion of the Emergency Preparedness badge equipped high school-age girls with CPR certification; a trip to DC was the ultimate Citizenship and Government badge field-trip; and the cake-decorating class introduced girls to a practical and popular skill. Some homeschool families even select badges to incorporate as part of their curriculum and in so doing earned badges relating to history, money management, history and arts, science and technology and personal management.





Each year offers new possibilities, and while a trip to Alaska isn't quite on the docket yet, it is not out of the question.

For more info about AHG, see the website: www.americanheritagegirls.org.



Ruthie Lloyd is happily married to Joel. They have five children, ages six to nineteen, all of whom have been homeschooled. She enjoys sports, coaching and outdoor adventures, and likes to engage kids in those interests.



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Asking the Right Questions

by Lisa Bailey

If I had a dime for every question I asked my girls throughout our years of homeschooling, we would be able to afford all the books we ever wanted! I am a big believer in questions; they are, to me, the best teaching tools at every level of learning. The nature of our questions may change as our children grow, but the method remains true.

When our children are very young, questions help them memorize and practice retrieving the knowledge that they are gaining. Answering our questions allows them to cement basic information in their minds that readies them to learn new and more complex ideas. Questions can be catalysts for learning and also can help a student dive deeper into his or her understanding of a subject.

When our students become middle schoolers, they are eager to *talk back* to us. This dialogue is necessary because it helps them process information into growing understanding. We ask questions designed to get them thinking, to help them draw conclusions and put facts together to explain bigger ideas. Many times our twelve and thirteen year-olds do not realize that they know what they know! Our questions should be designed to help them *connect the dots* of the pieces of information they know, to make connections that illustrate and strengthen their understanding.

As our children become high school students, we ask more open-ended questions. Our questions allow them to express their growing analysis of all the information and the understanding our earlier questions have helped them attain. They become thinkers as we continue to ask questions. They talk more as we talk less. Our major role becomes master question-asker, not provider of most information. After years of practice, I have learned to be a better question-asker, and that has made me a better teacher.

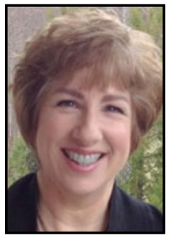
Often, our children know what is important to us by listening to our questions. A shrewd student can tell what will be on the test by attending to what the teacher repeatedly emphasizes when asking questions. Our questions can teach our children much bigger lessons, too; years ago I realized that questions can help us nurture our children's spirits as well as their *minds*. As the mother of my girls, I wanted them to know that their hearts and spirits were even more important to me than their academic proficiency. I began to end most days with three questions, hoping that they would see what was truly important to me.

Are you happy in your heart? Despite the stresses of the day, are you at peace in your heart?

Are you healthy in your body? Does anything hurt you? Are you worried about yourself in any way?

Are you hopeful in your spirit? Even if things did not go well today, are you hopeful that life will be better tomorrow?

Strangely enough, *these* are the questions my girls remember! I still ask them from time to time, sometimes to make them chuckle, sometimes to bring back good memories, and sometimes just to remind them that there was always more to homeschooling for us than mastering a new subject.



Lisa has enjoyed more than a decade of teachable moments with her girls. With one daughter in her junior year of college and one in her senior year of high school, Lisa and her husband, David, relish the opportunity to minister to other homeschooling families by tutoring, mentoring and speaking. Lisa currently serves Classical Conversations as the corporate speaker trainer and enjoys speaking to parents around the country about finding joy on the journey.

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Being Flexible in *Teaching Math*

by Debbie Mason

Flexibility is one of the greatest advantages of homeschooling. You can move as quickly or as slowly as necessary for each child to learn the subject. You do not need to stick to someone else's scope and sequence; you can create our own based on your child's individual needs interests and development. I would like to address the benefits of flexibility in the area of math.

One way to take advantage of this flexibility is in the pace you use to go through the material. You do not have to accomplish a grade level each year. If your child is understanding the material quickly and seems bored or frustrated with doing all of the problems, then cut out some of the problems and move on. If he is having difficulty, then slow down, or take a break and come back a few weeks later. If you decide that your student would benefit from a longer break from math, then take one, but I encourage you not to just stop doing math altogether. You've heard the expression, "If you don't use it, you lose it." This concept is especially true of math. Never stop doing math for very long. Even if you take summer breaks from school, math is one subject you don't want to completely avoid. If you determine that your child needs a break from progressing, then keep doing review even when you are not introducing new material.

My oldest daughter, who is now a college graduate with degrees in math and music and a homeschooling mother, was always good at math. I could tell from an early age that she was good in this subject. Until third grade, we didn't really do a structured math program in a consistent way. As I explained in my article, "Math and the Young Child" (2015 fall GREENHOUSE), we concentrated on real life math and games and used math programs lightly. When she was going into the third grade, I started her in a sixth grade math book. Because this book started with so much review (a common thing in math textbooks because they assume that students will have forgotten a lot over the summer), we were able to use the review in this book to cover the math concepts that would have been taught in the previous years' math books without having to do very much supplemental work. She spent two years working through this book. She did well academically, but she hated math. This bad attitude was a major red flag for me. One of my goals was for my children to have a good attitude about learning. I had to do something to fix this problem, especially since I knew she was gifted in this area. So, we took the next year off from progressing in math. I did consistent review for this year. However, the review did not take much time, so it really was a break. When she came back to a math program during the sixth grade, she had a much better attitude. (I need to add here that it was MathCounts that turned her into a math lover. (MathCounts is a problem solving club and competition for middle school students. To find out more about MathCounts, go to mathcounts.org.)

I tell you this story to show an example of the creativity you can have in the homeschool environment. You are not locked into the traditional program of conquering a math book a year and staying on grade level. Also, don't feel that you have to use the same curriculum every year. You can alternate or switch books if you don't like the one you are using. Different programs work better for different students. I also recommend that you do math along with your student when at all possible, especially in the elementary grades and if this is a first child. It will help you review the math concepts, and it is also good for your student to work closely with you. Remember that your attitude about a subject is more important than your knowledge about it. I remember pretending to be fascinated with the discovery of bugs and snakes when my children were little. If I can do this, you can pretend to like math if you are one of those people who hates math. You don't have to pretend to be good at it, though. It is good for your child to see you learning with him.

As a homeschooler, you have the advantage of being able to be flexible. You can mold your curriculum and methods around your student's learning style, developmental stage, interests and calling. You also have the advantage of knowing your student well and working one on one with him or her. Don't be fearful that you will not keep up with the standard scope and sequence. Your child is not *standard;* he is unique. It takes courage to veer off the beaten path. You have already decided to homeschool—now decide to use its advantages and be flexible.



Debbie and Spencer Mason homeschooled their four children from birth until high school graduation. They are on the NCHE board, and Debbie serves as events director.



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Five Ways Dad Can Lend a Helping Hand with Homeschooling

by Miguel Viera

It was early summer and our family was already thinking about the upcoming school year. Our youngest was ready for kindergarten, and my wife and I were contemplating how we could swing sending our three children to private school. My wife had recently interviewed for a secretary's position at our kids' school. This position would have provided a significant tuition discount; however, they ended up hiring a different person which was a blessing in disguise.

Outside the private school, we seemed to be surrounded by parents who were homeschooling their children. This started planting seeds to explore that avenue. My wife was having conversations with other homeschooling parents and started researching curriculum. We were quickly discovering there were tremendous benefits to homeschooling and minimal disadvantages. After much fervent prayer and research, we made the decision to homeschool our two younger children in the fall.

This homeschooling decision meant things were going to change in our home life. My wife and I wanted to make sure there was a harmonious balance between homeschooling two children and keeping our sanity. We set out to make a list of ways for Dad to lend a helping hand with homeschooling. This list is by no means perfect; however, I believe it does help lessen the load on Mom.

Five Ways Dad Can Lend a Helping Hand

1) Dad can step in and help around the house so Mom doesn't have to worry so much about the housework. Homeschooling is a full-time job. The last thing the teacher needs to be concerned about is washing dishes or folding laundry.
2) Dad needs to be willing to roll up his sleeves. From preparing a meal to picking up something to eat, having dinner ready doesn't need to be a priority. Dinner is flexible.
3) Dad can really provide a big help by making himself available to provide support for seatwork. Be willing to help with studies, whether it is helping with spelling or Latin homework.
4) Dad can give Mom a much needed rest by taking the kids on educational field trips. One recent memorable field trip we took was to the Goat Lady Dairy and Rising Meadow Farm. The kids got to pet goats, sample goat cheese, tour the gardens, feel the fleece, learn about local sustainable agriculture and eat local homemade ice cream while listening to an Irish folk band.
5) Dad can take kids places out of the house at least once a week to give Mom some peace and quiet. So many places to go, so little time! Among places Dad may choose are local parks or Chuck E. Cheese's. Mom can simply relax, go to the gym or check off a couple items on her to-do list. What she does doesn't matter as much as just having time to recharge.

At the end of the day, homeschooling is a team effort. If a husband and wife are willing to work together, there can be a harmonious balance without anyone having to lose his or her sanity. It is possible to be a Psalm 128: 3-4 homeschooling family.

"Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
In the very heart of your house,
Your children like olive plants
All around your table.
Behold, thus shall the man be blessed
Who fears the Lord."

Miguel, his wife, Tiffany, and three children live in Jamestown, NC. He is the author of two books and is the founder/president of Playing for Jesus Ministries. He is committed to encouraging student athletes and students across the country to help revitalize the significant importance of positive role models for the "Youth of America" through a personal and growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

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Help Me, I'm Stuck

by Mari Fitz-Wynn

Sometimes it's hard to admit that we may need help with our homeschool. Understandably, we may be overwhelmed with a curriculum choice, lesson plans, need for organization, homeschool itself or the motivation to want to teach. It is during hard times such as these that we *should* ask for help. Too often, as homeschool parents, we feel the pressure to *measure up* with other home educators whom we feel have it all together, so we don't ask for help. We stubbornly or persistently work to find our own solution; and we continue to sink, possibly getting in over our heads before reaching out. This reminds me of an experience I had, related to this observation. It seemed like a very simple plan, but in the end, I began to get stuck, taking my great idea along with me!

We were studying a unit on biology and I decided to take full advantage of the fact that our house fronted a lake. Since we'd just purchased a brand new microscope, I decided to give my children a new experience of seeing a little bit of pond life and an amazing creature called the amoeba. I explained all of this to them as I pulled on my husband's rubber fishing boots. Little did I know that this was mistake number one. The boots were way too big. Once I was ready, I walked out to the backyard with six laughing, shouting and very excited children running ahead. "See," I thought to myself, "I knew I could make biology fun!" After giving the kids one final, encouraging warning, "Stay on the bank," I waded into the lake, specimen jar in hand, while envisioning what impact this type of hands-on experiment would have on their learning and possibly their future career choices. Then it happened. As I took my third step into the water, I felt one foot begin to sink just a tad deeper than the other. I quickly steadied myself, so as not to plunge headlong into the murky lake. I was in trouble. As I attempted to bring my left foot even with my right, I felt my foot coming out of the boot, so I pushed my foot back into the boot to try to put it firmly back on. Trying to force my foot back into the boot only caused it to sink deeper into the mud. This was mistake number two. Still undeterred, I decided to pivot on my right foot and place it evenly with the left and head another way. Yet, to no avail, for the right foot was sliding out of that boot as well. To my horror, my husband's big boots were stuck in the mud, and with a maneuver in either direction, I felt myself sinking. While trying to remain calm and look cool, I realized the children were closely watching my every move. I tried to think of a plan of action that did not include yelling for my husband. I couldn't think of one. My feet were not going anywhere, no matter how tightly I curled my toes to try to lift the big boots up. So, now, not quite so calmly, I shouted, "Go get your dad and tell him I'm in the lake, stuck in the mud." Three children raced to be the first to deliver the message, and three stayed to ask if I wanted them to come in and help. Unfortunately, the tranquil learning environment I had intended had quickly turned chaotic. I saw my husband's face as he raced out the door and knew at once that the message he'd been given might have been a bit more dramatic than necessary. The dog was barking at all the commotion, the three children who'd remained faithfully at the bank were now screaming for their father to 'hurry up' and rescue me. I needed help!

What about you? Are you sending your own cry for help or are you slowly sinking? Are the noises all around you resounding so loudly that you feel as if the world is closing in on you? Are the kids screaming more often than not? Is it time to call for help? It's available. You need not continue to sink. You, too, can be pulled out of the murky, muddy water. The Great Rescuer hears your cry. He is with you, and He has placed people in your life to help you. For me, that day, it was my husband.

What a blessing my husband was. He was indeed that day, my hero. You have heroes all around you, in support groups, among your friends, your spouses and many others. When you feel yourself sinking under the stresses of teaching and training your children, you should call for help. The plea could prevent you from getting stuck.



Mari Fitz-Wynn has twenty-years of experience as a leader in home education. She published her first book, Take Heart: 26 Steps to a Healthy Home School *in June 2014 and has published a myriad of articles for NCHE GREENHOUSE magazine and various other home education newsletters. She is a home education consultant and president of Heart for Home School Ministries, Inc. Her blog is Heart Matters (www.heartforhomeschool.org). She is the former lobbyist for NCHE.*

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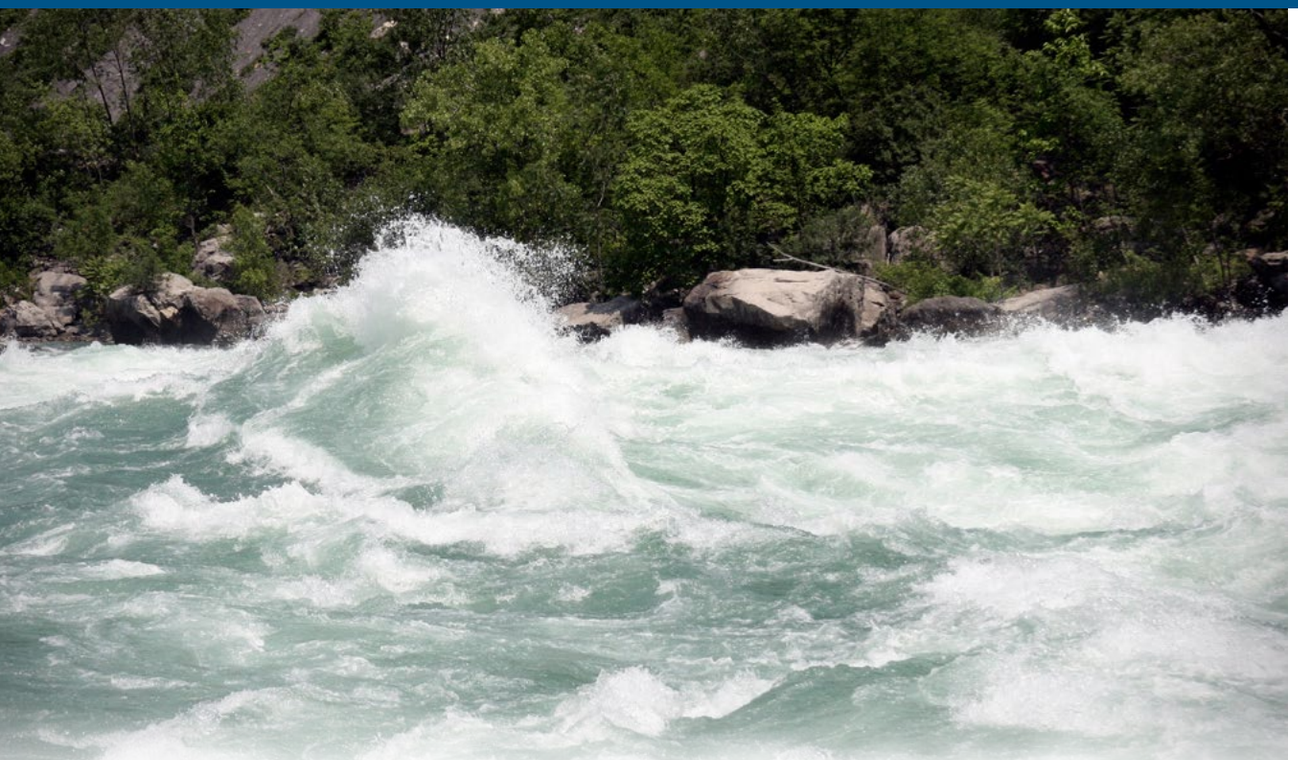
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Is Your Family Stuck in the Raging River of Busyness?

by Matthew McDill

Sometimes our lives feel like we have been thrown into a rushing river. We are just trying to survive, barely keeping our heads above the water and avoiding the jagged rocks. We have little control over our direction and speed. This is how we feel when we have surrendered to the tyranny of the urgent. We are at the mercy of deadlines, appointments and activities. We are driven by what the culture says we must do, by what others want us to do and by the gratification of our immediate desires.

But I have had enough of this. I have sputtered and bumped along in these rapids for too long, watching my life whiz by, watching my children grow up. God has given me a call and purpose for my family, and it is not being accomplished in this raging river of busyness!

So I desperately swim for the shore, not even sure I can break through the powerful currents. Drenched, coughing and exhausted, I crawl out onto the bank and now I am asking myself, "What is this supposed to looks like? How do I build a different life?"

First, I must refocus on my purpose and mission as a follower of Jesus Christ. *My purpose and mission is to love God, love people and make disciples.* This is not only the purpose and mission of each of us as believers but of our families as well.

Next, in order to see what my life is supposed to look like, I reflect on my biblical responsibilities and priorities. I have come up with five areas of responsibility and the priority of each. These are the ways that we can fulfill our purpose and mission in our families. The five areas are:

1. Relationship
2. Discipleship
3. Order and Work
4. Education
5. Ministry

Relationship

To be a family is to have relationships. To love others is to relate to them. How am I loving my wife and children? Am I treating them with kindness, patience and selflessness? Am I affirming and accepting them? What kind of relationships am I building with them? Are we making time to talk? Are we spending time together? Strong relationships are the foundation for the next category—discipleship.

Discipleship

To disciple others is to help them love God, love people and make disciples. This must be the ultimate goal of family because it is the ultimate goal of life. How am I helping my family to love God? How am I helping them to love others? How am I equipping them to know their own gifting, calling and personal ministry?

Order and Work

Loving God includes stewardship. All that we have is from God, and our responsibility is to care for what He has given us and use it to bless others. Stewardship requires work: cleaning, organizing and maintaining. Work is our contribution to the family and community and it is how we provide for our basic needs so that we are free to minister to others. A messy, chaotic home is not a place where discipleship, education or ministry can thrive.

Education

Education is the acquisition of knowledge and skills. These are tools for helping us accomplish our God given mission. Facilitating and leading our children in the acquisition of knowledge and skills is part of our responsibility as parents. Am I faithful in educating my children? Am I preparing them for a life of productivity and blessing to others?

Ministry

Ministry is the culmination of all that we have discussed so far. A spouse is a partner in ministry. A family is a ministry team. Are we joining God in his work to build his kingdom? Are our hearts beating with His for the nations? What are we doing as a family to express the love and truth of God to others? How much of our time is spent serving and entertaining ourselves? Are we intentionally giving our money, time and energy for ministry?

By faith I am rejecting the tyranny of the urgent. I will break the patterns of busyness and reactionism. Instead of focusing on what others expect from me, I will focus on what God desires for me. By faith I am choosing a life of peace and purpose for my family. In order to do this, I will make these five building blocks my priorities: relationship, discipleship, order and work, education and ministry. It may be a desperate swim to the shore, but God can help me make it. He can give me everything I need to live out His fantastic mission for my family.



Matthew McDill and his wife, Dana, homeschool their nine children in Creston, NC. Matthew is the NCHE media manager. He has a Bible teaching ministry, Truth to Freedom, and is a pastor of Highland Christian Fellowship in Boone, NC. You can read his blog and listen to his podcast at truthtofreedom.org. Matthew regularly teaches marriage and family retreats at Cherokee Cove Family Retreat Center in Mountain City, TN (www.cherokeecove.org). He is also president of High Country Christian Home Schoolers and previously taught communication at Appalachian State University. Matthew holds a B.S. in communication, two master's degrees and a Ph.D. in biblical studies.

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Podcasts: A Treat for Your Earbuds

by Amy Sloan

If you visit with me you're sure to hear the words, "I heard on a podcast recently," come out of my mouth within the first few minutes of our conversation. While in the past many folks followed their favorite blogs, there is now a sweeping move towards keeping up with content through podcasts. In fact, many prolific bloggers are transitioning towards the podcast realm as a way to be distinguished in the saturated online space.

What is a podcast?

A podcast is kind of like a radio program, but you can play any episode of any show at your own convenience and as often as you'd like for free. Some broadcasts are short—under ten minutes. Others last an hour or longer. Some shows are monologues by an individual; others are conversations between two or more co-hosts, and you will even find shows where one host regularly interviews various guests. As the blogging landscape changes, the development of audio-blogs is also growing, and some bloggers are even recording their old posts as audio content. While most podcasts are merely audio files, more are developing with video as well. Topics are as varied as you can imagine; if you have an esoteric interest, chances are somebody somewhere has a podcast related to that topic!

Why listen to a podcast?

I love the flexibility listening to podcasts gives me. I can do the dishes, fold the laundry or clean the bathroom while my mind and ears are occupied by scintillating conversations. Anytime you would ordinarily listen to music, you can also listen to a podcast: in the car, while exercising or while rocking in a hammock drinking lemonade. Oh wait! Homeschool moms don't do that every afternoon? Aside from personal entertainment, inspiration and education, I have also found that podcasts can be an excellent teaching tool. The kids learn about science, economics, culture and more using a variety of shows. Just like any other source for content, some episodes may be inappropriate for young children. Please use your own family's discernment and standards as you begin listening to podcasts as a family.

How do I listen to a podcast?

If you have iTunes, you can subscribe to a particular podcast and all their recent episodes will automatically download to your computer, or you can just download individual episodes. There are also numerous apps available on smartphones and tablets both for Android and Apple users including Stitcher and Overcast. Most podcasts also have a way to stream individual episodes directly from their webpage.

Some podcasts to get you started:

Here are a few podcasts I would recommend to get you started, many geared especially for homeschoolers and/or parents. Have fun exploring and finding your own favorites!

Homeschooling IRL

IRL means 'In Real Life,' and Kendra, from Preschoolers and Peace, and her husband, Fletch, definitely keep it real on their podcast, discussing topics you "might not hear discussed at your local homeschool convention." A major theme in their podcast is hope shifting, best defined as when we put our hope for our own or our kids' salvation or safety in anything other than Jesus. Spoiler alert: homeschooling won't save your kids.

Read-Aloud Revival

Host Sarah Mackenzie inspires us to build our family culture around books, interviewing guests like Andrew Pudewa, Jim Weiss and Rea Berg. My kids enjoy the final minutes of the show with a segment of children from around the world who have called in with their personal book recommendations.

Homeschool Snapshots

This show gives you a glimpse of the homeschooler next door. Pam Barnhill, a prolific homeschool blogger and podcaster, interviews homeschooling moms from a variety of educational and family-living perspectives. I also highly recommend her other podcasts: Your Morning Basket and The Homeschool Solutions Show.

Inspired to Action

Host Kat Lee is here to give a pep talk to all you moms. She reminds us that God created us in particular to be the moms to our own children. Her Christ-centered show interviews many guests on a variety of topics related to parenting and raising Christian families.

God-Centered Mom

Heather MacFadyen, a mom to four boys, wants to help moms in the process of replacing "me with He." Her authentic guests point us toward a Perfect God rather than the misguided idea of the perfect mom.

Center for Lit

The Andrews have produced a show of depth and insight as they discuss and debate a Christian approach to literature, and more broadly the arts and culture. I could see this being a fabulous podcast to listen to with your high school student and to use as a jumping off point for discussion.

Schole Sisters

This is a podcast for the restful classical homeschooling mama, with co-hosts Brandy Vencel, Mystie Winkler and Pam Barnhill.

Brains On!

Here's a science podcast for the kids that the whole family can enjoy! It is clever and engaging. Be aware that it comes from an evolutionary perspective that comes through more strongly in some episodes than in others.

5 Minutes in Church History

Do you only have five minutes? Then you have time for this podcast! Stephen Nichols gives a brief introduction to people, events and places that have played a significant role in church history.

Melody, Mystery, and Mayhem

This is a podcast produced by the Burr family, and it is full of delightful songs, stories and interviews that all ages can enjoy.

Can't get enough of podcasts? Here are some other suggestions: Cultivating the Lovely, What Should I Read Next, The Homeschool Sisters, Planet Money, How to Do Everything and The Simple Show. What new shows will you discover?



Amy Sloan and her husband, John, are second-generation homeschoolers by grace alone to five children ages one, four, six, nine and eleven. They adventure in Holly Springs, NC.

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The Simplest Truths Are the Most Profound



by Mark Fox

I remember many years ago hearing one of my relatives talk about his associate pastor in another city who was leaving to take a church somewhere else. "He's the smartest man I have ever heard when it comes to the Bible," my relative said. "He speaks Hebrew, Greek, even Latin." There was a slight pause and one of my young children asked, "Does he speak English?"

It's a valid question. In this case, the answer was "yes," but the truth is there are many who teach in churches and universities who, for all their degrees, have never learned to communicate the simple truths of their discipline. They can throw some Greek at you, but you have no idea what they are talking about most of the time. They can tell you all about the Hebrew verbs in a passage, but then they wander down a rabbit trail that has nothing to do with the text, and you are lost. Some speak about their subjects in a way that sends their audience into a deep sleep. I even heard about one professor who fell asleep himself while he was lecturing. Standing at the chalkboard, talking to his college class, the man actually nodded off while leaning against the wall. David Garrick, the great eighteenth century actor, was asked why he could so mightily move men by fiction while preachers, speaking such momentous truths, left them unmoved. He replied, "They speak truth as though it were fiction, while I speak fiction as though it were truth." If a man speaks the truths of the Word of God as though they were fiction, then he may as well be speaking in another language to his audience without an interpreter. It will have the same effect.

Some have passion for what they speak about, but they are even more impressed with themselves, and that is what is communicated most clearly. To paraphrase Charles Spurgeon, "He who makes much of himself makes very little of God."

Others have a passion for their subject, but they refuse to put the cookies on the lower shelf. Their vocabulary is impressive but a stumbling block. For example, how many of you would know what is meant by this quote? "Avian bipeds whose plumage can be demonstrated to have reasonable similitude display a tendency to congregate in groupings of some magnitude." Huh? I don't think they had avian bipeds where I grew up. Actually, they did, and the quote simply put means, "Birds of a feather flock together." How about this? "Male cadavers are incapable of yielding any testimony." Maybe you can wade through that one and come up with the answer, "Dead men tell no tales." But I bet you never heard your mama say this to you when you were growing up: "Freedom from incrustations of grime is contiguous to rectitude." Not if she was from around these parts anyway. But she might have said it in plain English: "Cleanliness is next to godliness." My personal favorite, however, is this one: "Scintillate, scintillate, asteroid minifid!"

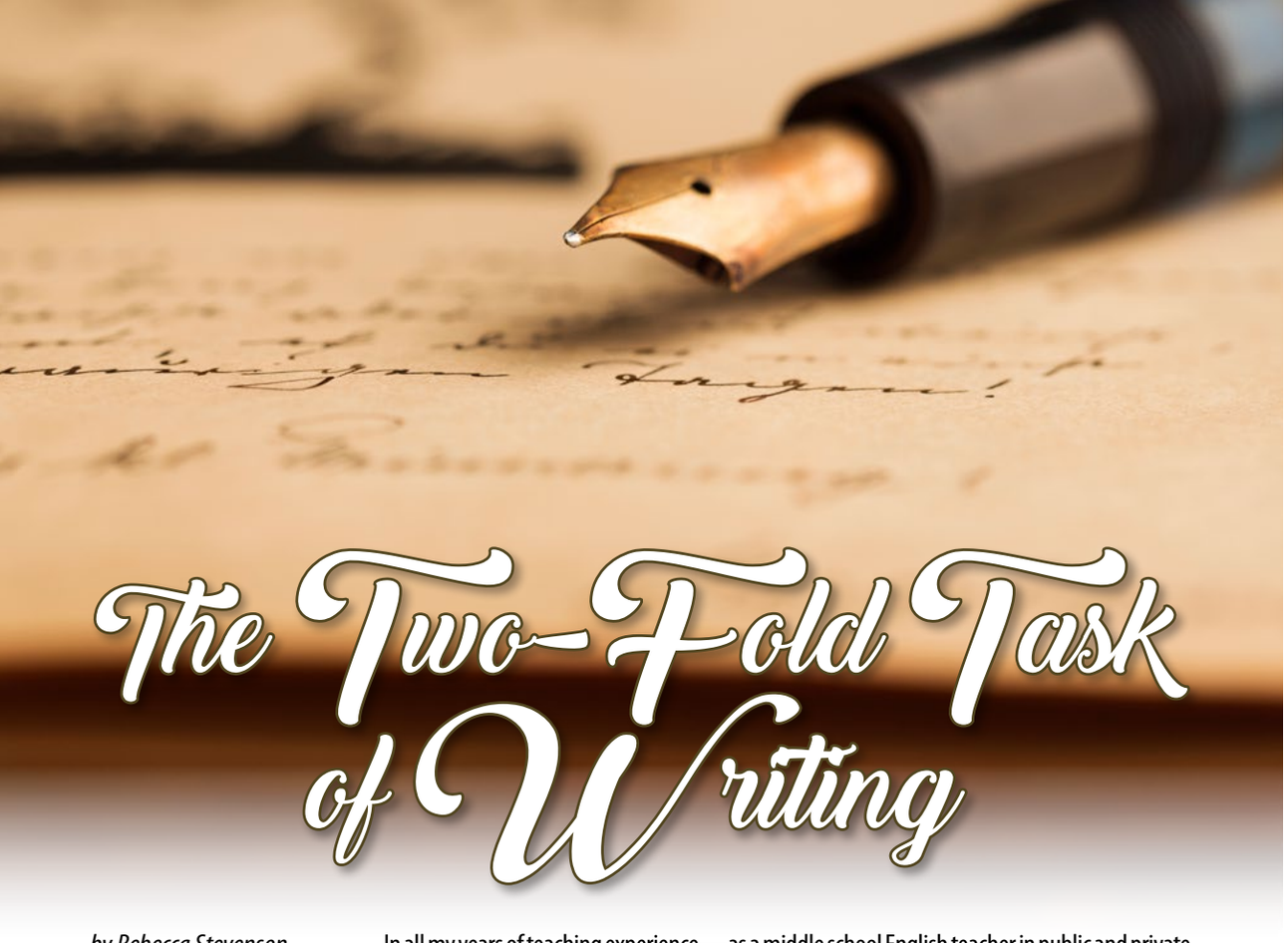
Ponder on it for a minute. But in the meantime, let me remind you that it was Jesus who said, just as plain as could be, "Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

That's a truth as simple to understand as "Twinkle, twinkle, little star!"



J. Mark Fox is the author of Age Integrated Church, *published in 2015, that tells the story of how God dramatically changed the vision and the course of Antioch. He is also the author of* A Faithful Man: Equipped to Lead as Prophet, Priest, Protector and Provider (2012), *and several other books. He is a weekly columnist for the* Times-News *in Burlington, and hosts a bi-weekly podcast called* Healthy Church Radio. *Mark loves to travel, run, and spend time with his family.*

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The Two-Fold Task of Writing

by Rebecca Stevenson

In all my years of teaching experience—as a middle school English teacher in public and private schools, as a high school English teacher in the same, even as a homeschooling mother—the most common questions I receive from parents have been these: 1) How can I teach my child(ren) to write? and 2) Would *you* do it for me?

I understand these questions. The stakes are high. We don't have to step two feet into a homeschooling conference or sit five minutes in a private school's introductory meeting or glance at a public school's curriculum before we are reminded of the importance of writing. Children need to learn how to write. High school students need to be good at it. Our states test it. Our colleges want it.

Teaching writing is intimidating. I've known seasoned English teachers who avoid it like clichés. Teaching writing lacks concrete formula. It's less science and more magic. And evaluating it brings its own nightmare: it seems entirely subjective.

How, then, does one teach writing (and evaluate the same) for *one's own child*?

High stakes, indeed.

As the new school year approaches, I'd like to take a few minutes to look at writing from the student's perspective and then, if possible, encourage your fearless homeschooling heart with some practical ideas that can foster good writing.

The Task at Hand

Rare is the student who, when given a writing assignment, doesn't immediately ask the obvious question: How long does it have to be?

This is because, for most students, the process of writing is so challenging, he or she wants more than anything to get it over with. Why? Because writing is so complex. This is precisely why colleges want students who are good at it, and precisely, why it is a worthwhile skill to hone in academic training and precisely why it is so difficult.

This may seem obvious, but it's worthy of some examination: writing is a two-fold process. In good writing, we must *know and think clearly* about what it is we want to say, and we must *say it well*.

Yes, other disciplines may require many more than two "folds." Take, for example, a proof in geometry. It requires multiple steps and sometimes multiple theorems. But these are implemented one at a time. In writing, these two folds—those of *clear thought* and *artful expression*—must (eventually) occur *simultaneously*. Any writer remotely aware of the task before her can readily (and understandably) be paralyzed or at least intimidated by this truth. In fact, professional writers are intimidated by it all the time.

I think it's helpful to any writing student to understand and name this complexity. While the expectation of good writing from your student should stand, you might want to help him see that his intimidation is reasonable. What he is doing, when writing, requires very high brain function. Good writing is hard, but it is attainable. And it is important.

Some Means for the Task

Clear Thought: I think this might be the part we are good at—from a curricular standpoint, I mean. The Internet is rife with helpful tools for organizing ideas. Graphic organizers abound, and, in a pinch, the humble outline can work miracles. Most students need this preparatory step before diving into a writing assignment. They need time to figure out what their thoughts are; and more time to decipher how their ideas are connected or might best connect to build an argument (or even a plot, for the creative writers out there).

Give your writer this time. Work to find the organizing system that works for her. Then let her *talk* you through her "plan," allowing both you and her to *listen to* and *evaluate* her ideas. Do they work together in the way she has planned? Great! If not, find out where the weakness is and guide her to resolution.

Clear thinking is essential, and it boosts confidence for the other part of the writing challenge, which for most is, by far, the more difficult.

Artful Expression: The fact is that some people are tone-deaf, and these people can and do live fulfilling and productive lives. But being "tone-deaf" when it comes to the art of good writing is less favorable for a writer—and all students are writers, whether or not they like it.

Take time to help your student develop *an ear for good writing*. This can begin when children are very young: the rhythms and predictable sounds of nursery rhymes help develop expectation of what words and sentences can do. Without any formal instruction, reading and reciting nursery rhymes aloud help inform appreciation of language.

Memorizing poetry, too, is excellent for this. Even if your child is older—even in high school—take time to read and listen to how good poems work. Attend to the rhythm and rhyme. Even though we rightly tend to avoid rhyme in formal writing, it can help develop that ear for good sound in language. Make use, too, of the poetry your child might already be enjoying: encourage her to think about the lyrics in her favorite songs. Write them out. How do the sounds of the words and phrasings work well, and why?

Would-be writers can develop an ear for good writing by reading and listening to speeches, too. President Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. come to mind as examples of excellent writers who knew the powers that lie in repetition, parallelism, contrasting lengths of sentences. Have your student listen to their speeches, noting where and how rhythm comes into play. These are rhetorical devices we employ in writing, and developing an ear for them helps us craft it on the page.

Help your writer find books he loves to read. Read aloud to him. Have him read aloud.

And when it comes to writing, *at least some of the time*, have your writer write about what he wants to write about. This can free your student from the constraints of the "first fold" (that of clear thought) and practice fluid expression on a subject he feels confident with.

In Practice

Teaching writing is difficult. Evaluating it, especially your own child's work, is more difficult. But let's remember that writing is potentially far more difficult for the student. Give your student time to think through her ideas. Provide your student with immersion in good writing—and then let her write.



Rebecca Stevenson has homeschooled all three of her children at various times. In her free time, she enjoys writing. Her first novel Healing Maddie Brees *will be released September 13, 2016 (Light Messages Publishing). "A gorgeous meditation on broken bodies, fractured faith, and the soul-wrenching path to serenity." -Kirkus Reviews*

rebeccabrewsterstevenson.com

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Financial Survival for the Single Homeschool Mom

by Joanne Giff and Debbie Crawford

Joanne:

If I had a magic wand, I would use it to solve the financial struggles of the sadly growing number of single homeschool moms. Too many women are finding themselves forced to reluctantly consider separation and/or divorce. This choice leads to new, seemingly insurmountable problems, with the most critical issues being how to support yourself and your children, as well as how to finance the divorce itself. It is hardly an inexpensive process, and when children and custody issues are involved, fees add up quickly. There is no easy solution, but there is hope. It can be done. I don't believe there is any one blueprint to resolve financial issues, but rather solutions that are personally available and unique to each woman. The strength and guidance needed to evaluate, enact and remain steadfast in your purpose will rely heavily on your relationship with the Lord and following His lead.

When I specifically think of the type of faith it takes to be a divorced, single homeschool mom, I think of the often-told story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. I marvel at a faith so strong that they willingly and without hesitation accepted their fate of being callously tossed into a fiery furnace. They defied Nebuchadnezzar and steadfastly resolved and determinedly announced that they would not serve his gods or worship his gold statue. They accepted God's decision for their lives even if it was His decision to allow them to perish. Now that is unwavering, single-minded and ardent dedication to and faith in a God who has the plan. They ultimately understood that God's purposes were paramount to anything else. Don't doubt that He has and will continue to rescue you, in His own way and in His own time, from your fiery furnaces as well.

No matter where you are in the separation/divorce process, I would like to say how deeply and profoundly I ache on your behalf. Too often I hear of another woman basically forced to leave her husband due to untenable behaviors (These days these behaviors most often involve pornography; think of the high profile case of Elin Nordegren). So now what? In 1Timothy 5, there is guidance for how to treat widows. I believe it applies to our situations as well. Turn to family first. In the short term, you will need to be someplace where you feel emotionally safe in order to weather the divorce process, which is not friendly to women in our positions. Hopefully that place will be in the family home. If not, maybe there is a family member you and your children can stay with in the short term. Hopefully your family will support your decision to homeschool or you will jump into yet another fiery furnace! Another option would be to approach your church and ask them for assistance, either in the way of rent money, or help with rent, from the benevolent fund or some type of church housing or housing provided by a church member. We cannot receive if we do not ask, so we need to ask! Otherwise, you will never know if there is someone out there looking for a tenant for a rental house, or looking to gift someone with a sanctuary, even if it's short term.

Regarding your financial future, if you do not receive a sufficient amount of support from your ex-husband, you will most likely have to work, if only part-time, while trying to school your children. The new challenge is to figure out how to work and home educate. There are many options if you are willing to be flexible and advocate at all times for you and your children. As for me, my ex-husband has been willing to pay me to educate at home because our son is dyslexic. It would be more expensive to send him to a private school. I have also had a clinical educational psychologist support my efforts to home educate my son. I received training to assist him, and we have been able to demonstrate progress through the testing by the psychologist. I have worked part-time on and off to help when extra expenses have arisen. However, once I am done home educating, I will need to work in order to support myself. So, the long-term financials are always ever present in my thoughts and plans. I daily lift my situation up to the Lord.

Debbie:

As a widowed mom of two young children, I immediately filed for Social Security Survivor's Benefits. These benefits are based on what your husband had paid into Social Security, and they only pay the "Mom" portion until your youngest turns sixteen. It has been a great help to us! Benefits stop for your children when each one turns eighteen, so in two years our benefits will cease from this source. I am constantly looking for jobs to consider for my future. Remember that we don't have to stay in one job forever; when your children are grown you can re-assess your job situation and go from there. The other thing that I did was to move in with my dad. This cut down on how much I would have to pay each month and gave the kids stability as we grieved the loss of my husband and their dad.

So what are the options to a single, homeschooling mom? Home daycare is one of the first ones that come to mind. It can be lucrative, but it will take away from your homeschooling time. I know a lot of single moms who opt to make their money this way. Another option is to find a job where the children can come with you. You could work at a gym either as front desk help or in the childcare department if your gym has one, or work at a martial arts studio. I am the office manager for a local martial arts studio, and my son trains for free while I work. Another option is to find a job where you can work evenings or nights while a family member or friend watch the children. I know of several women who edit books from home and yet another who runs a virtual call center from her house in the evenings. There are lots of viable options, but you have to get creative and reach out to those who can help you. Local churches need secretaries to answer phones and prepare bulletins for Sunday. Many may be willing to let you bring your children with you. I also have a part-time health and wellness business in which I enroll people into a nutritional system. This provides extra, needed income, and I can do it in the little free time that is available to me.

Whatever you decide to do, you will have to learn to adjust to the new balance in your life—one where work and schooling counter-balance each other. If your children are young, then it will be important to help them adapt to the new way of life. If your children are older, you can use this as an opportunity to teach them to be independent and to help you as a contributing member of the family. Don't underestimate the support that your children will give to you as they see you working hard for your family and the character that this will develop in them.

As a single homeschool mom none of your decisions will be easy. There are going to be many trials, but your hope is not in this world, but in the Lord. If you are convinced it is your calling to home educate, He will equip you in every way. God bless.



Debbie Crawford is a single, homeschooling mom of two. She is in her eleventh year of homeschooling. Debbie is also the office manager for her local martial arts studio. She is building her own health and wellness business. Debbie loves to read mysteries, surf the Internet and spend time with her family. She currently resides in Moore County, North Carolina with her children, father and cat.



Joanne Giff has four children and has homeschooled for fifteen years. Her younger son is dyslexic. She has received training in the Orton-Gillingham approach to dyslexia from Susie Van de Vorst, a Fellow with the Academy of Orton Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE). She has been tutoring her son and other students for approximately two years, which includes working as a tutor during the summer of 2015 at Camp Spring Creek, an AOGPE certified camp for dyslexic students which is located in Bakersville, NC.

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North Carolina House Page Program

by Darren Stephens

When I arrived at the legislative building early on a Tuesday morning, I hadn't known anything of what I was going to do, but when one is suited up and going into an important place, it is hard to feel like anything could be wrong. Even though I had no idea originally of what to do, the briefing was very clear and organized, and all of the house pages quickly got to know each other while getting ready for session.

I was privileged to get to meet my sponsoring representative, Mr. John Szoka of District 45, for a few minutes the first day and then again for a brief chat the last day before leaving. I was glad to be able to meet my representative and to get to know him, and some of what he did, over the course of the legislative week. Another highlight of the week, which came once each day, was being able to attend house session. The other thirteen pages that week and I got to watch as our legislators proposed, discussed and debated the bills that govern our state today. A very interesting part of being a house page was getting to watch committee meetings, as most of the discussion on each particular bill takes place not in the session but in committee meetings, getting the bills ready for session.

All in all, it was an enjoyable week. Getting to see our local representatives do what they do was not only an honor but a great pleasure. Until then, I knew very little about how our state is governed, but from that experience, I have gained a lot of information about how and why things work the way they do; I would definitely do it again if I got the chance. I highly recommend the House Page Program to any who are interested in meeting their representatives, learning about their state government and having an enjoyable time doing both. For more information, you can find it at their website, http://www.ncleg.net/house/housepagesite.



Darren Stephens, seventeen, enjoys team policy debate, plays the mandolin and works several hours a week with a local farmer. After graduating, he plans to join his father in the general appraisal business and serve in his community at the grassroots level.

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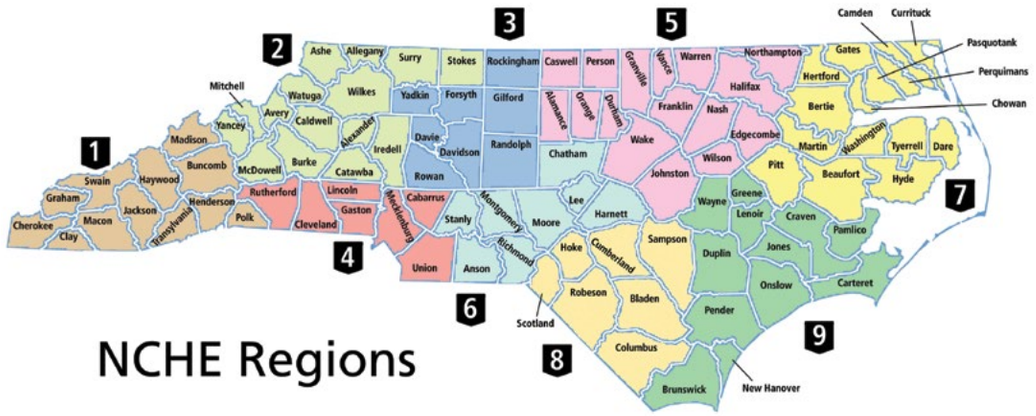
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About NCHE

In 1984, North Carolinians for Home Education was organized by homeschool parents to support and encourage home educators and to achieve the right to freely home educate in North Carolina. Since that time, NCHE has endeavored to serve the homeschoolers in NC. NCHE continues to work to promote the excellence of home education, provide support for those who choose to do so and protect the right to homeschool. Our name was selected so as to include all who are for home education, not just those who are currently homeschooling. NCHE is governed by a working board of directors who volunteer their time and efforts to serve homeschoolers. A non-profit organization, NCHE operates on the basis of biblical principles and welcomes members of all races and religions.

NCHE Membership

Membership in NCHE is available to anyone who supports home education. NC residents who are homeschooling must be in compliance with the NC homeschool law. Membership is obtained by donating any amount to NCHE (suggested donation is $35). The service of NCHE is made possible by the generous and consistent contributions of its supporters.

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The GREENHOUSE is the periodical of North Carolinians for Home Education. It is published twice a year, spring and fall. There is also a special graduate publication in May. It is mailed to all members and posted online. The name GREENHOUSE was chosen to represent the type of care homeschooling parents are able to give to their children. Children are lovingly "tended" in a protected and nurturing environment until they are sufficiently mature to go out and take a place of service in the world. Letters and articles addressed to the GREENHOUSE become property of NCHE with full right to publication without further permission required. Ideas and opinions expressed in articles do not necessarily represent those of NCHE.

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GREENHOUSE to all members. NCHE is now mailing GREENHOUSE to all members. There will be three issues a year: Fall, Spring and Graduate.

NCHE Capital Fest 2017. Every odd year during the long session of the NC General Assembly, NCHE holds a special event in Raleigh to give homeschool families an opportunity to meet with their elected officials, advocate for homeschooling and learn more about state government. Capital Fest is planned for March, 2017. Details will be available in the NCHE weekly email and on the NCHE Facebook page.



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