

Homeschooling

Made Simple



Simple Life Photography

Homeschooling Made Simple

By: Mrs. Joseph Wood

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All photos are from real life moments in our home, taken by myself or my daughters: Bekah Lynn Wood and Bethany Joy Wood. Please respect their work and do not copy photos without their written permission first. Microsoft clipart used with permission

Greetings!

My name is Jeanette Wood, also known as Mrs. Joseph Wood. I am delighted to bring to life a series of books that have been in the making for many years. The *Made Simple* collection was written in hopes of making tasks and skills from the past *Made Simple* once again. I remember the books I read, and all the questions I had when we first lived off the grid. It didn't take long before I realized that some books were written by people who had never lived like I was living. They had book knowledge perhaps but no real life experience. After some searching I found books and resources that really helped, those are the resources I have listed for you to consider in this e-book. I also found people who had lived the life we were living that could give me valuable information; information I benefit from still today. I have included this real life living type of information for you to glean from. You'll also find photos of my children, husband and myself throughout the book. This is not an exclusive source of information, but rather a helpful tool that offers you all the SIMPLE information you need to get started and keep going!

Make sure you look for our other titles in the *Made Simple* collection:

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Introduction to Homeschooling:



There are countless books on homeschooling, so why do we need another? This was a question I had to pose to myself as I began this project. I've read a number of homeschool books throughout the years of our homeschooling adventure. Some are helpful for examining the heart of homeschooling, others are helpful for putting together an academic plan. Many are excellent resources and will be mentioned in this book for your reference. For this resource however, the purpose was to break down this very complex, sometimes emotional journey into steps that would allow the reader to build a foundation for their homeschooling days; a foundation that withstands the storms of life. I will show you how to address the necessary tasks so that you can enjoy the important things in life, your ministry to your family. So, grab yourself your favorite beverage (mine will be a cup of herbal tea) and join me as I open up my heart and share with you our

story, the tools that helped, the resources that were valuable, and the peaceful results that God has brought to pass by His amazing grace.

Our introduction to homeschooling started in 1988, just a few months after my oldest son, Jedidiah's, birth. I was attending a ladies church meeting when some of the older women started sharing with me why they had begun homeschooling a few years prior. I would sit and day dream about the possibility of living out my life with my son. Teaching him as we walked in the garden, climbed the apple trees, and worked in the home together. Curiosity took me on many travels to many bookstores and libraries. I would sit for hours on the bookstore floor reading titles such as, *Homeschooling for Excellence* by David and Micki Colfax, *The Christian Home School* by Gregg Harris, and any other title on the subject. We attended homeschool conventions before our son was even school age. For those of you that may not know, homeschool conventions in the early 90's consisted of people meeting together for the common purpose of encouragement and educating ourselves on the issues of home education. There were not the thousands and tens of thousands that gathered like you see today; often it was a few hundred people and sometimes just a handful of families. Church rooms were filled with parents who had questions on the legality of this "extreme" and "radical" move we were all considering. The homeschool movement has come a long way, yet I find that it has lost much of the passion, commitment, and unity that the original families started out with. Somehow we passed on the "how" of homeschooling but the "why" got lost by the way. I want to encourage you to start your homeschooling adventure with a "why" of substance. I want to equip you to stay your course because of the "why" and celebrate with you as you end this season of life seeing the "why" applied to real life, daily living. When my oldest son finally turned four, I had his curriculum picked out, paid for, reviewed, and ready to go! I spent \$500.00 that year for his pre-k curriculum only to discover that none of it met our needs. After months of trying to homeschool my husband finally said, "Jeanette, if our son dislikes school, it won't be his fault, it'll be the teachers." OUCH! I had spent hours each day trying to pound facts into his head. I used all the creative energy I had in me to teach him his letters and

All I had to show for my effort were tears, frustration, and receipts. I had to make some drastic changes if our homeschooling adventure was going to last longer than a semester. I went to the Lord in prayer and realized that it was the Lord that had knit my son perfectly. I knew that God would never require too little or too much. I also took my husband's words of wisdom and began thinking of our goals in homeschooling our son. That was the moment I decided that I wanted our homeschooling days to cultivate a relationship, not simply a graduation certificate. Many homeschool days have come and gone since that first year. In fact, we are now entering our 19th year of home education. Our family size has increased from three to eleven children, we've moved 17 times, lived off the grid in remote locations, operated our home business, adopted five children, graduated three children, cared for parents and grandparents, experienced death, loss, and made a move half way across the United States. Yet, through all these circumstances our home education has thrived.

What is Homeschooling?



For the purpose of this text, homeschooling is defined as: Parents who recognize the needs of their children academically, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Parents who actively meet those needs through prayerful planning of the academic school year at home. They provide tutors where needed, facilitate field trips accordingly, participate in co-ops if necessary, schedule testing as needed, set goals, track success, and purchase supplies and resources to meet the needs of each child within the family.

History of Homeschooling:

The history of homeschooling has been successful for thousands of years. It was in 1852 that compulsory laws requiring school attendance were introduced. The concept of homeschooling was almost forgotten. Arrogant laws were created in the 60's and 70's banning prayer in school and preventing children from reading the Bible in the classroom. The educational institution began to teach that evolution was the answer to life beginnings and made this teaching mandatory. This caused some parents to explore the time tested method of education – Homeschooling. Parents began to question the status quo and turn to the research that was being published by John Holt and Dr. Raymond Moore. In the 80's there were a handful of families that went against all odds to home educate their children. Children were removed from the public school system, legal battles were fought, little support was available, and few curriculum suppliers accessible to the general public. However, with the Lord's blessing, and a steadfast commitment these families plowed the way to educational freedom. By 1983, there was a legal defense organization for homeschool families called Homeschool Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). State statutes and regulations were adopted each year and the homeschool movement grew abundantly. When our family came along to homeschooling in the early 90's, many of these pioneer families were sharing through literature as well as at meeting places and churches. I remember Gregg Harris, Karen Andreola, Richard Wheeler, and others who were instrumental in introducing our family to a biblical way of education – Home Education. The atmosphere these and other pioneer homeschool families created was one of great respect, unity in purpose, and commitment to parents personal responsibility to train up their children. In fact, in Michael Smith's own words he states,

“Just as our founders were courageous in their battle for freedom, so were the homeschool pioneers in their battle for the freedom to homeschool. America owes a great debt of gratitude to the pioneers of the homeschool movement. As we celebrate freedom, HSLDA salutes the thousands of homeschool parents who risked going to jail, and even the loss of their children, to establish this freedom for the hundreds of thousands of homeschool parents today.” (The Washington Times Op-ed—Homeschooling Pioneers Deserve Thanks for Efforts)

Homeschooling Is It Legal?

“Is that even legal?” is probably one of the top five questions asked of homeschooling families while in conversations with others. It’s a legitimate question that often comes from concerned family and friends who are not familiar with homeschooling. There are several common questions that homeschool families are asked. I’ve seen and heard many mothers getting frazzled with the socialization question, the legality question, the ‘what about being a witness to public school children question’, and many other questions and comments. I understand the frustration, yet I also realize that most of the time those questions came from sincere hearts that just don’t understand what we are doing. It can be difficult to cheerfully obey what God’s put on our hearts when we want the approval of family and friends. However, we know that we will only be blessed when we walk in obedience to the Lord. We must want God’s approval more than man’s; when we do, these questions won’t bother us quite so much and we’ll find them as excellent opportunities to share of God’s work in our lives. Know why you homeschool, know the issues and be ready to give an answer for the decision that you have prayerfully made. It’s important that we keep abreast of our current laws, freedoms, and restrictions in homeschooling our children. Don’t expect someone else to make the phone call, write the letter, or support the attorneys that sacrifice much of their time for the homeschooling freedoms we enjoy. In general, homeschooling is legal within the United States and Canada. However, where you live may dictate some specific requirements. For example, some states require testing, teacher qualifications, and other paperwork. Don’t take someone’s word for it; be safe and make sure you have the facts! There have been battles, victories and losses within the homeschool movement. If you live within the United States or Canada contact Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) and ask them what is needed to ensure that you are homeschooling within the laws of the land. HSLDA is a non profit organization of families who home educate their children. They have been actively protecting the parents rights to homeschool since the early 80’s. For a yearly fee (or you can join as a lifetime member) HSLDA will provide you with professional legal representation regarding homeschooling and keep you up to date on legal issues that effect your freedom to homeschool. I strongly encourage you to visit HSLDA (and join them!) they have a great wealth of information online. You can click on the graphic above to be taken to the HSLDA website. You may also want to check with your state homeschool associations for helpful information. State associations can be found by visiting: HSLDA’s [Home School Organizations](#) page. Here is a helpful YouTube video to learn more about HSLDA’s history, purpose and work: [Learn more about HSLDA](#)



Getting Started With Homeschooling:

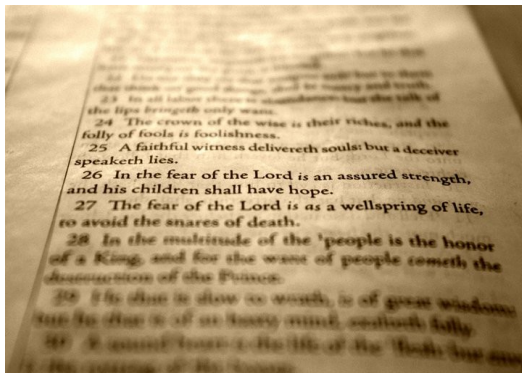
Every school establishment, no matter if it is private, public, or home, must have three established elements: a philosophy, their curriculum, and their method. This may seem intimidating to you if you are new to home education. However, I will show you how to simply define your homeschool philosophy, pick your curriculum, and define your method to education at home. It's important that we don't pick the curriculum before we define our philosophy. Before we dive into the wealth of resources available we need to carefully prepare the foundation of our homeschooling adventure. First, we need to solidify our "why," define our purpose, and discover our goals. Secondly, we need to evaluate our personal needs, family needs, and student needs. Lastly, we need to determine our school schedule, homeschool style, and curriculum.

Why Homeschool?

I recognize that the "why" of homeschooling varies from home to home. For our family, we didn't homeschool because home educated children win spelling bees, science fairs, or have better social skills. Simply put, we homeschool out of obedience to the Lord. As a young mom I began to read the Bible for instruction for the details in our home. I read through the Scriptures from cover to cover, and studied the Word as directed in 2 Timothy 2:15. It didn't take long for me to realize that there was absolutely no biblical support for parents sending their children off to school. In fact, I found multiple references that gave me reason to believe it was in the home that God wanted instruction passed down. Deuteronomy 6:6-8 *"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."* (KJV) How would I train my children if they spent the majority of their waking hours away from me, away from the home? We continued to pray and our "why" began to develop. We knew there would be days that challenged our confidence in the call to homeschool. We had to give prayerful attention to developing our "why" which, in return, gave us a powerful educational philosophy. I am thankful that the Lord had prepared my husband's heart and mine for the idea of homeschooling long before it was presented to us. We desired to work together, live together, and have all our best friends reside within our own home. We daily work towards that goal and carefully guard it still today! Because of this, the process of how I came to my "why" may look much different than yours. My only word of caution to you is that you make sure that you root your "why" on Truth. If you base it on anything else, your educational foundation for homeschooling will eventually crumble. Don't just grab one or two Bible verses that fit the moment either. **Study the Word.** Examine the lives of those that feared God. Learn from their mistakes, success and see the mercy of God that reveals its self. Spend your time on this project. Join your husband in prayer, come together in agreement, submitting to the Lord's will and write out your "why". You won't regret the final result. As we walked in obedience over the past 19 years, our "why" has not changed, only solidified through each experience. I believe that the "why" behind each family's decision of home education will prove powerful in the success or failure of their homeschooling days. What's your "why" for homeschooling?

ACTIVITY: Talk with your husband and write out your "why" to homeschooling. Talk about it, pray about it, post it somewhere visible in the home. On those challenging days, or simply forgetful days, read it, and remember the importance of the "why".

Homeschooling with Vision



Proverbs 29:18 Where *there is* no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he. Once you've prayerfully pondered your "why" behind homeschooling, I encourage you to take a look at the long road ahead and not just the short term. The Scriptures warn us about neglecting vision. Develop the vision for your homeschool decision. Consider how it will impact your family legacy, not just this year but the next year, and five years after that, twenty after that, and so forth. Consider for a moment how your "why"

to homeschool will actually impact generations that are yet to be born. Take the blinders of the moment off and really consider the years ahead, even after you're gone. We must not simply live in the moment. We must not be so blind with the 'to do' list of today that we fail to dream, plan and purposely live to impact tomorrows. If this is new to you, it could seem overwhelming to even consider such a thought; I know from personal experiences how hard it can be to think that somewhere in-between the morning dishes, the fourth load of laundry, and the repeat math lesson, that eternity is being impacted. Oh, but it is!! Our children are watching and learning from us each moment we're with them. They are learning to surrender to the Lord by watching me crucify my flesh daily. I am impacting lives I will never meet because my children learned that the mission field is first within our home, then our community, and the world. **Homeschooling is about so much more than math lessons; it's about pouring ourselves unselfishly into the lives of our family, for His purpose.** It's about preparing and equipping them to live for the glory of God on a daily basis. Children will never learn this in a book lesson, a summer camp, or a weekly Sunday school class. They gain this knowledge from their personal observation of Sinners (their parents) working out their faith with fear and trembling. We all know they will learn more by our actions than they will ever learn by our words. That thought alone should make us all wake up and walk humbly through our day covered with amazing Grace. Take some time to evaluate what you're going to teach your children to teach their children. What do you want them to carry to the next generation? Write out your vision and refer to it as needed. Pray over it and ask God to reveal the specifics. He is faithful!

Evaluating the Needs in the Home:

Each year, it's critical for us to evaluate the needs of each individual in the home as well as the family unit combined. In our home, we take time to hear my husband's vision for the family, his goals for the year and his desires for each of us. We typically do this on Father's Day weekend; it's a tradition we started several years ago and have enjoyed ever since. Being purposeful about our days, our homeschool year, and our family mission has helped us accomplish a great deal more than we would have otherwise. I have written down the three main areas we consistently address: personal evaluation, family evaluation, and student/child evaluation. I will review each of these main areas in more depth, explaining how we break them down into subcategories that have daily application. I've also included some forms to assist you in the evaluation process. Let's first take a look at the personal evaluation and consider how we can improve in our ministries at home.

Personal Evaluation— As wives we can fall into two different traps when we finally make time for personal evaluation. One, we can refuse or make excuses for any shortcomings we have or two, we fail to see that we have any talents to offer. Both are problematic because they fail to recognize the power of God in our lives. The first allows excuses to keep us from acknowledging our need to call upon the Lord for help. We would rather say, “If only my husband was like...” or “I could never homeschool my children, I’m not good at math,” or “I don’t have the patience,” “I’m not organized enough to homeschool my children,” and a multitude of other excuses! I agree, homeschooling can be an overwhelming task to consider and honest personal evaluation can be heart wrenching at times. Not because the goals of homeschooling are unattainable, but rather because it stretches each one of us out of our comfort zone. Homeschooling requires us to acknowledge our weaknesses and seek positive ways to minimize them. It also requires that we know where and how to maximize on our strengths. I am confident that if you make a point to prayerfully consider your weak areas, as well as your strengths, it will help you find the direction you need for your homeschool planning. Make sure you talk about this with your husband and gain his insight. Often our husbands can see things differently than we do. I’ve found my husband to see a strength in me that I wasn’t aware of. He’s also been there to point out my areas for needed growth that I have been ignoring. Personal evaluation should be just that, personal. God is unique and how He works in my life is personal, intimate and specific. I want to open my ears to hear his unique plan for me as I prepare to teach and train His people on a daily basis. Perhaps our school days won’t look as creative as the next person’s, but that is no excuse for us not to teach our children. Maybe I will have more papers across the kitchen table than the other homeschool moms and maybe I’ll hit the snooze button on the alarm clock more the others. **The fact still remains that God created me to be the mother to these specific children.** He has equipped me and when needed given me a network of resources so that I can provide the educational experience my child needs. The problem occurs when we forget that we have been personally fashioned for our family by the hand of God. He knew the husband, children, lifestyle, finances, and resources we would have and created us perfectly to meet each need under these conditions. You were created for such a time as this! Take some time and evaluate your weaknesses and strengths without excuses or blinders. Once you’ve completed the evaluation, begin dreaming about your homeschool day and what you want it to look like. Keep in mind we can not change other people; that’s only the work of the Lord. We, however, can change us by His strength. We can change our responses to trials and our ignorance to all of our blessings. As women, we have the ability to cultivate homes that are peaceful, beautiful and simple! Yet, the reality is that there are times when life isn’t very peaceful, beautiful, and all too often far from simple. What do we do in those seasons of life? How do we create moments in our home that are God glorifying, build relationships and grow rich character in each family member? Let me share with you a moment from my journey. I remember a time we lived off the grid. My husband sold our dream home and purchased us a remote piece of land, high in the Sierras. We were living in a tent with five children until my husband could build us a cabin. There were days that I felt very discouraged; my whole life changed overnight. I had to cook over a fire and wash clothes in a creek; everything was a challenge to keep clean and the list could go on and on. I remember telling God, “If only I had my kitchen table and tea cups again so we could meet each morning for devotions”. I use to call that time, “Tea with God”. My children knew if they awoke early and saw mommy at the table praying to just wait until my quiet time was over. Now, there was no quiet time, the children woke when I did,

Personal Evaluation:

[illegible]

2 Corinthians 12:9

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

[illegible]

there was no table, and the tea cups were packed away. How do I create that beautiful moment I once treasured? Well, after prayer, the truth occurred to me that God wasn't interested in the "perfect" moments I created with Him. He just wanted my attention no matter where I was. That began a year-long visit with God under the oak tree. I still recall those moments when I would cry out for strength, understanding and love for my family. It was under the oak tree that God met me each day as I came to read of His word, pray and ponder on His faithfulness. I began to see simple things I could make beautiful like the branch from a cedar tree I used to make a beautiful wreath for winter. Story time before I tucked the children into their sleeping bags each night, or the small Yankee Candle that I would burn next to me while I washed my dishes with water warmed over the fire. I found ways to cultivate beautiful moments while I served my family. I know you can too.

ACTIVITY: Take some time to write out your personal areas of struggle making sure to list some solutions to those areas. Also note your strengths and how you could use those to enrich your children's education. I have included a form to assist you with this project, I like to call 'Teacher Evaluation' on the next page. Make sure you discuss your thoughts with your husband and humbly receive his words of wisdom as well. The only 'rule' I have is that you can't write down a weakness unless you write down at least one solution.

Family Evaluation— As I explained earlier, my husband shares his vision for our family each year. He talks about what he wants to see in each of us, in our home, and so forth. However, for this project we typically work together. I come along side him and offer him insights that I have. If we're busy working on some serious character issues with children, we'll take that into account when planning activities we are committing to. We acknowledge our limitations as a family, and make the needed adjustments. If we have upcoming family events that we're aware of, we write out what we foresee as far as the time and personal commitment they will take from us. For example, a pregnancy, adoption, a move, new duties in the home, family business, adding farm animals, or taking on a position at Church or in our community. These are all things we consider as we prepare to start our homeschool year. There have been times that things came up we didn't plan for. In those moments we recognize the importance of flexibility and know that His plan is always the perfect plan for our family. If try to keep doing things my way when God seems to be shutting doors it only causes frustration on my part. I've learned through the years to joyfully, willingly, set aside what I might have planned and follow His leading. We try to anticipate situations, we look ahead and consider how they might impact our homeschooling day. We also discuss and agree to what we will be saying "no" to. All successful homeschooling moms have learned the vital need to say "no". Don't be caught off guard and find yourself volunteering (or being volunteered) for new things within your school year. Set limits and guard your homeschool schedule. Make sure that you're realistic, consider your limitations and decide what your homeschooling year is going to look like. If you're not sure about your limitations, talk to your husband. Our husbands know our limitations better than we do. Ask him if he thinks you're overcommitted and what he would suggest you eliminate or rearrange so that you can manage your time wisely.

HOME EVALUATION:

Year: _____

Commitment	Time Required	Special Considerations	Impact on School day?

Use the chart above to consider the commitments, projected events, or home dynamics that may impact your school schedule. By doing this you can make adjustments to your school schedule or teach creatively around the event. Homeschooling gives us so many options and freedom in teaching our children. For example, a move may make book work a challenge therefore, I can use that time of the move as part of our non school days or I can adjust the pages of book work the children do before and after the move so they stay on track. I could also consider the move as part of their school by taking field trips along the way. Taking the children to the chamber of commerce to learn about the community, visiting historical landmarks, learning map skills as they help navigate the way, without the GPS, and the list could go on. If you expect to be pregnant in the school year, you can give yourself some cushion in your school year by extending your start/stop dates so that you can take “sick” days as you need. You could also have the children doing studies to complement this season of life. Topics such as early childhood development, CPR, anatomy, whatever would be age appropriate and acceptable for your home would be beneficial. Think creatively and make plans with prayerful consideration. Thinking ahead about your family and home needs can be instrumental in your success.

Proverbs 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

- **Student Evaluation** – We’ve evaluated ourselves, the family as a unit, and now we must evaluate each child in the home. Joe and I do this project with the use of large index cards. We simply write the child’s name, grade, age and then the four areas we are focusing on: Spiritual, Academic, Physical and Emotional. We try to keep these goals for each area of interest simple. I want to use these cards as a point of reference throughout the year so I know we’re on target. These are general yet specific goals for example: under “spiritual” I will address a character I am wanting to see in my child, such as self control. I will then list a few verses that I might talk about with the child, areas of needed encouragement such as “self control when playing with siblings,” or “self control at the dinner table”. I might also list creative training tips I want to implement to help reach this goal. For Academic, I may put, “learn to read” or “finish all of his book work within the scheduled school year.” When we address the ‘physical’ area, we talk about our child’s physical health, the need to exercise and ways to do that, sports we will or will not participate in. We might also address nutrition under this category. There have been years that this process was quite time consuming and other years it seemed to crystal clear to both of us. The important thing was that we came together as a couple to develop a plan, set goals and pray for our children and their specific needs.

ACTIVITY: Using the form provided, or on index cards, write out your goals for each of your children in the four areas of interest. Take time to pray about the specifics. We must be confident that these aren’t our ideas but are truly God’s ideas and his perfect timing for the child to achieve these things. As your children get older review the goals with them, listen to their feedback, and have them join you in prayer regarding their evaluations.

We’ve considered our “why”, discovered our vision, and completed our evaluations. Now, with God’s grace, we have a solid homeschool foundation to build our homeschool days upon. It is critical that all the details we bring into the day, the schedule, the curriculum and all the activities must be of a substance worthy of this carefully built foundation. I am reminded of *Proverbs 14:1 Every wise woman buildeth her house; but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands*. Isn’t it interesting that the Scriptures warn us of this foolish woman that plucks down her very own home. There are so many practical ways we can do this each day from unkind speech, bad time management, choosing that which is a time robber instead of investing our time into our family. It is vital, as the women of the home, for us to carefully guard our homes and be purposeful about building them up. If you rarely consider building your home I would suggest you’re plucking it down with very little notice as well! Be wise dear Sister and purpose each moment of your day to build up your home so that it declares the Glory of Go to all that pass by. In our home we call this “guarding the peace”. I am very diligent about the peace in my home. Don’t get me wrong, there are times my home is noisy, but it’s a rare occasion to hear strife in the home. I’ve learned to say “no” to opportunities that would disguise themselves under this mask of beauty yet rob our family of peace. Perhaps it’s just not the right timing for us, or the right event, I don’t know. Yet, I have seen the fruit of learning to say “no” even when it was difficult, and I’ve been delighted with the results. Guarding the peace in your home takes an active role from everyone involved. In our home, we’ve learned to communicate and develop relationships with each other that are built on real love. It is my opinion that if you want to achieve homeschooling days of substance then you must homeschool with eternity in mind!

STUDENT EVALUATION:

Child's Name: _____

Age: _____ School Year: _____ Grade: _____

Goals:

Spiritual	
Academic	
Emotional	
Physical	

NOTES:

[illegible]

This is a simple form that Joe and I made up years ago by simply using large index cards. We would go away for the weekend and devote our time to conversation and prayer for each of the children. I encourage you to find time to discuss these goals with your husband and write them down for each child. It may take some time at first but it will save you much time later. You will want to use this as a reference throughout the year to keep you from derailing in your homeschool adventure!

Homeschooling with Eternity in Mind

I'll never forget an early morning, autumn walk through the woods, praying to the Lord about our homeschooling days for the upcoming year. Was I making the right choices? Committing to the right activities? Expecting too little or expecting too much? I had so many thoughts and questions as I talked with the Lord. I can still remember the way the dew glistened off the leaves that had already started to fall. I felt a pressing need to get answers for the multitude of questions that I had and yet all the answers seemed so far for me to even reach. Walking with my head down, observing the nature beneath my feet, I started to realize something my husband had been trying to convey for months, "Homeschooling decisions become simplified when I put them into perspective with eternity." I asked myself, "What would I want the Lord to find me teaching the children if He was to return at this very moment?" As I pondered this question another question came to mind, "What do I need to teach them today so they are equipped to lead their homes in a God glorifying manner tomorrow?" At first the answer to these questions seem as if they contradict each other and yet, they don't. Because our God is a personal and intimate God He is going to lead each of us in details that are different and yet the goal remains consistent. We're to be teaching our children what we would want Him to find us teaching if He returned in the next moment. God wants us to raise up children equipped to lead Godly homes. So how do we sort through all the fine details and achieve these two objectives. For myself, I found it came through simplifying. I began to simplify our home schedule and our school schedule. I began to realize the quietness I had missed. In my error I had filled every free moment I had with something. Play dates at the park, visits to the museum, field trips across the state. If I had "extra" time I thought that meant I could say "yes" to the next opportunity that presented itself. How wrong I was. Those quiet moments of transitioning from breakfast to Bible study and Bible study to spelling lessons is where the relationships were being built at ground level. It was when we were remaining at home, day in and day out, that I started seeing character issues I had missed in the past because we were so busy running from here to there. I began to see the needs in my home and understand how I could answer both these questions simultaneously with great success. I encourage you to answer these two questions for yourself before you schedule your school year and pick your curriculum. The applied answer to these questions will bring clarity to your homeschooling days providing you with focus which leads to productivity. Take a look at your homeschooling plans with an eternal perspective and set your goals accordingly. Does this curriculum, activity, lesson plan, yearly schedule fulfill the unique needs within your home so that you are staying eternally focused through the homeschool adventure? You've heard me mention several times now, "homeschool adventure" that's really what it is; an adventure, a journey, for the entire family involved. It's so much more than just math lessons and science projects. Enjoy!

Developing a Yearly Schedule:

Using all the information I've gathered through the process of evaluation, goal setting and sharing of our family vision I can create a rough draft of our school year calendar. I've always found it best to use a yearly calendar and begin marking out the days that I know we have events happening or holidays we want to observe. It was my second year of homeschooling when I mentioned to my husband in conversation, "You know this school year really throws me off schedule with all the holidays. We start in September and we are moving along just fine when we start having birthday's in October (four

Developing Your Homeschool Philosophy

Why do I homeschool?

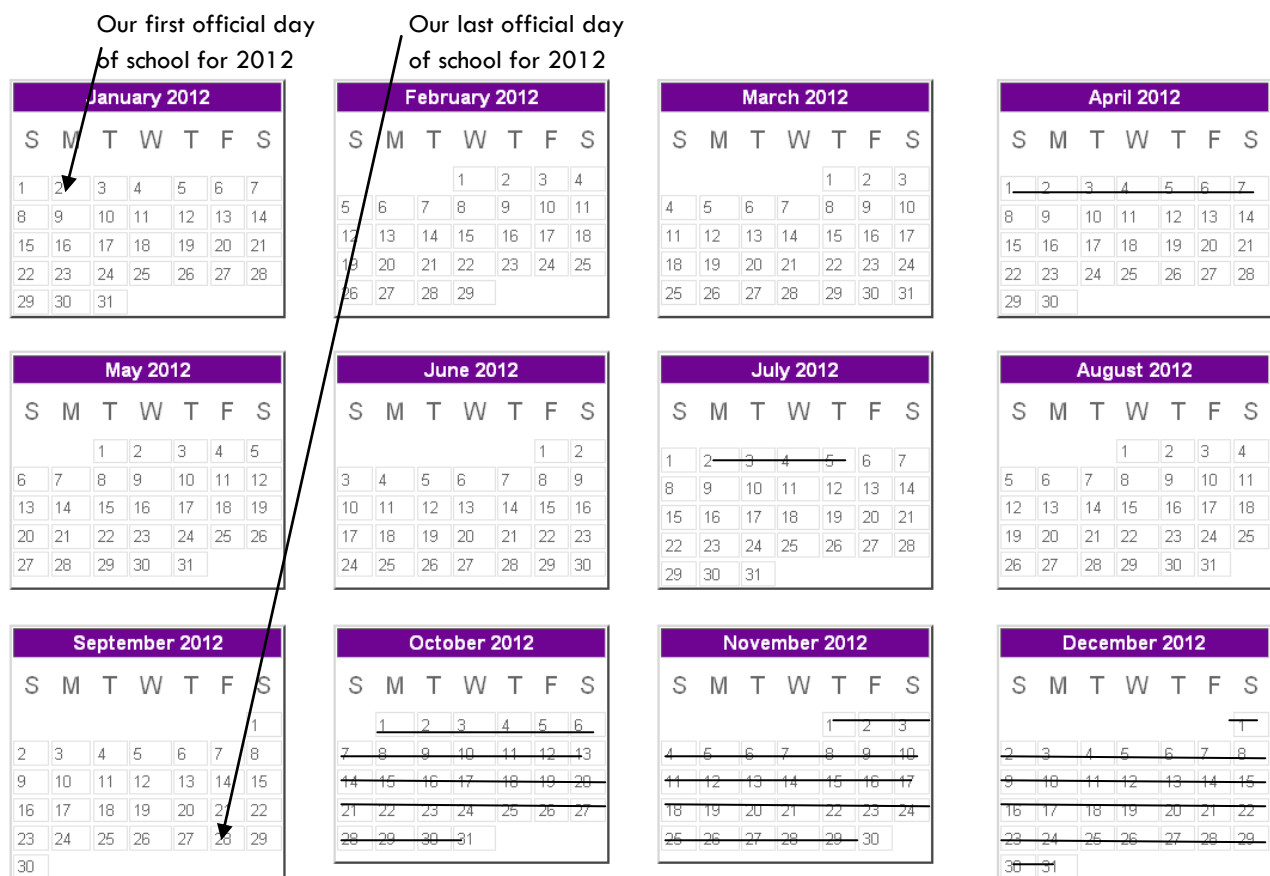
What is our Homeschool Vision?

Homeschooling with Eternity in Mind?

What do you want God to find you doing today if He was to return?

What do you need to teach your children today so they are equipped for tomorrow?

of our family members have birthdays scattered throughout the month). I can make it through that okay and then we stumble across Thanksgiving. I have projects that are related to the season I try to incorporate into our days but as soon as that's over we have parties and cookie exchanges and other activities we want to do for Christmas.” As I sat pouring out my woe’s he calmly answered, “So why don’t you start school in January and go through till September instead?” “WHAT?!” I had never even considered such a concept. That was 17 years ago when we first had that conversation, and 17 years ago when we began homeschooling from January till September “officially”. In reality, we usually school year around. Freedom to design a homeschool schedule that meets the specific needs of our home has been an incredible blessing to our family. I would encourage you to evaluate your family needs and set a yearly schedule that meets your specific needs. I have included an empty calendar for you to make copies of and consider as you plan your 2012 school year. I have also given you a sample of what my calendar might look like for 2012. The days with a strike through them are days that I don’t have as official school days therefore, I don’t have to keep track of subjects and attendance during this time. We do still do learning activities. It’s just with the holiday’s and birthday celebrations this gives me a break from the paperwork. Typically, people conduct 160-190 school days. Check with your state homeschool group and ask what is required in your area. For our family, we will work on a 186 school day schedule Conducting our official school days to Monday-Friday even though we often do school work on Saturdays also. On average, this means that we are doing school 20-23 days a month. You will also notice that I did not leave myself “extra” days to make up for sick or days absent from school. This is because we operate our homeschool on a six day schedule even though we only keep records officially for a five day week schedule. This allows me to easily adjust for any missed or sick days that might come up. If you have questions regarding your proposed school year, you can always ask us on our [Made Simple Series](#) page. We delight in helping you succeed in the duties at home.



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Your Homeschooling Method

There are several different teaching methods that are popular in the homeschooling movement. Personally, I do not hold onto any one way of learning as the “right” way. As I discussed earlier, each home is unique and should be operating as such. I believe we do ourselves an injustice when we try to apply a cookie cutter approach to our teaching/learning style. Not only are families different, but members within the same family are unique in their learning style and needs. We are wise to hold loosely to the “methods” of homeschooling and simply homeschool each child as they personally need. I have my preferred methods of teaching. I have based my method of teaching off of my research on how children learn, the understanding of my children personally, along with the vision and “why” of our homeschool. When you establish your method of home education whether it is a traditional/conventional textbook method or an ‘unschooling’ approach you must first evaluate your “why” and examine your vision for homeschooling to determine if this method meets the goals you have set forth. You can not neglect the individuality of your children through your process of consideration. Therefore, make sure that the method you are drawn to is also the method your child will respond best to. All too often a mother has a teaching preference that her child doesn't respond to. Remember, homeschooling is about us, as the parents, reaching the heart of our children and educating the minds of our children. Even those that hold onto the same methods of education have differences in-between themselves so that they can meet the needs of the family, just the way it should be. Many years ago, Wade Hulcey, owner of [KONOS](#) unit studies once told me, “Jeanette, people must decide if they are homeschooling to provide a diploma or are they homeschooling to provide an education?” That was the first time I considered that there really was a difference; the latter, of course, produces a diploma and a life long love of learning. As I evaluated myself, I was able to refocus some of my efforts to ensure that we were homeschooling for a true education, not simply a diploma. I encourage you to exercise your freedom and make adjustments to your method of teaching so that it meets each child in your home. With that said, let me describe the most common methods of education:

Traditional/Conventional textbook: This is probably the method of education that most of us are familiar with. There are publishing companies that produce both Christian and Public texts. Each publishing company has a unique point of view. Therefore, you'll want to familiarize yourself with the publishing company you decide to use to ensure you are comfortable with their opinions. There are other questions you'll want to ask yourself also such as, “What is their scope of sequence?” “Does it appear that topics of study are built upon each other in a logical way?” and “Is the information presented with enough instruction and provide enough review of the concepts presented?” Typically, these texts with a student book, teacher manual, tests, answer keys and so forth. One of the issues with this method of education is the expense of purchasing all the required texts for your students each year. Another big issue for me, was simple reflection back on my own textbook education. “Could I recall the lessons learned or did I simply learn how to fill in the right answers?” I can hardly call the practice of regurgitated information, an education. A textbook can have its place in the homeschooling family, but this is my least favorite method of education and probably my childrens' least favorite as well. For our home, we use texts for math lessons and sometimes a child will use a text for something very specific. However, in general, it's not our preferred method of education.

Delayed Formal Academics - This is a well known method of education that delays the use of formal texts until a child is between the ages of seven to eleven years old. The idea is use the early years for hands on projects, reading aloud by their parents, and working along side the other members of the home. In hopes that this time allows the child to develop in maturity, development and reasoning before the child is expected to work out of texts. Because each child is allowed to develop at their own pace I approve of this method yet only apply it as needed. My goal in education is not to put a child in a text book. This is just one example of how we can take parts of different methods of education to find the 'perfect' method of teaching our children.

Early Childhood Academics – Is the opposite in theory of the Delayed Formal Academics. They take the stance that forming a child's character and academic development must happen in the early years, before the age of six. I don't believe all children are ready for this type of formal education at such a young age. Yet, I have a child that learned to read at age four and another child that learned their multiplication facts before they were five. If I have a child that is interested in learning a concept, I want to teach them when they have the interest. This leads me to the next method of education, Delight Directed Studies.

Delight Directed Studies – This concept was presented by Gregg Harris. The concept was based on the idea of parents demonstrating a delight in learning and involving their children in the process. Creating an atmosphere where children were encouraged to learn about the topics that interested them. The child's natural excitement for a subject was the driving force that created the desire to learn while parents held the responsibility to make sure the learning was taking place and holding the child accountable for their work. In our home, we've found that when our children play a role in what they are learning they learn more easily and have a personal connection to the lessons before we ever even begin. Often Delight Directed Studies uses a Unit Study approach to teaching the various areas of interest.

Unit Studies — Unit study approach is known as the integrated approach and includes science, math, geography, art, music, history, language, literature, drama and creative movement. Also known as a multi-disciplinary or a thematic approach. We have taught with a unit study approach most often in our home. I appreciate the fact that unit studies allow for the hands on style to learning that children enjoy. Children typically, enjoy "doing" as they are learning. The lessons taught using the unit study approach are lessons that my children still recall as their favorites today. There are many unit study publishers, in fact, you can create your own unit study if you're ambitious and enjoy that type of creative work. I've made up unit studies for our family several times throughout the years. However, I always come back to my favorite unit study publisher, [KONOS](#). Perhaps, the greatest reason for my complete satisfaction with KONOS stems from the Hulcy's passion to assist homeschooling families to train their children in Godly character. I also appreciate the fact that many of the methods incorporated within KONOS were developed from their understanding of Charlotte Mason's philosophy. The unit study approach is most often a very affordable approach to homeschooling, especially multiple grade levels. Typically it takes longer to prepare for than the textbook method. It incorporates "living books" and is easily done in co-op settings where families can share the learning experience and responsibilities with one another.

Charlotte Masson Approach— Based off of the teacher, author, and lecturer in England in the late 19th and early 20th century. Mrs. Mason thought that children learned best if they were offered experiences in nature and activities that were clear, realistic, and produced a reasoning in the child of desire for a “noble character”. Freedom of exploration balanced with routines and disciplined habits created learning environments where she observed children thriving. I love to read the work of Charlotte Mason. In fact every year, since Karen Andreola first published her book, *A Charlotte Mason Companion: Personal Reflections on The Gentle Art of Learning*, I have set time aside for me to read through it, ponder, refocus and be encouraged. It is absolutely one of my most favorite books throughout our experience of homeschooling our children. My husband can tell you of multiple country drives where I would read excerpts or entire chapters to him as we discussed our desires for the children’s education. I would strongly encourage anyone who hasn’t read this book to consider doing so.

Ruth Beechick’s Approach— This approach created a balance between the early and delayed approach to education. She presented age appropriate skills for the parent to teach the child based off of their readiness of the child to formal learning. Dr. Beechick recommended “living books” for learning instead of dead textbooks and believed firmly that children learned best at home under the loving instruction of their parents. I have listed some of her books in the resource section of this book. I started out my early homeschooling days reading the three books she had published at the time, today she has other resources available that you might also find beneficial.

Principle Approach— The principal approach to homeschooling approaches each area of study with a clear Christian world view. Applying seven principals to all areas of study (individuality, self government, Christian character, conscience, government, local self-government, and political union) and incorporating a 4-R method of study: research, reason, relate, and record. Don’t think for a moment that this is just an approach to learning history, it’s not. It is a very in-depth approach to learning that would take more time than I have here to present. I encourage you to investigate it and consider it’s value in your homeschool plan.

Classical Approach— Based off the book, *The Well-Trained Mind A guide to Classical Education at Home* by Susan Wise Bauer. This method of education maintains that a child matures in prescribed stages that correspond to a “trivium” drawn from the Middle Ages. Grammar, logic, and rhetoric are taught at age appropriate levels. This method of study incorporates, memorization, research, logic, and the ability to express thoughts in a clear and conscience way through writing and speech. Latin is taught at the beginning of third grade and children are taught to read fluently prior to first grade.

Unschooling— The unschooling approach typically follows the philosophy of John Holt who suggested that children should be allowed to learn without the interference of parents or other adults. My concerns with this method of education is the lack of respect for the authority in the home. In the Delight Directed approach to education children were given the freedom to learn subjects that were of interest to them and still remain in submission to their parents. Unschooling may be used without the user knowing it’s humanistic roots that should be of great concern to the Christian home. There have been times when we allowed children to step back from our more structured homeschool schedule so they could develop in maturity or reasoning before proceeding. I still wouldn’t refer to that as unschooling but I suppose some might.

There are other methods of study: Eclectic, Montessori, Thomas Jefferson and the list could go on. I know many of us glean ideas and concepts from multiple methods and then incorporate them into the ‘perfect’ method of instruction for our own homes. As you review your homeschool vision and schedule you can easily eliminate certain methods that would not compliment your home. It is vital to make sure that you are not selecting a method of education that will unravel the homeschool vision you and your husband have established for the home. The vision of homeschooling, and the “why” behind your homeschooling should always take precedence over the method or curriculum. In other words, if adjustments need to be made, make those changes to your method and curriculum, not your vision or “why”. This of course, is under the assumption that you’ve developed your “why” and vision with great care and prayerful consideration. Use the form, “Choosing a Method of Education that Works” to brainstorm and evaluate the methods that are of interest to you. Once you’ve chosen a method of instruction you can start looking for curriculum that will meet your needs.

Choosing a Curriculum that Counts

Choosing curriculum can be a fun, intimidating, rewarding, expensive, and at times frustrating experience. Before you dive into the abundant options for homeschool curriculum, talk with your husband about your budget and how much you feel comfortable spending for the year. Also, take time to look through the variety of curriculums available, read reviews and talk to friends. If possible get your hands on a copy and spend time evaluating its worth in meeting your family needs. Just a few years ago, I purchased a text book that I typically don’t use for one of my children. I made sure it was published by a Christian company and read that companies statement of faith. However, shortly after my child began their lessons “tips” were scattered throughout the book suggesting the ‘power of positive thinking’ to such a degree that we were not comfortable. That could have been avoided if I would have been able to look through a copy of a friends, or at a convention. Here are some practical steps of evaluation to assist you in finding a curriculum that counts:

- Examine your homeschool method and determine if this curriculum will fit within the parameters of your method of education.
- Does this curriculum meet the goals we have established in our personal, family and student evaluations?
- Does the curriculum hold fast to the convictions and Biblical worldview that we embrace? For example, does this curriculum support a young earth?
- Is the curriculum focused on Godly character or do I find hints of materialism encouraged? Does it support the family authority or undermine it? Especially look at the message it gives silently regarding the father’s role in the home and relationships between siblings.
- Does the curriculum fall within the boundaries of financial limits you have previously established for your budget?

Choosing a Method of Education that Works!

[illegible]

NOTES:

Use this space to consider how to implement the best of each method you feel would work well with your homeschooling vision.

[illegible]

In Conclusion:

Curriculum is not the only thing I am buying and evaluating each year. I'm also making purchases to increase our family library. In fact, most of my purchases would fall into this category and very little would look like "official" curriculum. I enjoy using "living books", taking road trips and learning from informed and interesting people along the way. I've mentioned on more than one occasion the term "living books". Perhaps this would be the best time to define what type of book I am referring to as, "living books". "Living books" are books written by knowledgeable authors in such a way as to excite a love of knowledge by the reader. When a child finishes reading a "living book," they are inspired to know more on the topic or completely satisfied with the information they have received. They close the book with a joyful sigh, as if they just finished with a tall mug of hot cocoa, they are completely content. "Living books" were first discussed by Charlotte Mason in her Original Homeschool Series and are used in our home as tools for learning. They assist us in teaching concepts and principals so that we can present a real account of a time in history and not just a lesson in history. Yes, most of my spending each year is on "living books" and online tours of real life people visiting real life places. My children always feel like they've attended the adventure themselves and chat for months about the information they read or heard. We listen to CD's filled with exciting drama and yet, they have scattered throughout them real scientifically, historically. accurate information. For this example, I am thinking of the [Jonathan Park Series](#) that my boys enjoy listening to each night before bed. You can review the series at [Vision Forum](#). I use a multitude of resources that I've found through Vision Forum for our homeschooling days. Our "why" for homeschooling, and the vision we have for our homeschooling days presented itself in such a way as to cultivate this type of method for learning. Your "why" may present a different style of learning. Keep yourself focused on that foundation you carefully built and buy your curriculum that will compliment your desires and goals.



Let's Talk Recordkeeping:

If discovering our “why”, developing our vision, and establishing our days with eternity in mind makes up the foundation of our homeschooling days then recordkeeping should be considered one of the pillars that keep our days, weeks and years, from falling all around us. What records we keep and how we keep our records will vary depending on our unique style of homes, personality, as well as our geographical location. Each state requires different records that you must keep in order for us to remain in compliance. If you are establishing your own private school then it is vital that you contact your local [state homeschooling association](#) and/or the [Homeschool Legal Defense Association](#) for assistance. State associations often offer homeschooling manuals that are filled with information on recordkeeping and homeschooling as it applies in your particular state. Recordkeeping is among one of the reasons that many families decide to join distance learning programs or local homeschool groups that operate as ISP's. An ISP is a private school which files one affidavit on behalf of all the members of the group. They typically have requirements that must be met for you to continue participation with them. You'll still have recordkeeping to complete however, it would be less than what you would have if you operated as your own private school. Often ISP's overlook your work to make sure it is meeting your state standards. This could be an excellent option for new homeschool families. For our family, we have always filed our own affidavit, operating as a private school. I remember a dear Sister in the Lord sitting down with me to explain how to keep all the needed records for state compliance. The thought of a school description and policy seemed overwhelming to me. Picking a school name, filing the school affidavit, determining our course of study, writing out our branches of study to be taught, much less writing out my teacher qualifications, all had my brain swimming. Little by little and with the assistance of others who had homeschooled before me, I was able to complete all that was needed. I've learned that I love for things to be organized in a large 3 ring binder. Binders work for me! I love pulling from my desk top the correctly labeled binder and finding all my bills, insurance, utilities company and so forth. My homeschool binder keeps things neat and orderly for my quick reference. As I've learned to be a ‘professional’ home manager (no degree or study in the subject just 25 years of hands on application) I have learned the value of having everything orderly so my family can easily access what they need when they need it! I imagine this topic could be an e-book all in itself. For the purpose of this book we are going to deal with just the basics of recordkeeping. No matter what your state laws are we can all benefit from keeping three basic forms up to date and current. You will need to keep attendance, a daily planner and a sample of the work completed.

Attendance:

You've already created your proposed school year calendar. Now you'll find it helpful if you keep a monthly tally of your official days of school attended. In fact, many states require that you keep this type of attendance register. I have included an attendance record form for your reference. As with all the forms in this e-book, feel free to print anything that would be helpful for your personal use. Basic information should be included on your attendance sheet. Name, age, grade, academic year, along with your monthly register and key so that anyone can easily understand your record. I also like to add the total days attended for the month as well as a combined total for the year. I want to clarify this is the way I *use* to keep records. Because I have several children, and each child must have their own

Student Name _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____ School Year: _____

[illegible]

attendance record, the digital method of record keeping just made more sense and was a better way for me to manage my time. However, I am a pen and paper kind of gal. I do miss the connection of actually writing things out. I enjoy having them in a physical form that I can hold and look at. I often find myself daydreaming about the “old” nostalgic ways of recordkeeping, but when I remember the time that would be required and I quickly dismiss those ideas.

Daily Planner

The daily planner is critical to your recordkeeping success. Take some time and look around online, in school supply stores, and at homeschool conventions to make sure you get a daily planner that really fits your family needs. I remember a time when there simply wasn't a daily planner that fit my needs, so I created one! I loved that daily planner and used it successfully for several years. I had to print it out on a 11X14 sheet of paper run horizontal, but still it was perfect! Be creative and if you can't find what you need, make it yourself! I only have one word of warning, make sure you're not becoming so busy in the business of school that you fail to ever accomplish any school. There are many traps for the homeschool parent that will prevent us from ever accomplishing the vision of our homeschool days. The enemy would love to get you over committed, busy, and distracted so that you never accomplish that which the Lord has put on your heart. While I don't have space to create the exact planner I use to have, I will incorporate some of my favorite features of that daily planner and give a form that you can use for your homeschooling days.

Sample Work

Here's a great question that I get asked all the time, “How much of my child's work should I keep” I strongly encourage you to keep sample pages and pictures of projects or whatever it takes to create a documented account of your child's learning. This can be done through scrapbooking, (my favorite method of preserving sample work), removing pages from completed texts and keeping those in a file for future reference. It's always fun to see where you've come from. The children will not only appreciate the time you've put into this project but you'll have it as a memory reminder in days that follow. Because we use binders to keep organized, my children can easily take samples of their work and quickly put it in the binder after the divider that has their name. You might be asking, “What does this Homeschool binder of yours look like?” Let me answer that quickly here.

Creating a Homeschool Binder:



Like I mentioned earlier, I keep all my records in digital format with the use of Homeschool Tracker. I print out reports, lesson plans and attendance as needed to place in my binder. I can also print out my child's book reading list, memory record, field trip log and much, much more. However, I typically just print out overviews and attendance records. I've pulled out my homeschool binder and I'm going to walk you through exactly what I have in my binder and how I have it organized. I hope this can offer you a springboard of creative ideas on how you can keep records in a simple, manageable fashion with great success. When you first open my 4 inch 3 ring binder (yes, that's a huge binder), you'll see the

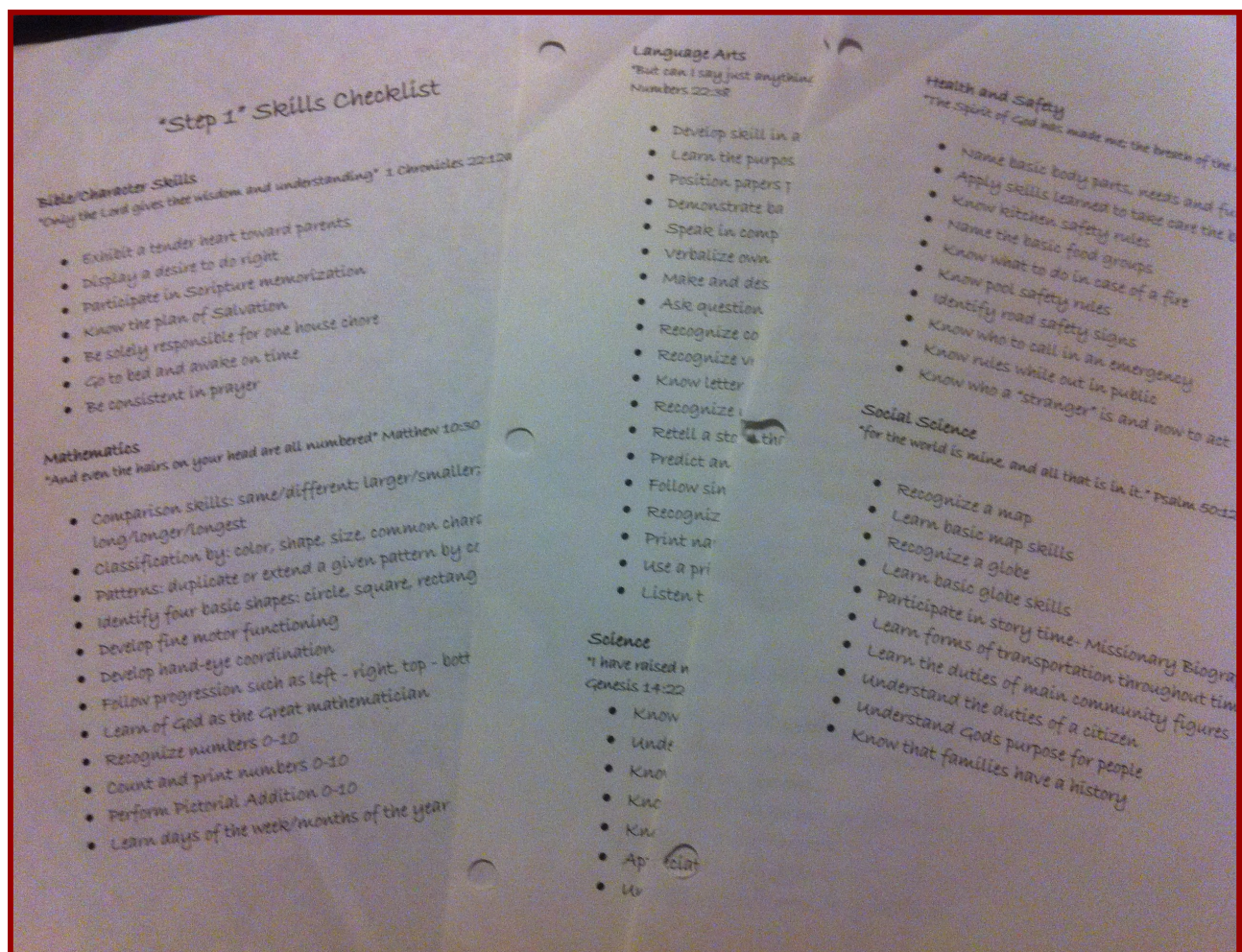
[A Checklist for Parents](#) that I first purchased back in 1992 from [Doorposts](#) this simple and inexpensive tool has offered me much encouragement and plenty of personal evaluation as I began my day! After that you'll see a tab divider labeled "Attendance" it is behind this that I keep our daily attendance as well as my projected yearly school schedule. Behind my attendance is a tab that reads, "lesson plans" it is here that I keep my weekly lesson plans and jot down all my notes on units of activity we may be doing or have done. After this I have a tab with each one of the children's names. This is where I place that index card that we've discussed in the child/student evaluation section of this book. I also keep their Skills Checklist in this section. I will explain the Skills Checklist later when we talk about, "Evaluating What Your Student Knows and Needs to Know". I also keep sample work in this section, along with tests, and any notes I might find useful for planning or needs I might see this child has. Before my digital recordkeeping days this binder also had a reading log, memorization log, library book list, field trip section where I post contacts and ideas. I also had my KONOS Compass in my binder simply because it helped me for quick reference while we worked through KONOS units we were working through. I might also have extra worksheets for math, writing prompts or other quick work I could give the children if they needed extra help in an area. Make your binder work for you! Put the items in it that will keep you focused and moving forward. Too much "stuff" will mentally weigh you down, too little and it's useless as an effective tool. Create your binder all the while keeping in mind your "why" and your vision for homeschooling. I'm confident that if you do that, it will come together perfectly! I should note that if you are your own private school this binder is separate from the binder that contains your requirements

Evaluating What Your Student Knows and Needs to Know

There are a variety of ways to track your child's development and learning. Testing, recordkeeping, and checklists can prove helpful. I know there are books written on what your child should know and when however, I've never been impressed with those. I think the greatest way to evaluate your child's progress is to first have a checklist of things you want them to learn for the upcoming year. You can look through your curriculum's scope and sequence to help you determine what concepts will be presented, also use your student evaluation that you and your husband created. Once you're done with that you'll have a starting point for your child that you'll be able to test them on at different times of the year. Take a look at the checklist I created one year for one of my preschoolers on the next page. I should mention that I keep my skills checklists so that I can use them again for other children at that age. Sometimes I have to change one or two things but in general they stay the same. In general, I probably spend 30 minutes to an hour developing a checklist for a new student/grade. It's time well spent!



I have taken a photo of my Skills Checklist for preschoolers. You'll notice that I broke up the areas of "testing" into six categories: Bible/Character Skills, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, as well as Health and Safety. I have a Scripture listed under each category that is more encouragement for me than anything else. At times I chose one of the passages the child will or has committed to memory but most often it's a Scripture that I've been focusing on. In each category I try to list a minimum of ten things this makes grading very simple. If the child misses one question or skill that's 90% missed two skills would be 80%. This quick and very unofficial method of testing allows me to see what my children really know and allows me to have some type of grade to give the test. It may be difficult to read in the picture reference so that you can create your own! Your child is unique and designed by the mighty hand of God, the same God that fashioned you while you were in your mother's womb and created you perfectly to be the wife to your husband and the mother to these specific children. I could not do a better job raising your children or even homeschooling your children for that matter. I was not created to be their mother, YOU were! Don't fall into the quick, fast and generic template for teaching or testing your children. Fast food education is not what homeschooling is suppose to be about, at least not in my book! NOTE: I realize that many states require testing, or homeschool groups require that your child completes a basic test each year. I am not "against" these tests. I only suggest that they are generic tests that do not offer specific skill testing for the individual child. If we really want to know where our child is, shouldn't the test be created in such a way that it addresses him/her as an individual and tests on what information that has been presented to them?



Three Tips to Success in Recordkeeping

- **Evaluate your preference for recordkeeping.** Would you want to keep all your records in a digital format on your computer or would written copies fit your needs best? If you think you would prefer digital recordkeeping, I strongly encourage you to use [Homeschool Tracker](#). I have used this method of recordkeeping for several years and been happy with the customer service. It's an economical option at \$49.00 for a lifetime of service and upgrades. I've had my computer crash a few times and they've been more than gracious, helping me reinstall the program on my computer. There were years that I would purchase a student schedule from the school supply store, then as our family grew I decided to create my own. Other times I decided to just keep a journal and write down our daily activities other times, I kept a very detailed scrapbook with photos and records of the year (I especially did this when the children were younger). I share this with you so you realize that recordkeeping needs to be something you're going to do, whatever that looks like, and there are several methods you could use. If it's a digital program or a home journal you're using the important issue is that you are using it.
- **Be Consistent in your recordkeeping.** Once you've discovered the recordkeeping method of your choice you need to set aside time on a daily and weekly basis to enter notes. Don't put off things until you no longer remember the specifics. Good recordkeeping is consistent recordkeeping. Create a moms night out where moms get together once a month to work on their recordkeeping and enjoy a cup of coffee together. Of course, you don't want to wait for a month before you enter in your child's daily progress. This time would just be a great way to keep accountable and finish up any unfinished notes, plan for the next month of study, fill in attendance record, and so forth. Remember: Procrastination and homeschooling are a disastrous combination.
- **Keep a record of your students work within moderation.** I remember meeting a mother over lunch one year at a homeschool convention. The topic of recordkeeping came up and we discussed methods of keeping track of our homeschool success. I'll never forget the look on her face when I told her that I tore 4 pages out of each child's bookwork or unit study when they were finished with it and put it in the file. I thought perhaps I was over doing it by the way she acted when she finally said, "I've been saving every bit of work, from every single subject." I said something to the affect that, that must be an incredible amount of "stuff" when she replied, "Yes, it's been invading my attic!" We both sat there quietly for a moment and then started laughing. Friends, keeping records doesn't have to overrun our lives! Good time management, knowing what to keep and why you're keeping it will be helpful in creating a recordkeeping system that is a tool, not a slave master.



Recordkeeping is a vital tool in the homeschooling adventure. Don't neglect this duty of homeschooling. Be diligent to give your recordkeeping ample time so that you can record all the learning that is taking place within your home. Yet, don't let recordkeeping consume your moments of motherhood to the point that you miss all the memories and joys of homeschooling.

Week of: _____ Weekly Unit/Theme _____



	Bible	Mathematics	Language Arts	History	Science/Nature Observations
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					

Scripture: _____

[illegible]

Unique Circumstances

We've talked about each home being created uniquely. However, did you realize that not only is every home unique but each year of your homeschooling will also be unique? I think we often forget this fact. We know it with our heads but somehow we forget along the way, in the middle of the our homeschooling days. Ladies, no matter how wonderful you're able to get your routine down, how organized you're able to keep your records or how long you've been homeschooling, you will never have two years exactly alike! For that matter, I doubt there will ever be two single days alike. Simply put, life happens when we homeschool. We're not in an isolated school room, in a government building with fences to keep our children in and the majority of life events out. Homeschooling happens on the front lines of life, just the way it should be! It is my firm belief that children are more spiritually, academically, emotionally and physically prepared for life if they have been homeschooled in God fearing homes. Don't look at life as a distraction, instead look at it as the canvas onto which you can paint the most beautiful picture of your homeschooling days! Use those opportunities most would call obstacles as the texture in your masterpiece. I am confident that when you learn to homeschool in the midst of life successfully, you have learned how to live successfully! Homeschooling should not be separate from our daily lives, rather it should be an intimate part of our lives. It is parents living, walking, working, loving, hurting, struggling, and overcoming right along side their children. Homeschooling happens in homes full of Sinners saved by the amazing Grace of God who is daily at work in each life. It's a place where we overlook shortcomings, it's a place to spur one another on in well doing. The type of homeschooling I'm referring to in this book is much more than an educational alternative, it's a way of life. While I list some of the most common obstacles that families face, keep in mind that each of these events have occurred in our home. I didn't write to you about something I hadn't walked through personally.

Homeschooling through Pregnancy

We were on our second year of homeschooling when my son, Elisha, was born into the family. I was put on bed rest through my pregnancy while my husband worked outside the home and I was left to care for my very active five year old boy, Jedidiah, and my full of life little two year old, Rebekah. I've often thanked the Lord that Jed was only five years of age at this critical time of our lives. School lessons really didn't take that much work from me. I could do everything we needed to do from bed. Could I do everything I wanted to do? No. I guess that is one of the tips I would like to encourage all mothers to consider, what needs to be done compared to what we want to be done. It's hard to tell the difference sometimes, I know that from personal experience. We had some fun days on the bed together. And we had some dreary days as well. When it would get that dreary feel, I would have Jed open the curtains to let the light in. Then he would open the windows allowing the breeze to make it's way through the room offering a fresh new outlook to the day. Perhaps the greatest lesson learned that year wasn't math, geography or spelling. Rather, it was the contentment that had to take place in each of us. My bouncy little girl of two years of age had to learn to be content with the basic toys and small space we had in the bedroom. Jed had to learn to be content looking out the window instead of going out to play for himself. That season only lasted a few months before Elisha was born at 26 weeks gestation. Then came the rollercoaster ride with twists, turns, falls, and emotional highs and lows that lasted for the next several months. Through this time I found that the daily planner

written in each day however, at the end of the year we had still reached our goals and kept our family on track with purpose and vision! How? Because we quickly learned what was important and what wasn't. Just a few weeks back, 18 years after this season of life, I sat in the living room with our new-born 11th child who came to us through adoption. As Elisha worked putting together the baby bassinet he said, "Thank you mom". I didn't know what he could be talking about. I asked with great interest, "Thank you for what son?" "Thank you for showing us what's really important in life. No matter how much or how little you and daddy have you always give it to protect and care for others. I'll always remember that about you and dad." I had to hold to the tears back and said, "Thank you son". We may write out lesson plans for the year, goals for the home, and to do lists for the day. However, it's in times of unique circumstances that we get to see what lessons God's written out for the family. We would be wise to embrace these lessons and not fight them like we can so often do.

Homeschooling with Toddlers

Homeschooling with toddlers in the house can be a beautiful time of life. Toddlers shouldn't be viewed as "outsiders" in the homeschooling rather, they should be included and valued for their contribution to the family as well. I think There are times in homeschooling when your children need a great deal of your attention in order to understand the concepts. What do we do in those times, when including the toddler isn't an option? Here are three helpful tips that we've used with success in our home.

- Have little ones start nap time before the older children. Then conduct lessons that take your close supervision when the little one is down for a nap. Nap times have always been something kept in our schedule. If I needed to give a lesson during nap time I made sure to keep it to a minimum, I use to set a timer for 30 minutes. After that everyone in the house laid down. I use to tell the children, Nap time isn't because you're tired it's so mommy can be a good mommy." I found this quite time helped me regroup my thoughts, take a nap myself if needed, tidy a few things up, or make some calls for my husband. I did not however, spend this time on the computer.
- A box of "school" toys just for these moments are helpful. The trick is making sure that it's something they really enjoy and they can only play with it when you're teaching lessons that need more of your attention. We keep toys separated and in plastic buckets. I can rotate the toys as needed. We never have more than a few toys available at any one time. This keeps messes to a minimum and also keeps our children more satisfied. A child that has too many options typically gets board and discontent. We wanted to present "real" toys to our children. Items that lead to imaginative play and discovery are my favorite. Animal figures, blocks, and cars are the favorite toy bins in our home.
- Don't forget to use this time as a training moment. Teach your little ones how to sit still. This is a wonderful opportunity to teach some good manners. You'd be surprised to learn that most of my infants can sit still in church. They weren't born that way, they learned how to sit quietly because we practiced at home. Make sure you reward them for good behavior and don't expect them to sit quietly for long periods of time. Keep your expectations age *and* child specific.

Homeschooling Multiple Grade Levels

Most moms are homeschooling multiple children, at multiple levels with multiple learning styles. How does one person address such a wide variety of needs in a time efficient manner? As a mom of eleven children, I understand this issue very well. I guess this is why I fell in love with KONOS. KONOS offered me a method of education that every child could do together! Hands on, auditory, visual learners all of the children could be taught the same subject together. This fit our method of education and with the emphasis on Scripture and Godly Character we felt it complimented our “why” and vision for homeschooling perfectly. I know that not everyone is going to feel comfortable with the KONOS curriculum most commonly people get overwhelmed when they look through KONOS and they don’t understand how to use it as an incredible resource and tool within your homeschooling. KONOS can make school easier, not harder. Still, there are times that I need to work with one child on a concept and the others must wait. Besides addressing any character issues that might be disrupting the peace of the home we’ve also done the following from time to time:

- Have older children teach the younger. There’s an old saying, “You don’t really know something until you can teach it.” I use this method of reinforcement in our home quite often. It’s great for older children to help the younger, they love it. We’re building relationships and learning practical skills in the process.
- Team up! If you have two children that are close in academic strengths consider having them do the same grade level and curriculum together. This can save you money, encourage them to work together and allow you more time so you can work with both of them on the same lesson.
- Be prepared. Think ahead! If you need to help a child with Algebra lessons and have another child that needs help with spelling and still another that needs to memorize their multiplication tables you can have all of them work together with just a little preparation. Have the multiplication flash cards ready so that child number two can work on that while you give the Algebra lesson, have a cookie sheet of sand for the child working on spelling words and ask them to practice all their new spelling words or the ones they missed last time. With just a little planning you can have everyone working creatively while you’re busy giving a lesson.
- Deal with disruptive behavior! Homeschooling gives us the opportunity to see our children’s weaknesses and areas of struggle much more clearly than if they were away from us eight hours a day. This is a wonderful benefit to homeschooling, in my opinion. If you have a child that is upsetting the peace in the home it needs to be dealt with. You might feel like you don’t have time, you’re not getting work accomplished but you are! There have been many days that I’ve felt like all I did was character training. I have to remind myself on those days that God had a different lesson plan written out for the day than I did.
- Most importantly relax. If you are feeling stressed you’re going to bring that to the family. Sometimes when things get real frazzled we’ll just put the lessons away for awhile and go for a walk. When we come back we’re all much more capable of completing the project with a fresh perspective!

Homeschooling Special Needs

One of the most beautiful benefits of homeschooling is that we are allowed to meet the individual need of our children. We have a variety of special needs in our children from Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Poor Vision, Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD), Physical disability, and the list could go on. The bottom line is that each of my children are unique and have unique needs that I must address as their mother and teacher. At times the special needs interfere with the traditional way of learning. We must be creative, flexible and consistently in prayer seeking God on how much to expect from our children. I've often told the children, "Just because you struggle or have this need we will never allow it to be an excuse for bad behavior." We don't allow excuses in the house, we do allow for understanding, patience and consistency. There are times the children can get discouraged that someone can do something they can't do. In those times, I've tried to encourage the children and remind them that instead of complaining, start thanking Him for the way He created you. Ask God to open your eyes to how you can serve Him exactly the way you are at this exact moment. As moms, we should remember that differences are beautiful and God wants to use us, our children, and our homes for His purpose. If we'll just let Him and stop waiting for it to be "perfect" first. I would encourage you to visit [NATHAN](#) a helpful resource for the parents of special needs children. I'm confident you can find encouragement in a variety of areas.

Homeschooling the Gifted Child

Before we deal with this topic, it's important for me that while I acknowledge the need for this label and want to address the unique needs of this child at the same time, I believe it should not be given too much value. Like most labels it can do harm to everyone involved. There is the issue of pride, artificial "wisdom" and the possibility of lost childhood days. I speak as a mother to a very Gifted child. At the age of four he could do second grade work without instruction. He was constantly counting objects, dividing, multiplying abstract things. I was always amazed at how he would learn just by looking at an older sibling's text. He was writing me letters and reading with very little example or instruction. I have had to purposely direct His attention to the purpose of learning (to understand the character of God and glorify Him through all the application of what is learned). His heart is tender and for the most part the challenges we've faced in this area have been my personal challenge of making sure I am directing his days and specific activities as the Lord would see fit. The gifted child has unique needs of their own, just like every child has unique needs. The challenge comes for us as parents in recognizing those needs and then embracing them, even when they are out of our comfort zone. There may be a need for more stimulation and a faster pace when learning. These children cause us to think out of our developmental stage timeline and run with them! That has been the challenge that I've had to address. Keeping up, keeping life skills and information available to them because they simply love to learn. I have one child that I would fit within the description of a Gifted Child. We must remember and always call our children to remembrance of the fact that Wisdom only comes from God. We will never gain Knowledge, Wisdom, or Understanding apart from Him no matter how fast or how much we learn. Therefore, we must first commit ourselves to gaining the Fear of the Lord and then seeking to see Him and His Truths in all of life around us. When we have accomplished this, we have given the Gifted Child an education that will last for eternity!

Discovering JOY for the Journey

There have been times I've teased the children that I'm not sure if the circus has come to town or if this is what others call homeschooling. There have been days I've felt as if I'm trying to get the children to jump through hoops of fire, other times I felt I was taming wild beasts called curriculum choices. It's been a balancing act for sure. I've felt as if I was swinging from the trapeze as I balanced family life, farm life, home businesses, babies being born, children adopted, living off the grid, moving multiple times, and all the while keeping our smile and homeschooling moving forward! Yet, God's grace is sufficient and somehow we got all the details in order and lined up just the way they were needed. Homeschooling has caused me to get rid of my pride, selfishness and any slothful tendencies on a daily basis. It's caused me to be real with myself, acknowledge my shortcomings, and search for my strengths. I've discovered joy for the journey, peace that is inviting, and increased the substance of our home by learning how to hold fast to the JOY that's found in the journey. JOY is not an emotion. It's a character, a fruit of the Spirit that we're told to possess as children of God. So often we hear mothers wrestling with depression, guilt and frustration. Let me share with you real moment that occurred about 10 years ago. I had to be away from the home for the day so I left my oldest daughter, Rebekah, in charge of caring for the family. She was a very ambitious and skilled girl who had been helping me run the house for awhile. Her daddy knew her as faithful in caring for the needs of the family while I was away so we had no worry that she would do a wonderful job providing meals to the children, giving baths and helping my husband as he worked at home. I was quite surprised when I showed up and saw the disappointment on my husband's face. I asked what the problem was and he began to explain how Rebekah had such a terrible attitude as she went about caring for the family and house that day. He said it was heartbreaking to watch her work and act as if everyone living in the house was the burden. I knew instantly what had happened and called Rebekah into my room for us to chat. "Rebekah, can you tell mommy what happened today?" She burst out in frustration and started rattling off a hundred things that everyone had done 'wrong'. I sat quietly and listened to every word. I knew very well, what had happened and what the problem was. I was a young mommy that had experienced my share of days like she had. I knew the feelings she was expressing all too well. Finally she stopped took a breath and said, "Are you going to say something?" I smiled and said, "Rebekah what was it that you wanted to get done today?" "I just wanted to have a clean house and have everyone do what I said. Nobody would listen to me though." She replied. "Was there anything else you wanted to get done?" I continued to ask. Rebekah continued to share with me, "Well, I did want to call my friend Shay and I did want to read my book but that couldn't happen because everyone was being so naughty." "I see. Did you try to read your book or call your friend?" I asked. "I tried but everyone would just interrupt me or make a mess somewhere and I had to hang up the phone." She answered with frustration. Rebekah sounded completely exhausted and even burst out, "Oh mommy! Raising ten children is hard!" I knew she hadn't tried to be neglectful of the family needs. She just didn't realize that she would have to set aside her own desires and expectations for the home to run smoothly. I replied, "Rebekah raising one child is hard. It's not the number of children that make it hard it's something else. Let me share with you what mommy learned years ago when I was tired of having days just like you had today." I began to share with Rebekah where she had gone wrong. She had her own agenda of how the day would go, she had a list of things she wanted to do, and while she was trying to care for the home and meet the family needs, she was also trying to

get finished so she could do the ‘important’ things on her list. Whenever we have expectations or plans outside of God’s plans for us things will get frazzled and soon our day will unravel on us. I shared with Rebekah that our home and our family was not the distraction it was her book and phone call that was disrupting her peace. If she would remember to serve the family every day with JOY she would have time for the book and phone call without any stress.

J— Put Jesus first. Don’t start the day without Him. Talk to Him all throughout the day and ask for help, wisdom and direction. Do everything as if you’re doing it for him. Put your entire heart into your tasks and work cheerfully unto the Lord.

O— Serve others! Don’t think of yourself, your own needs first. Esteem others better than yourself. Remember, what you’ve done to the least of these you’ve done unto the Lord. Smile and allow others to see the joy of the Lord as you serve them.

Y— Enjoy your own desires. After you have put Jesus first, others second, you’ll have time for yourself. You won’t never get to read your book or make your phone call. You will, but it will be in God’s perfect timing and it will be so much sweeter of a reward.

After explaining this to her we prayed, she cried and I encouraged her to try it. I was going to be gone the next day so she would have the opportunity of serving her family again. It was a complete delight when I opened the front door and saw candles lit, dinner on the table and children had baths. Rebekah greeted me with a smile and said, “You were right mommy! Serving ten children isn’t hard.” She had experienced a wonderfully, productive day. Everything she wanted to accomplish plus more was done. She even enjoyed a phone conversation with a friend!

Ladies, I would encourage you to review those “bad” days and consider that maybe what you really need is to apply JOY for the journey. Like I shared with Rebekah, it’s a purposeful JOY filled living that we must do each and every day! God desires for us to have homes that direct others to him. Frazzled days can hardly offer anyone hope. Pray and ask the Lord what His plan is for the home, then trust Him as He completes the good work He has begun!

Avoiding the Pit of Comparison

Why is it that we compare our husbands, our children, and our homeschooling success with others? Comparing only leads to discontentment, unrealistic expectations, and a heavy burden that God never put on us. It will never bring JOY to the home if we’re trying to run our home out of the pit of comparison. It’s a wonderful gift to glean from others, hear how the Lord is leading them, and watch them live out their faith. However, when we start comparing sin enters the friendship and fellowship is soon dissolved. It’s critical for each of us to remember that we are individual members of a Body. All with a unique and beautiful purpose! While we may be able to glean Truths we can apply to our own home it is simply wrong to try and live out the plan that God has for someone else while we fail to see the beauty in our own home. God desires that each of our homes are a light leading others to see His Grace. Avoid comparisons at all costs, it only leads to destruction!

Depression Discussed

In the children's novel, *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery, Anne questions Marilla asking if she has ever tried to imagine being in the depths of despair when Marilla replies, "No, I cannot. To despair is to turn your back on God." I've always loved that response. We are wise as women to learn to control our emotions. I always tell my children, especially my girls, emotions were given to us by the Lord to be a thermometer of other things going on in life. Emotions were never given to us to rule over us. We are to have dominion over our emotions. So how do we get dominion over our very loud and unruly emotions at times? First I would like to remind you to go back to the JOY for the journey conversation we had there and consider if you have been living JOY filled days. Secondly, examine yourself and make sure that you're not feeling the way you are because you've fallen into the pit of comparison and lastly make sure you're getting enough sleep, exercise and eating right. You will be surprised at what a little sunshine each day can do for you. I always tell people to get at least 20 minutes of sunshine each day, schedule it into your school day, go for a nature walk, pull weeds in the garden just get some sunlight. We have a dear Sister, Teri Maxwell, who has shared so transparently with us about her battle over depression. I would encourage you to visit her site and glean from her as the Lord allows. The Maxwell's are a family I feel very comfortable referring others too even though I have never met them personally. I would encourage you to read her article, [A Journey Through Depression](#) written in September of 2000. There was a season in our lives when I used their [Managers of our Home](#) book with great success. It was a tool that taught me a great deal about home management even though we don't use it today, I use the skills I learned through it.

The Foolishness of Busyness

Let's face it we can get ourselves busy and never get anything of value accomplished! **Being busy is not a sign of productivity; productivity is the sign of being busy.** We are foolish to think that the act of being busy is anything honorable. Busy deeds keep us from doing things of eternal value which makes them foolish to say the least. Just because you have time to commit to something doesn't mean it's what you should be committing to. The quietness of a day is beautiful and should be considered as such when Seasons of life give opportunity for them. True, there are times when life is just busy and we must work hard and long hours to see it all through. Diligence and perseverance are vital for us as homeschooling moms. I'm not saying that if you're busy you're wrong. I'm suggesting you evaluate your productivity and determine if you're busy at the right things and the right time of your life. If you're unsure, ask your husband. Make sure you keep your home evaluation handy throughout the year so you know what you need to say "no" to. And finally, guard your time and make choices wisely!

Five Critical Lessons I've Learned

I am often asked what my greatest lessons learned through the homeschooling adventure. There are five critical lessons that not only changed our homeschool days but changed our home and lives.

- **God is sovereign-** It is God that knit my child together. If I go to Him daily He will show me what and how much to require from the children. He doesn't miss any of the details; there are no surprises for Him. I can trust God with all the results of our homeschooling days.

- **God provides**— God knows all my tomorrows and has made provision for them today. This is a lesson that He has taught me as I look at the needs of our homeschooling days. I use to be anxious or feel like something was missing if I couldn't buy this or that item. However, after time in prayer and seeing His continual, faithful provision I began to trust when we didn't have items, that too was part of His plan and were 'missing' on purpose.
- **JOY filled living is better than a single moment lived otherwise**— Our sinful tendencies would love to have us believe that we need “me” time before we can serve others effectively. That we have to watch out for ourselves because nobody else will. While that may be popular thinking it doesn't make it right thinking. God typically does things the opposite from the world so why fight
- **Hours of careful cultivating leads to years of harvest**— I remember being a young mom with little ones who were constantly keeping me busy; I felt like child training was all I ever did. I went to an older Sister's home one night and noticed that her older children were working so cheerfully in the home. I made the comment that I can't wait till my children are older and can be more helpful. She replied, “You're just in the pruning stage.” That comment has stuck with me for years and I've passed it onto many other young moms. It's important for us to remember that while the pruning stage may not be as fun as the harvest, it's necessary if we hope to get a harvest of substance! I know how long the days can be. I know how weary we can become. Yet, as I prepare to celebrate my oldest son's wedding I can see that God has brought about a beautiful harvest because of those pruning days. I have a grown man as a son that loves me tenderly and strives to honor me. His soon to be bride is a precious addition to our family. I couldn't hope for more. I'm confident that God's grace has watered our relationship and the result is simply beautiful!
- **Homeschooling is about so much more than academics**— Homeschooling is really about so much more than academics, it's about relationships. It's about building a home life that operates together for the Glory of God. Keep your focus and goals on what's eternal! We must win our children's hearts as we live with them.

Real Moment From My House: Josiah was five years old when I began to teach him officially. It was his first day of “school”. I sat down and turned on the tape that accompanied the curriculum with a cute ABC song. He informed me that he wouldn't be singing with me today. When I asked him why,



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“If home-schooled kids mess up, can they be expelled from the family?”
4/25/2002

he told me there was no need to sing silly songs. I explained that it was part of the lesson and it would be fun but it was no use, he refused. I was in shock to have my child boldly refuse to do his lesson. I told my Joe what happened. He spoke with Josiah and informed him that he had been “expelled” from school this year and would have to wait until next year for school. This comic reminded me of that time. While he wasn't expelled from the family, he was my only child ever expelled from school. I must say, the next year when we picked up the official lessons again, there was no complaining!

The Finish Line

Graduation of our homeschooled children is something that requires our careful and consistent attention. Good recordkeeping throughout your homeschooling days will prove to be critical in this season of homeschooling. I especially appreciated Barbara Shelton's work in [Senior High: A Home-Designed Form+U+La](#). She has done an excellent job sharing different approaches, is practical for whatever method of homeschooling you might be using, has multiple forms for your use, examples of what worked in her home and much more! If you have a child entering the high school years I strongly encourage you to consider this resource. This is a resource I enjoy going back through and refreshing myself on ideas that I might have forgotten. High school years can be intimidating to moms as they realize they need to keep track of hours, credits and activities so their child meets all the state requirements. I understand that feeling. We've now graduated three of our children, each uniquely different graduations. We've been so blessed. It makes my heart glad to see them growing and using their skills, talents, and information learned here at home for God's glory.

From the Parents View:

Just like all new areas of growth for our children, we can have mixed emotions as parents. We're excited to see the fruit of our hands, the work that God's accomplishing in them and yet, at the same time, we're missing those moments that we've come to cherish; spelling lessons in the sand, math at the kitchen table, science lessons that made us cringe. Times like this can test our ability to keep our emotions in check. It's vital that we don't allow one moment of this special season be stolen from us because we're looking back. This is a time to look forward, to see glimpses of how God's going to use the last years of home education. This is a precious time, savor every moment of it.

What Next?

Many Christian families are reconsidering traditional college after their child's graduation. Even colleges that profess to be Christian are showing some concerns. For our family, we have the rule that as long as you're living in our home you must always be engaged in learning something of interest to you. For example, Bekah graduated two years ago yet she's continued to study Italian and Algebra. We want to teach our children that learning never stops. Giving them a love for learning was something we worked on a great deal when they were little. Vision Forum offers a book called, [Accelerated Distance Learning](#). I see this as a great alternative for the Christian family. We've been blessed over the years by God bringing us individuals that could help teach the children in an area of interest that we weren't skilled in. this type of apprentice allows the child to learn so much more than they would have in a formal classroom. As you wrap up these last years of home education you'll want to review your child's school records (many call this the Cum File) to make sure that all the information is complete and ready to be evaluated by others should you child be attending a college after this. I am often asked how I evaluate if my child has completed enough study. There are a few factors I keep in mind. First, I take a look at the state requirements and use that as the minimum required for completion. Secondly, with my husbands help, we've prayerfully considered what our child's interest are and how we feel the Lord is wanting to lead them. For example, I have one child that is very interested in Creation Science and therefore we've added more science to his graduation requirements than his sister.



If you have a child that will be attending a college or taking college courses at home, I encourage you to find out what the school requirements are and make that the part of your basis for studies completed. You can visit your college's career center where you can find helpful counselors with resourceful information. I've especially enjoyed the fact sheets they have for each area of study. It breaks down the required courses and prerequisites for those courses. It's a great tool to use when helping our children consider what choices of study need to be completed to better equip the child for their future educational goals.

NOTE: If you would like to participate in learning more about alternatives to college, I invite you to join Vision Forum for five FREE webinars to help prepare your children to be influencers who can lead! You won't want to miss this opportunity. Register by clicking on the banner above. This event is Free!

Graduation Ceremony

Celebrating this special time of completion is something that each family does in unique and creative ways. I've enjoyed seeing all the different ways families have celebrated their children's first 12 years of formal educational study. You want to offer your child something of substance and not leave them feeling like they've got their diploma out of a cracker jack box! There are a variety of online sources and local companies that will offer printed diplomas, certificates and awards that the homeschooling can use to make this day special. This is really a time that you can be creative and make it special by sharing your vision of homeschooling with others. Scrapbooks, photos, and school work from previous years are all fun things to share with those coming to celebrate this special time with you and your family. I encourage you to finish strong. Keep your "why" to homeschooling and your vision strong all the way through the process of home education, including your graduation ceremony.

Conclusion

Homeschooling has so much more to offer us than just an educational alternative. Homeschooling offers us the freedom to live daily with our children and address their needs while we teach them through the daily living, structured schooling we give them and purposeful lessons we provide. It's a journey with bumps, turns, long lonely stretches, and crowded intersections. It can feel like your character is tested on a moment by moment basis at times. And yet, I would make this journey a thousand times over. It has been worth every moment, every frustration, every victory and small success that I've enjoyed the last 19 years. Praise God for those families that originally stepped out of the traditional school idea and followed through with their commitment to train their children at home even though it meant entering the unknown and often hostile environment with government officials. I am thankful for the many families at HSLDA that continually protect our freedom. I can not ever express with words how grateful I am for the ministries that have not lost the true vision of the homeschool

Resources



movement. The families that have shared their time and resources through the development of curriculum that is of substance. There are so many things to be thankful for when we come to the end of this discussion and yet, so many more exciting things to anticipate. For myself, I have enjoyed seeing these young homeschooling adults proceed in life with conviction, a strong education and impact their homes, churches, and communities around them. I am excited as I watch all the young families who are discovering this way of life for themselves. I am honored as I share with young moms and see them create “whys” for their home and prayerfully live out the vision their husbands have for the home. These are good days!



HOME EVALUATION:

Year: _____

Commitment	Time Required	Special Considerations	Impact on School day?

Use the chart above to consider the commitments, projected events, or home dynamics that may impact your school schedule. By doing this you can make adjustments to your school schedule or teach creatively around the event. Homeschooling gives us so many options and freedom in teaching our children. For example, a move may make book work a challenge therefore, I can use that time of the move as part of our non school days or I can adjust the pages of book work the children do before and after the move so they stay on track. I could also consider the move as part of their school by taking field trips along the way. Taking the children to the chamber of commerce to learn about the community, visiting historical landmarks, learning map skills as they help navigate the way, without the GPS, and the list could go on. If you expect to be pregnant in the school year, you can give yourself some cushion in your school year by extending your start/stop dates so that you can take “sick” days as you need. You could also have the children doing studies to complement this season of life. Topics such as early childhood development, CPR, anatomy, whatever would be age appropriate and acceptable for your home would be beneficial. Think creatively and make plans with prayerful consideration. Thinking ahead about your family and home needs can be instrumental in your success.

Proverbs 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

STUDENT EVALUATION:

Child's Name: _____

Age: _____ School Year: _____ Grade: _____

Goals:

Spiritual	
Academic	
Emotional	
Physical	

NOTES:

[illegible]

This is a simple form that Joe and I made up years ago by simply using large index cards. We would go away for the weekend and devote our time to conversation and prayer for each of the children. I encourage you to find time to discuss these goals with your husband and write them down for each child. It may take some time at first but it will save you much time later. You will want to use this as a reference throughout the year to keep you from derailing in your homeschool adventure!

Developing Your Homeschool Philosophy

Why do I homeschool?

What is our Homeschool Vision?

Homeschooling with Eternity in Mind?

What do you want God to find you doing today if He was to return?

What do you need to teach your children today so they are equipped for tomorrow?

January 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

February 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29			

March 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

April 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

May 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

June 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2			
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

July 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

August 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

September 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1				
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

October 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

November 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

December 2012						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Choosing a Method of Education that Works!

[illegible]

NOTES:

Use this space to consider how to implement the best of each method you feel would work well with your homeschooling vision.

[illegible]

Student Name _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____ School Year: _____

[illegible]

Week of: _____ Weekly Unit/Theme _____



	Bible	Mathematics	Language Arts	History	Science/Nature Observations
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					

Scripture: _____

[illegible]

Homeschoolers Resources/Suppliers

There are more than a multitude of resources for your review. It can be overwhelming and there's plenty out there that is simply nonsense. For this list I have only included books that are actually in my home library and resources that we have used effectively. It is not an all inclusive list of our home library, that would be a daunting task for sure. Hopefully, I have remembered the best of what we've used throughout the years.

Bible:

[King James Bible](#)

[The 1599 Geneva Bible](#)

[Strong's Concordance](#)

[Matthew Henry Commentary](#)

[John Calvin Commentary](#)

[For Instruction in Righteousness](#)

[Proverbs for Parenting](#)

[Balancing the Sword](#)

Mathematics

[Horizons](#) (This is my favorite Math text for the kids)

[Saxon](#)

[Mathematics: Is God Silent?](#)

Language Arts

[Spelling Power](#)

[The blue book of Grammar and Punctuation](#)

[Simply Grammar](#)

[Italic Handwriting Series](#)

[A Reason For Handwriting](#)

[The New England Primer](#)

[The Original Blue Back Speller](#)

[McGuffey's Eclectic Primer](#)

[American Dictionary of the English Language](#) (we use this on a daily basis)

History

[History and Christianity of Western Civilization](#)

[Mysteries of the Ancient World](#)

[American History to 1865](#)

[The Annals of the World](#)

[A Scottish Christian Heritage](#)

[The Scotts Worthies](#)

[G.A. Henty Book set](#)

[Crown and Covenant Collection](#)

Science

[Into The Amazon: One Lost World](#)

[The Mysterious Islands](#)

[Jonathan Park](#)

[Apologia Science Curriculums](#)

[Audubon Field Guides](#)

Economics

[Biblical Economics: A Complete Study Course](#)

[In God We Trust](#)

[Boys At Work Set](#)

[Getting Your Hands Dirty](#)

[Tilling the Soil](#)

Law/Government

[Institutes of Biblical Law](#)

[You May Not Take Our Guns](#)

[For You They Signed](#)

Fine Arts

[Barry Stebbing Art Curriculum](#)

[Classical Music Collection Curriculum](#)

Foreign Language

[Rosetta Stone](#)

Life Skills

[Created to Work](#)

[Plants Grown Up](#)

[Polished Cornerstones](#)

Unit Studies

[KONOS](#) (There are many unit studies out there but none in my opinion even come close to KONOS! Hands down it will and has been a favorite resource in our home!)

Homeschool Resources

[Charlotte Mason Companion Guide](#)

[Senior High: A Home Designed Form+U+LA](#)

[For the Children's Sake](#)

[Educating the Wholehearted Child](#)

[More Hours in my Day](#) (This book was instrumental in helping me as a young mom.)

Suppliers:

[Vision Forum](#)

[Titus 2](#)

[Doorposts Ministries](#)

[Pearables](#)

[Mantle Ministries](#)

[Whole Heart Ministries](#)

