

Keystone

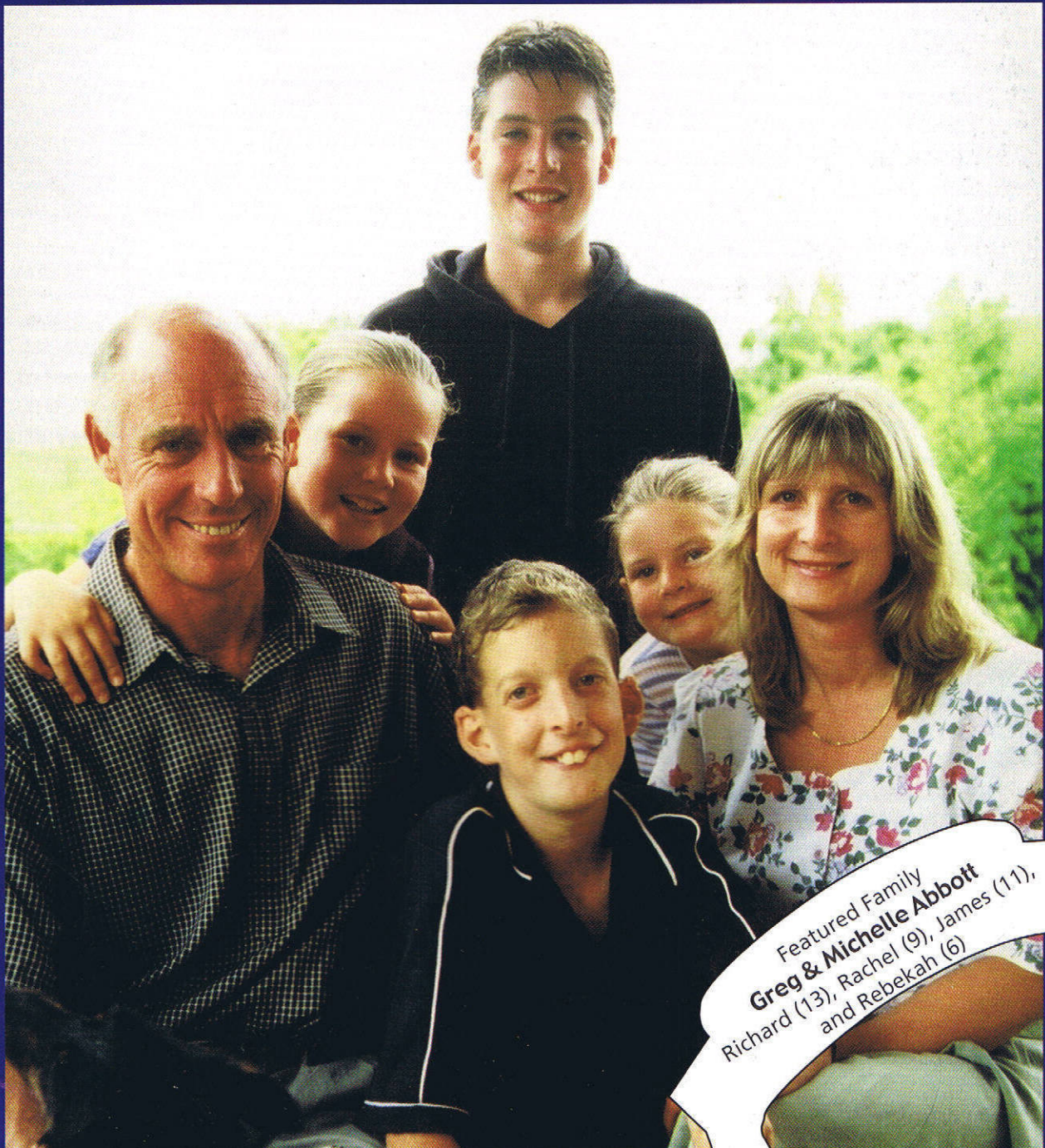
The Journal of Christian Home Schoolers

of New Zealand

Vol. VIII No. 1

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Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth. – Psalm 112: 1-2



Featured Family
Greg & Michelle Abbott
Richard (13), Rachel (9), James (11),
and Rebekah (6)

KEYSTONE

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KEYSTONE is the journal of Christian Home Schoolers of New Zealand, a part of the Home Education Foundation, a Charitable Trust established to promote the concept of home education to the Christian community and beyond.

KEYSTONE is intended to inform, challenge, encourage and inspire. The Christian faith is being undervalued. Christianity alone is fully able to present a world view that is comprehensive, coherent, consistent and complete.

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*The fear of the LORD is the
beginning of wisdom,
a good understanding have all those
who do His commandments.
— Psalm 111:10*

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It was Henry R. Van Til, in The Calvinistic Concept of Culture (1959) who stated that "culture" is religion externalised. Look at the expressions of our culture today: hatred, violence, murder, infanticide, anti-Christianity, immorality, drugs and other crimes. The religion, the faith which our popular culture externalises is demonic.

Oh, Lord, please give us the wisdom and vision to home educate our children for Your Glory. May they not only live and work honourably as Christ-like role models in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation but also fearlessly, tirelessly, lovingly offer

Editorial



The controversy and confusion regarding the core beliefs of Islam, whether the September 11 WTC attacks can be considered part of main-stream Islam or the work of demented fanatics, is not getting any clearer. Our political leaders in New Zealand continue to formulate legislation designed to reverse attitudes all societies have held since history began, making the immorality of homosexuals and defactoes as legitimate as marriage and demonising parents who would correct their children with spankings. When our Lord Jesus asked the Pharisees if they knew from whence John the Baptist's authority came, they answered, "We don't know", verifying their inability to function as religious leaders. There are church leaders today who come up with, "We don't know," or "We can't be sure," when asked about the divinity of Christ, the virgin birth, the reality of the resurrection, the historicity of Adam and Eve, etc., also eliminating themselves as proper spiritual leaders.

So whether it be on the international stage, closer to home, or right there in our churches, we home educators need to know what we believe and why we believe it...lest we be deceived down a wrong track. World views are important, for just as Hopper said in Walt Disney's *Bug's Life*, "Ideas are very dangerous things."

Are we committed to a truly consistent Biblical world view, or are we open to the various scenarios constantly presented to us in the marketplace of ideas? *Do we see ourselves* as consumers, Christian consumers of course, *in* the marketplace of ideas, shopping around for concepts and ideas compatible with our Christianity? If so, be very, very careful. The serpent deceived even sinless Eve into doing exactly the same thing, reducing God's clear command down to one of several options presented to her by the serpent and her own fertile mind: she liked the idea of looking at all the options, all the possibilities, listening to all the critics, gathering all the information, weighing it all up and deciding for herself what she should do about the forbidden fruit. She liked the idea of being in charge. The world view she adopted at that point plunged all of humanity into condemnation.

Is this not the world view we often hold? Weigh up all the options, get in all the information? Our problem is seldom recognised: we can never weigh up all the options, for we never know what all the options are. We cannot get all the information, for such exhaustive knowledge is the preserve of our Omniscient God alone.

Seriously consider attending the World View seminar being held in Auckland, April 7-12 this year. We need to know the Biblical world view thoroughly, and the more we know of the enemies' world views the less we'll be tossed to and fro by every wind of their doctrines.

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Osama bin Laden is to Islam like Timothy McVeigh [Oklahoma Bomber] is to Christianity, says Mark Juergensmeyer of the University of California. However, with the exception of one government-staged anti-bin Laden demonstration in Pakistan and very few prominent Islamic scholars, hardly anyone publicly denounces him. The only Islamic scholar in Egypt who unreservedly condemns the Sept. 11 operations admits he is completely isolated. American officials are still waiting for Muslim politicians to speak up. "Long live bin Laden," shouted 5,000 demonstrators in the southern Philippines. In northern Nigeria bin Laden has (according to Reuters) "achieved iconic status". — Daniel Pipes, *The Washington*

TEACH Bulletin (Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home) is a monthly newsletter of the Home Education Foundation. Articles deal with political developments which may affect New Zealand home educators, statist and professional trends, correspondence with politicians and educationalists, and other items of general interest to home educators. Published since January 1997, **TEACH Bulletin** has been used to sound legislative alerts, rallying home educators to write submissions to their MPs and Parliamentary Select Committees when legislation unfavourable to home educators was introduced into Parliament. The six-page newsletter comes out 11 times a year (none in December) for an annual subscription of NZ\$16 or two years for NZ\$30.

The Home Education Foundation is a charitable trust established to serve, promote and strengthen the home education community in New Zealand. Since November 1998 the Foundation has contracted Craig & Barbara Smith (whose six children are all totally home educated) to serve the home education community full-time. They are continuing to build on their volunteer work since 1986 in the areas of publishing (such as *Keystone* and *TEACH Bulletin*), counselling, correspondence with politicians and educationalists, lobbying, researching issues of concern to home educators, running National Leadership Forums (annually since 1996) and National Christian Home Education Conferences (six since 1987), initiating the National Home Education Awareness Week, moderating five home education email discussion groups, producing media releases, speaking at local seminars, hosting overseas speaker tours, and networking among local support groups and with overseas home schooling organisations. Their efforts are conducted under the eye of the Home Education Foundation's Trustees and a Board of Reference which represents 21 locations all over New Zealand.

The Home Education Foundation, Christian Home Schoolers of New Zealand and the projects they take on are supported entirely by home educators subscribing to *Keystone* and/or *TEACH Bulletin*, investing in a TimeChart or making tax-deductible donations either by cheque, credit card or by automatic bank payment (ask us for a form). The Foundation can also be supported through Telecom and Clear who both give a percentage (5% & 2.5% respectively) of your toll bill to the Foundation, *painlessly and without costing you an extra cent!* Telecom subscribers can ring 0800 724 665 and ask to support the Home Education Foundation, ph. (06) 357-4399, through Telecom's "School Connection" Programme. Clear subscribers can ring 0508 888 800 and ask to support the Home Education Foundation, ph. (06) 357-4399, through Clear's "Friends of the School" Programme. Please ring today!



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Feature Family

Greg & Michelle Abbott

of Drury, Auckland

When we first came across family friends who were home schooling, we thought, "What a shame; those poor children! It's one thing believing in God," (we were not walking with the Lord at the time), "but taking these children out of school is really taking it all to the extreme."

However, God must have been looking on with a twinkle in His eye. These same friends continued to nurture me until I was asking lots of questions. I eventually gave my heart to the Lord (11 years ago).

My husband Greg also started to ask me questions when he was going through a difficult time. He was trying to get an Amway business to work, but of course God was not going to allow a business with New Age at its root and money as its god to work for Him. However He did use this business to bring Greg to Him (9 years ago).

Now we had both given our hearts to the Lord, we started to notice that there was something different about these home educated children.....

God has blessed us with four beautiful children. Richard, 13, is a big boy for his age and loves hands-on activities and sport. He plays rugby, mountain bikes, tramps and helps with hay cartage in summer. His friends are mostly home educated; however he maintains some contact with former school friends.

James, 11, is not able to do much in the way of sport but has a "quad" motorbike which he uses extensively on our deer farm and when we are on holiday at the beach. He is a great detail person and is very thorough in all he does.

Rachel, 9, is our most academic child and learns very fast indeed. She is currently very keen on swimming and would love to start collecting birds in an aviary.

Rebekah, 6, is very physically active and is loving and thriving on her schooling and learning. She never stops asking questions about everything.

Our son James has many difficulties. He was born with Marfans syndrome. This has meant that James has been in and out of hospital many times. This syndrome affects the muscles and ligaments in the body. James looks and acts differently to other children. So when we sent him to school at five to join Richard, he was given a tough time. The other children mimicked him and teased him. James would cry each morning when we left him. Greg and I decided we were not going to subject James to this treatment on a daily basis, and so we took the plunge and decided to home school him. Richard joined us three months later, and our two girls have never been to school. That was five years ago, and we

have never looked back.

I find routine works for me. Our children do their set jobs first thing in the morning, including breakfast and music practice. We then gather together at 9:30 am to go over our times tables and for Rebekah to go over the seasons, months, days, etc. What a difference this has made to the children's memory of times tables. I then read to all of them while I do physio on James. This is one of my favourite parts of the day, as I love reading a good book to the children. We then spend time doing *Simply Grammar* by Charlotte Mason. This is a great book, and our children enjoy doing grammar this way.

By 10:30am we are ready to do our formal school work:

Maths -- I have used many maths curriculums, but we have settled on *Making Maths Meaningful*. I love the way this curriculum comes in on a totally different angle. The children move through their books quickly and with a good understanding.

English -- because we do *Simply Grammar* in the morning, I use the *100 Exercises, Knowledge of Language* and *First Aid in English* all by Rober Gibson to reinforce English.

The Abbott Family
Greg & Michelle, Richard (13), Rachel (9),
James (11) and Rebekah (6)

Spelling -- *My Spelling Journal* by Curriculum Concepts. We have only just started to use this so I'm not sure yet how it will go. I find with spelling some of my children seem to have it naturally and some really struggle, and I don't feel the curriculum that we use makes a lot of difference.

Writing -- *Writing Strands* by National Writing Institute. We use this mainly for our boys who always had a mental blockage when it came to writing a story. (It just seems to come naturally to girls.)

We have lunch at 1:00pm. Then around 2:00pm we will do a science project once a week, go to swimming lessons once a week and for the other days we do our history and geography project using Diana Waring's curriculum *Ancient Civilizations and the Bible*. We have all got so much from these projects. Going through the Bible in chronological order has made so much sense. You can expand or do as little as you like on these units, but it covers so much including art, cooking, science, drama, etc.

Having said I'm a very routine person and showing you how our routine works, we also have to be flexible enough to be able to drop tools and go to hospital appointments on average once every two to three weeks. When James is unwell, Greg often has to run the house, teach the children and keep working (as he is self-employed) while I stay in hospital with James, which averages two to three weeks in the winter.

James also has chronic asthma which means if he comes into contact with dust mites or cat hair he can find it very difficult to breathe, normally resulting in us calling an ambulance or Westpac coming to our rescue. So our house is regularly dusted and vacuumed by a local lady.

We also have a district nurse visiting regularly so we have a lot that can happen to affect our routine with people coming and going; but my aim is to always try and stick to my routine because without this we would not get far each day.

The combination of educating the children at home and my husband being self-employed gives us flexibility as a family, but best of all it gives us all time together. To us family time together is special. James is not a well boy, currently he has severe heart valve leakage, serious lung disease and only one lung working, severe spinal curvature (which is inoperable due to his heart and lung condition) and the threat of chronic asthma daily. Consequently we especially relish this time together as a family and thank God for His many daily blessings.

The Faith of Us Fathers

The Christian Man and His Children, Part 3 (Final)

by Craig Smith

“You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.” — Leviticus 20:26

As we established at first, our children belong to God and not to us. They are a stewardship, a huge responsibility, laid upon us by God Almighty to be trained up for His purposes. And He will call us to account for the way in which we have trained them up. God claims them from the beginning, for after all, He caused them to be born into a Christian family. We do not follow the child-centred philosophies of the world and treat our children's wants, desires and wills as sacrosanct, as off-limits to interference by us, as taboo. And we recognise both our accountability and responsibility toward the rest of the Body of Christ, the saints with whom we regularly worship and fellowship.

We as parents often struggle with the issue of our children's conversion, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, re-birth as Christians. Many of us who became Christians in later life can pinpoint the day and the hour of our conversion experience. But surely, the ability to identify the moment of conversion should be the exception rather than the rule *within Christian families*. I used to scoff at people who would say to me something like, “I've always been a Christian.” Well, I don't scoff anymore, for my own teenaged children have said such things, and as much as is humanly possible, I am totally convinced of their regeneration. Such children have “always” been in a Christian environment. My wife and I, along with many Christian home educating parents, both wish that we had had such a consistent Christian upbringing ourselves...it would have surely kept us from some of the damaging sinful excesses we experienced as unbelievers, things we wish we could erase from our memories as they negatively influence our present Christian lives. Some Christians say to me that they wish they had not had such a protected upbringing as they had in their Christian home, for if they had experienced the vileness of gross sins, perhaps they would be more urgent in their quest for Christlikeness, in their evangelistic efforts, than they are now. I cannot disagree more with such a sentiment. Brothers and sisters: take it from me: you do not want the physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual scars that sinful actions cause. You do not know what you are saying. The Lord has called us to move in the opposite

direction.

All the more true of our children, who belong, remember, to God. Do they need to steal another's property to appreciate how wrong it is? Do they need to actually become drunk or ruin themselves by immorality in order to appreciate the ugliness of sin? NO!! Take them to visit some prison inmates, take them to a pub or an A & E ward on a Saturday night to observe. Get a Christian doctor or counsellor to share with you some descriptions of the human wrecks he or she has had to deal with. Sign up as a foster family for a few months: becoming involved with a few of the many desperate "families" which exist out there will convince you of the blessedness and privilege of a Christian home. Life itself provides plenty of yucky illustrations of sin. The Scriptures warn about it over and over. But sin dwells within our own and our children's hearts, regenerated or not, and your own family life (yes, even within the most godly of Christian homes), will provide you with plenty of opportunities to point out the ugliness and deceitfulness of sin. Hate it. Run from it. That's what families are for: to deal with the lying, thieving, immoral tendencies in our children before they go public.

We do not wait for our children to affirm that they want to be Christians before we train them in all areas of Christian life, thought and doctrine. No. God has already claimed them. Whether you are a Presbyterian who sprinkles a newborn or a Brethren who has a dedication ceremony for a newborn, you already acknowledge that God should have an "unfair advantage" in shaping the child's life. Self-conscious atheists have described to me how they let their children determine all their own life decisions by remaining hands-off from birth. I point out that this is still imposing their "hands-off" philosophy upon their children without asking them (I guess it is hard to ask a newborn) whether that is the way they'd like to be raised! As Christians we have this politically incorrect advantage that we know for certain what is right and what is wrong. So we don't quibble about it or apologise for it: we simply inculcate our convictions into our children from day one. Memorise Proverbs 1:7-8 for it clearly states who we and our children are to obey: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's

teaching." God first, then Dad and Mum.

We do not live in a vacuum, nor are we ever truly independent or self-sufficient. We need the guidance, counsel, admonition, encouragement and example of our Christian brothers and sisters. The Scriptures specifically say the older women should be teaching the younger women (are you ready for this!) "to love their husbands and children" (Titus 2:4). Can you think of a more unwelcomed and downright nosey activity in our secularised cultures of today? Just shows how far we've moved away from the Biblical standard. We should welcome such input from others within the Church. And we should be prepared to lovingly and gently give such input ourselves. In I Timothy 4:12 Paul admonishes the young man Timothy to set the believers an example. It is obvious that we are to do this for our children, but it is also our duty toward all other believers. In fact, we parents can have, by God's grace and the respect we will have with other Christian parents, quite an opportunity continually to influence other children. Likewise we should consciously select other godly parents and encourage them, give them permission if need be, to speak to our children, to chastise and correct them as the situation demands, or reward them, without the need to first fetch us to the scene.

The Christian man can have no greater opportunity to leave his stamp upon the history of God's earth than to leave his stamp upon his sons and daughters. Our labours here, more than in any other sphere, have everlasting consequences which will follow us into heaven. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain." (I Corinthians 15:58). Hallelujah!

Home Educators Did It

The Ward Family of Tangiteroria, Northland

by Christine Ward

For the last twenty-seven years, I have spent my time tucked away in relative obscurity on an eleven-hundred acre sheep and beef farm in Tangiteroria, home schooling our three children. Commitments on the farm and in the community have meant that my husband's involvement in this process has been limited. For me, just knowing that someone's there to confer with when the going gets tough has been invaluable.



The Ward home educators:

L to R: Allison 14, Ryan, 22, Natalie 24.

We began in the days when homeschooling was literally unheard of and considered a radical departure from the norm; the sort of lifestyle that hippies rather than conservative, run-of-the-mill folk like us might get involved in. Getting an exemption was no easy task. Application to teach at home had to be made via a headmaster, after which inspection by inspectors took place. In order to be approved we had to produce a term's objectives, a thematic work unit, have visits with inspectors and answer innumerable questions. It certainly wasn't all plain sailing! Our initial exemption was cancelled -- not because there was anything the matter with our programme -- but because it had been granted by a headmaster outside our educational district. Undaunted, we continued to bang on the appropriate doors and eventually gained approval to teach our two children, Natalie and Ryan, then aged six and four, at home. Four years after our commencement we had a third child, Allison, who at fourteen, continues to be home educated.

In the early years of our venture, having no homeschooling families or support groups to call upon, we were fortunate to have the advice of Maggie Pierson (now deceased), a Christian teacher who was a strong advocate in the development of Christian schools in New Zealand. We began by mimicking the state schools -- teaching the basic subjects, but from a Christian perspective. As Christian teaching materials were scarce, I developed the total programme, a task which took up most of my spare time. The children advanced in leaps and bounds and enjoyed gaining knowledge even "outside school hours".

At no time did we ever seriously consider sending them off to school, not even when we reached secondary level. As neither of the older children had

any idea of what he/she wanted to do in the future, Wayne and I decided it was necessary to keep their subjects broad and at the same time aim for a qualification that would gain them entry to university. Natalie was placed on the Christian Liberty Academy Programme, an American-based programme providing plenty of variety in course options. Ryan chose to move on to NZ Correspondence which he commenced at sixth form level, sitting bursary the following year. Both did well and had no difficulty gaining entry to Auckland University via the usual channels. Three years later Natalie completed a BA degree majoring in English and Art History. She went on to successfully complete an MA degree (Honours) in English. Ryan gained a BA majoring in Political Science and English.

Since then both have gone on to secure good jobs in Auckland. Natalie works for the Institute for International Affairs and Ryan works in Customs House. As mentioned earlier, Alli continues to be taught at home. I arrange her basic programme allowing her greater input as she matures. She will more than likely move onto NZ Correspondence at either sixth or seventh form level. To date she has not decided what she'd like to do in the long term, though farming has always featured foremost in her mind. On occasions she's mentioned the possibility of a career in the Army or Air Force. The thought of women flying planes seems quite appealing to her!

Natalie had a passion for art. As it was an area in which I had little knowledge, I began taking her along to monthly meetings held by a local art group. Here she learned all sorts of skills she wouldn't otherwise have learnt. She eventually began entering work in exhibitions, and at the age of fourteen became the

youngest person to be accepted as a working member of the NZ Fellowship of Artists. She won a couple of art awards -- one in Auckland and another in Whangarei -- and completed a number of commissioned works. By the time she was fifteen, she was fetching up to \$400 a painting.

Thrashing it out -- The Day to Day Running

Our children have always worked to a schedule, though it has grown far more flexible as the years have progressed. It is my personal belief that in order to teach the basic academic skills well, it's necessary to have a schedule in place, structure in learning and a goal in mind. In other words, there needs to be an on-going, deliberate and purposeful process in action, one which allows room to embrace the unexpected which Providence brings our way, the latter being either opportunity or trial.

Most home educating families will pass through trials of varying degrees. One of our greatest trials was looking after an elderly eighty-year-old grandparent whose wife could no longer care for him. He was very ill and in need of constant attention. It was physically and emotionally draining -- a real character-building experience. While this was not "formal learning", the children learned first-hand about a stage in life through which we must all pass. More than anything else, it taught us of our own human limitations and our need of a God on Whom we can depend at all times.

Socialisation

This has never really been an issue in our household. We have always contended that socialisation is learned first and foremost within the family. The "principles of good conduct" learned here are then continued and developed as the children are integrated into the wider community. Though we have always lived in what many consider an isolated area, the transition from homeschool to university, country to city, was very smooth. There were no socialisation difficulties and our (by then) teenagers made friends with relative ease.

One of the more fortunate aspects of home schooling is that children live free of the constant pressure to be like their peers. Allowing them to develop and mature at their own pace and according to their own relational styles is extremely important. This is particularly true in the area of socialisation. To force or pressure children into situations that they themselves feel hesitant to move into can create a whole new set of problems. If you know your children's personalities well, you'll soon sense when they're ready for experiences a little more challenging than they are used to. Take your cues from your kids! Each has his own unique style of relating to his environment and other people. Discovering those different styles and establishing how best to bring them to maturity is a weighty responsibility; one which none of us can ever do perfectly, least of all me!

Tough Questions People Throw Your Way



What Are Some of the Benefits of Home Education?

by Christine Ward

If I had to sum it up, I'd say that four things in particular come to mind:

- 1) Home education builds strong families.
- 2) It allows the freedom to pursue interests and passions for life.
- 3) Home education embraces the whole of life -- children learn to live in the real world.
- 4) Home education provides the best context in which to maintain and transfer the faith to the next generation.

Some may argue that the above can be achieved even if children are sent to school. I agree, but to a lesser extent than those schooled at home.

Building Strong Families

Perhaps more than anything else in the world today children need the security of strong families. They need the security of knowing there is someone there who has walked the path before them; someone they can trust to give considered advice and instruction when it is most needed. Home education provides the context in which parents can best gain an intimate working knowledge of each family member. This enables them to respond appropriately to any physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual challenge that may arise. It allows for a very personalised approach to dealing promptly with life issues. This in turn enhances the security felt by the child.

The development of trust and security over time has long-term implications. Of all the home educated young adults I know, it is most often the family to whom they turn in times of trouble. Home is not a place where problems are placed in the too-hard basket! It's a place where issues are sorted through; painful though it may be at times.

Freedom to Pursue Interests & Passions

I recall reading somewhere that homeschooling provides the opportunity to raise children who are seldom at a loss for what to do with time. Our experience has borne this out. In all the years we have been learning together at home, I have seldom heard our children tell us they are bored. Their interests have been many and varied. In particular our daughter Natalie had a passion for art. (Read of her accomplishments in "Home Schoolers Did It" on page

8.) Because of a heavy work schedule, she gets little time to paint today. No doubt when she's an old thing like me, she'll pick up a brush again! At a very early age our son Ryan developed a passion for reading and writing. He would read anything he could lay his hands on irrespective of the subject matter. As he grew older, we'd often catch him reading or writing into the wee hours of the morning. Diaries, poetry, short stories, letters to friends, letters to members of Parliament, you name it. To Ryan this was not school work, it was a hobby. His love of reading and writing continues today. Allison has a passion for the outdoors and more particularly horses. She has a cute little miniature pony named Pearl, who has a habit of chasing the sheep around and around the paddock. We catch glimpses of her through the kitchen window and laugh at her naughty tricks. Allison's greatest love is her horse, Tammy. They know one another inside out!

Home Education Embraces the Whole of Life

Life skills develop naturally as we interact with our environment and one another. For best results you can't compete with home education. One's involvement and knowledge is as expansive as life itself. Here are a few glimpses into life as we've lived it, with that wonderful spontaneity that only homeschooling can give.

From little things -- like making a big pot of soup for lunch on a cold winter's day, then sitting by a big open fire to enjoy it. To bigger things -- like renovating our eighty-year-old house and painting it pretty colours. To pursuing dreams -- my husband and son have always had a love of classic cars, and when the opportunity arose to travel to America to find one to restore, they seized the moment, setting off across the United States in search of Dad's dream car (a '69 Mustang). The vehicle has since been shipped to NZ and lovingly restored. It now holds pride of place in our garage. To more serious things -- like welcoming new arrivals into the family -- to participating in the daily care of elderly grandparents. This is what you call real life.

An Environment for Maintaining and Transferring the Faith to the Next Generation

As Christians we are commanded to walk with God through life. This does not mean for one or two hours a day. It means all day, every day throughout life. If we are sincere in this effort our children witness a process in action that they would not see if they were attending a state school seven hours a day. It is here, in our homes, that we have our greatest opportunity to influence; to pass the faith to the next generation by example. Our behaviour should reflect a Biblical blueprint for life, rather than the "do as I say, and not as I do" approach, though the latter will inevitably occur from time to time.

The transference of the Faith requires not only godly role models, but a sound Scriptural knowledge. We have sought to impart this in a number of different ways. By familiarisation with the Bible, by instruction in confessions of the Faith of Church catechisms, by developing a Biblical world view, and finally by introducing them to Church History.

Our children, like most other Reformed Presbyterian youth, have been instructed in the Heidelberg Catechism. This has given them a good overall knowledge of the basic teaching of Scripture. As mentioned in a previous article ("Smorgasbord Theology" by Craig Smith, *Keystone* of May 2001), the catechism "does not replace the Bible, but helps one more accurately understand the incredible breadth and depth of Scripture's application to every area of our private, social and national lives." It provides them with an anchor for life.

Developing a comprehensive Biblical world view has also been a priority. Much has been learned simply through day-to-day conversation -- looking at what is happening in the world and discussing the worldviews which dominate. We have numerous books which have assisted in this development. Some of the most valuable have been:

- 1) *The God & Government* series by Gary DeMar (3 volumes).
- 2) *The Biblical Blueprint* series by Gary North (10 volumes).
- 3) *Biblical Solutions to Contemporary Problems* by Rus Walton.
- 4) *Understanding the Times* by David Noebel.

A Biblical world view is important. It equips people with the necessary knowledge to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

We did not concentrate on Church History a great deal, though friends have recently stressed the importance of this to us. It allows children to see God's sovereignty over history, and to feel a part of a much greater plan. The book, *The Story of Christianity*, by Tim Dowley, was recommended to us. It provides a richly illustrated presentation of the heritage of the Christian faith.

A Few Closing Comments

On the whole, home educating our family has been a positive and enriching venture. It has been a grand exercise in building our faith. Like men of old we have learned to live a day at a time, walking through life with a deepening awareness and dependence on God. We have learned not to expect instant results and that those things worth having are worth waiting for. We have laboured quietly believing that all this hard work will one day reap dividends. Finally, we have enjoyed growing together in the faith. Life for us has been a journey of discovery. A drama to which we awake each day. And as with any good story, it's had its share of trials and tribulations. We have learned to face and embrace life, to live it as faithfully as we are able. As our children embark upon their own personal journeys, it is our hope that they will remain faithful in their generation.

Bits of Books



Homeschools Should Increase, and Classrooms Should Decrease

by Harvey Bluedorn

We should all agree that Christian parents are to follow Biblical order by controlling and directing their children's education (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4). But what is the best way to accomplish this? For most of us, because government schooling is ruled out for philosophical reasons (no jurisdiction, godlessness, etc.), and a privately hired tutor is ruled out for practical reasons (cost, availability, etc.), our choice is narrowed down to either a private classroom school or a homeschool. In Homeschooling, parents are the most directly involved in the education process. In the private classroom school, however, though parents choose which school the child will attend, after that, the parents are removed from the driver's seat and become support for the school and its program.

Seven Problems with Classroom Schools

In addition to parents relinquishing the control and direction of their children's education in the classroom school, there are a number of problems which classroom schools introduce to the educational process. Here are some of the problems which persist in large gender-mixed, age-segregated, day-long classroom schools.

1. Classroom schools create bonds which can easily cross and oppose the proper bonds of authority and affection.

The teacher-to-student bond may weaken the parent-to-child bond.

The school-to-student bond may weaken the family-to-child bond.

The student-to-student bond may weaken the sibling-to-sibling bond.

The parent-to-school bond may weaken the father-to-mother bond.

The classroom has much potential for alienating appropriate lines of affections, and for engendering inappropriate lines of affections.

"Peer socialization breaks down family relationships. . . . [it] separates kids both from their siblings and their parents through time commitments, interests and emotional bonding." -- Rick Boyer, *The Socialization Trap*

The child's heart, affections, and attentions -- the

very life of the child -- is bound up with his peers, and parents lose the heart of their child.

2. Classroom schools can create an atmosphere of ungodly rivalry instead of godly challenge. When peers are put together in a graded context, the natural result is comparison -- not against an absolute standard, but against each other. This breeds fleshly competition and rivalry. We illustrate this point from the book *Marcaria; or, Altars of Sacrifice*, a nineteenth century novel by Augusta Jane Evans. The main character of this book is Irene, who was sent off to a prestigious boarding school in New York.

". . . the defects of Irene's character swiftly strengthened and developed in the new atmosphere in which she found herself. All the fostering stimulus of a hot-bed seemed applied to them, and her nobler impulses were in imminent danger of being entirely subdued... and the associations which surrounded Irene were well calculated to destroy the native purity and unselfishness of her nature. . . . As regarded educational advantages, the institution was unexceptionable But what a Babel reigned outside of the recitation-room. One hundred and forty girls to spend their recesses in envy, ridicule, malice, and detraction. The homely squad banded in implacable hatred against those whom nature had cast in moulds of beauty; the indolent and obtuse ever on the alert to decry the successful efforts of their superiors; the simply-clad children of parents in straightened circumstances feeding their discontent by gazing with undisguised envy at the richly-appeared darlings of fortune; and the favored ones sneering at these unfortunates, pluming themselves on wealth, beauty, intellect, as the case might be; growing more arrogant and insufferable day by day. . . . it is surprising how really fond parents, anxious to promote the improvement of their daughters in every respect, hasten to place them where poisonous vapors wreath and curl about them. The principals of such institutions are doubtless often conscientious, and strive to discharge their duty faithfully; but the evils of human nature are obstinate, difficult to subdue under even the most favorable auspices"

3. Teaching the identical material to multiples of children who are at different learning levels is not an efficient use of the student's nor of the teacher's time. Compared to homeschool, a classroom school spends more time covering less material at a lower level of quality. Homeschooling allows more to be accomplished at a higher quality with less time and effort. That is the private-tutor and homeschool advantage.

4. The age segregation of classroom schools encourages peer groupings as the proper way of segregating society. It creates an artificial and impractical one-size-fits-all standard within age segments, while it divides families and generations. It develops an appetite for being surrounded by one's

peers, and for shunning the presence of adults, while it creates a culture void of age-integrated relationships. It is frequently a formula for foolishness. William Cowper satirized it this way:

His intercourse with peers, and sons of peers --
There dawns the splendor of his future years.
-- *Tiriconium; or, A Review of
Schools* by William Cowper, 1785.

The age-segregated classroom originated in evolutionary and socialist philosophy, and it produces an artificial youth culture which is glamorized for breaking with cultural tradition. (Many of these problems also persist in other gender-mixed and age-segregated situations, such as Sunday schools and youth groups. Read *Critique of Modern Youth Ministry* by Christopher Schlect.)

5. The gender mixing of classroom schools can create situations which are inappropriate. Boys and girls from different families should only mix together in controlled environments fully under the authority of their parents. Our girls have no business developing independent relationships with other boys, and our boys have no business developing independent relationships with other girls, apart from our knowledge, advise, and consent. (This also applies to boys with boys, and to girls with girls, though for somewhat different reasons.) "Co-education" breeds cultural disintegration by breaking down parental authority and by breeding the culturally idolatrous and emotionally fornicative dating mentality which prevails in our society. (Read *The Pattern of Courtship* by Natali Miller.)

6. Time at school away from home, after-school programs away from home, and schoolwork brought home from school -- these all draw order and commitment to the school and away from the family. Conforming the family's life to the daily schedule of an outside institution is an enormous imposition. The school becomes the center of life, replacing the home and the church. Children grow up with allegiances forged more strongly with the educational institution than with their own blood relatives and the people of God. Our concepts of "home" and "family" have become so fundamentally altered by the artificial culture created by socialized education that we have forgotten the true purposes of the family.

7. Classroom schools consume resources imprudently. Education in a classroom school is obtained at a premium rate -- thousands of dollars per student. The student consumes time at a discount rate. Actual teaching and learning time, especially at the juvenile level, is only a fraction of the total time elapsed. Homeschool provides better quality time and consumes time at a dramatically more efficient rate. This leaves lots of time for other worthwhile activities. The family which homeschools has greater freedom of time and of movement in order to pursue special family activities such as academic research, specialized tutoring, ministry to others, extended travel, or even family emergencies. Such

opportunities are greatly decreased when the family is tied to the schedule of the classroom school.

We could expand the list to include such issues as health and safety, conformity and uniformity, lines of communication, conflicts in academics, behavior, discipline, etc., and -- no doubt -- you've begun thinking up your own list.

Summary and Conclusion

Classroom schools often create an artificial microculture of age segregation, gender integration, reorientation of personal commitments, restructuring of time commitments, alterations of cultural and academic values, social peer pressures, and ungodly rivalry. Such things usurp the proper lines of parental authority. The long term effect of classroom schools is to take the children from their parents and to give them over to themselves, to their peers, to their teachers, and to their school. This necessarily leads to a cultural transformation. Socialists have promoted the classroom school as their model for cultural transformation -- weakening the family bonds, separating children from their parents, and transforming the children into human resources for the state. Christians should stop mimicking the socialist culture. We should begin to transform culture through a Biblical model for education. The nature of the *present cultural emergency* should move us away from the classroom school.

"The home education has so much more potential than that of the school, that the little modicum of training which a 'common-school' system can give to the average masses is utterly trivial and impotent..."

-- *Discussions* by Robert L. Dabney, Vol. IV. Secular, 1876. p. 197.

In the providence of God, private classroom schools have served as an intermediate launching pad for many of the materials which later lifted homeschooling off of the ground, up, and into orbit. But now that homeschooling is increasing, we believe it is time for classroom schools to decrease.

Those who have grown up in a world which knew nothing better than the classroom school, tend to think that classrooms must be better. When homeschoolers experience "burnout," it is often because they have tried to put the new wine of home-tutoring into the old wineskin of the classroom school. They have tried to "bring school home." Home-tutoring and classroom schools are two very different worlds. It is time to put the new wine into new wineskins (Luke 5:36-39).

The home should be the center for childhood education, and those who honor God's order will receive the blessing. The future of godly education is not served by centralizing the process into classrooms, but by diversifying it into families.

We do not expect the classroom day-schools to largely disappear because of what we say here. We

do suggest that they should be thoroughly restructured into a resource for Christian parents. School faculties and facilities could be greatly reduced and converted into think tanks to produce materials for homeschooling parents, to provide specialized part-time classes for parents, and to provide specialized tutorial services where special help is needed. That would be a very efficient use of talents and resources within a Biblical framework for education.

Perhaps you think that we have overstated the case. We'll allow you to be the judge. We are satisfied that every parent should prefer homeschooling, but we are most sympathetic to the practical difficulty of pursuing this ideal within a culture which excludes normal family life from its agenda. We are not in the business of judging other Christians for their decisions. They understand best their own circumstances and the direction in which the Lord is leading them. We do not all see the same things at the same time. There may be many halfway measures which, in some ideal sense, seem out of order, but which, in a practical sense, are nevertheless necessary steps down the road to where we ought to be.

We believe God's blessing today rests upon much of the modern Homeschooling movement because it conforms most closely to God's order for families, which is His chosen way to restore godly foundations to society and to culture.

[Selected and Condensed from "Should Christians Prefer a Classroom School?", Chapter Three of *Teaching the Trivium* by Harvey and Laurie Bluedorn. Used with permission.]

Harvey and Laurie Bluedorn are the parents of five children: Nathaniel (26), Johannah (24), Hans (22), Ava (20), and Helena (18). Their family ministry, Trivium Pursuit, seeks to teach parents how to apply classical education to homeschooling. The Bluedorns live near New Boston, Illinois. Email: <trivium@muscanet.com>, Website: www.triviumpursuit.com Phone: 309.537.3641, Post Mail: PMB 168, 139 Colorado Street, Muscatine, Iowa, 52761.

Home Education Research



Home Education in Canada

"In the past decade, home schooling has proven itself to parents and researchers to be a highly effective alternative to public and private schooling." So says Claudia Hepburn, director of education policy at The Fraser Institute of Vancouver, B.C., when commenting on a new study, *Home Schooling: From the Extreme to the Mainstream*.

The Growth of Home Schooling

In 1979, just 2000 Canadian children were home schooled. By 1996, the respective provincial ministries of education put the number of home schooled children at 17,523 or 0.4 percent of total student enrolment -- a 776 percent increase over just 18 years. Today, some estimates put the number of home schooled students in Canada as high as 80,000.

In the United States, various estimates suggest home schooling is growing at a rate of between 11 to 40 percent annually. In 1999, the US Department of Education estimated that approximately 850,000 students were being home schooled. In both countries, this surge in home schooling has been facilitated by the growth of the Internet.

"Although parents home school their children for a myriad of reasons, the principal stimulus is dissatisfaction with public education," notes Hepburn.

Home Schooling and Academic Performance

Research indicates that home schooled children in the U.S. and Canada regularly outperform their peers in both public and private schools. The international evidence on the academic performance of home schooled students is equally encouraging.

In the United States, at every grade level, home schooled students' average score placed between the 82nd and the 92nd percentile in reading and reached the 85th percentile in math. Overall, test scores for home schoolers placed between the 75th and 85th percentiles. In contrast, public school students scored at the 50th percentile, while private school students' scores ranged from the 65th to the 75th percentile. Home schooled students also surpass the national averages on both of the major college-entrance tests: the ACT and the SAT.

Although there is less Canadian research available, the academic performance of Canadian home schooled students appears to be comparable to the American

experience. The largest study to date in Canada found that home schooling students, on average, score at the 80th percentile in reading, at the 76th percentile in language, and at the 79th percentile in mathematics. The Canadian average for all public and privately educated students is the 50th percentile.

“Almost one-quarter of home schooled students perform one or more grades above their age level peers in public and private schools,” says Patrick Basham, Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute and the study’s author.

Home Schooling and Socialization

Contrary to the concerns of the educational establishment, the typical home schooled child participates in a wide variety of extracurricular activities, including afternoon and weekend programs with public school students, day-time field trips and co-operative programs with groups of other home schooled kids. Ninety-eight percent of home schooled students are involved in two or more outside functions on a weekly basis.

Research also suggests that home schooled students are more sociable than their school peers, as well as more independent of peer values as they grow older.

“Popular belief holds that home schooled children are socially backward and deprived, but research shows the opposite: that home schooled children are actually better socialized than their peers,” says Hepburn. “Some studies have shown that home schooled children are happier, better adjusted, more thoughtful, mature and sociable than children who attend institutional schools.”

Characteristics of Home Schooling Families

Parents choose to home school their children for a number of reasons, such as: the opportunity to impart a particular set of values and beliefs, higher academic performance, a lack of discipline in public schools, the expense of private schools for large families, and a physically safer environment in which to learn.

Home schooling parents have above average levels of education. Among American parents who home school, 81 percent have studied beyond high school compared with 63 percent of parents nationwide. Interestingly, having at least one parent who is a certified teacher has no significant effect on the

achievement levels of home schooled students.

Home schooling families are almost exclusively two-parent families. Because of the time required, home schooling usually involves two parents -- one who participates in the labour force and one who home schools. Research on the income of home schooling families has so far proven inconclusive.

Regulatory Environment

Home schooling is legal in all ten Canadian provinces. In regulatory terms, each province has its own specific rules governing home schooling: most require that home schooling parents comply with the Education Act in the respective province. Alberta leads the way in North America as the only jurisdiction that provides funding to home schooling families.

A comparison of home schooled students’ performance in a highly-regulated, moderately regulated, and unregulated American jurisdictions found no statistical difference. In other words, the degree of government regulation has no significant effect on the academic performance of home schooled children.

“Although home schooling is neither desirable nor possible for all families, it has proven itself to be highly successful and relatively inexpensive alternative to public and more formal private education,” concludes Hepburn. “As such, it merits both the respect of regulators and the further attention of researchers.”

(From Media Release *Home Schooling is an Effective Alternative to the Public School System*, Claudia R. Hepburn, Director of Education Policy, The Fraser Institute, 9 October 2001, claudiah@fraserinstitute.ca)

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Alan Curnow, Learning Consultant,

200 Hill Street, Richmond, Nelson

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To the Editor:

I am writing in regard to the Fraser Institute's recent report on homeschooling. As one might expect, the Fraser Institute, a frequent critic of teachers, schools and the public education system, has released a report which is one-sided and tends to glamorize certain aspects of homeschooling, while remaining relatively silent on some other critical issues.

The report purports to provide a comparison of results on standardized tests of home schooled children vis a vis students in the public system. What it fails to mention is that there is no requirement or compulsion for those who are home schooled to take part in a standardized testing program, while there is for students in the public school system.

It also fails to address the needs for home schooled children to be assimilated into society and how these students relate to people of different backgrounds and cultures. How well do these children adapt to different life situations which require teamwork, understanding and co-operation?

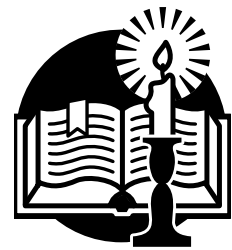
The Canadian Teachers' Federation would be delighted to see the Fraser Institute take a balanced approach in assessing the effectiveness of education and promote adequate funding and resources, rather than pursuing a biased agenda that favours home schooling, charter schools and a voucher system. This narrow approach only serves to undermine publicly funded education systems in their efforts to promote social inclusion and an education agenda that serves the needs of society, local communities and the individual student.

Doug Willard
President
Canadian Teachers' Federation
18 October 2001

(The Fraser Institute is a pro free-market group, generally opposed to state intervention. They are, therefore, open to the charge of "pursuing a biased agenda". But note that Doug Willard is himself taking a biased position, although he does not draw attention to the fact that he criticises the Fraser Institute for being biased while maintaining his own biased position....it is simply that Willard does not share the same bias!

Willard's first criticism is valid: scores for home educators are almost always from those who volunteer to make their scores known and so cannot be said to be representative of all home educators. However the second criticism, that home educated children possibly not being assimilated properly, is the worn-out socialisation issue all over again. This clearly identifies where Willard is coming from: his world view insists that children must be exposed to all kinds of other cultural norms and standards of behaviour, rather than have just one — i.e., your own family's — consistently re-enforced.)

In Line with Scripture



If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it. — Luke 9:23-24

This is the answer to both the proud, arrogant and haughty and to the hurt, abused and feeling-sorry-for-themselves. No room for cry-baby Christians, for those who would claim, "I'm not responsible....."

- For my hot temper. I'm Irish.
- For my life-long indulgence in sensual behavior. I was molested at age 12.
- For wallowing in self-pity and under-achievement. I come from a broken home."

Living as we do in a crybaby society that encourages blame-casting and personal irresponsibility, it is interesting to note that the Scriptures allow us no such luxury.

You don't see Jesus, for example, saying to Peter, "Pete, your dad was a pretty harsh taskmaster, growing up as you did the son of a fisherman. When you get around to it, and are feeling better about yourself, perhaps you would consider tagging along with Me. Give Me a buzz when you think you are ready."

Or to Nathaniel, "You know Nate, you have a pretty sensitive disposition. I'd like you to trust and believe in Me, but your alcoholic father scarred you for life. Perhaps we can work on the 'trust' thing, when of course you have the time...and the inclination."

Today I had lunch with Sam* and his lovely wife Kerry*, and their three adorable children. Frankly, I was blown away because Sam is the product of multiple foster homes and irresponsible parenting. Women, who are loved and treated with respect, "glow". Kerry "glows". And the kids? Alert. Confident. Well mannered. Secure.

In his teens, Sam became a high priced con artist. In his mid-20s he met Christ. At 40, he is a successful businessman who gives large portions of his income to God's work. Sam also travels the world, meeting with heads of state, and sharing Christ in the most dangerous of environs. On the side, he raises millions of dollars for propagating the Gospel. In a word, Sam has assumed responsibility for his life.

While the Scriptures express compassion for human weakness....

“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak...” (Rom.15:1b; See Ps.41:1-3)

...they do not temper Christ’s call to discipleship:

“If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will save it.”

* Names have been changed.

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One of the great liberations of educating at home is that our children are removed from the environment of being compared to other children. Other children rarely if ever provide good yardsticks for other children. Or put another way, a child doesn’t need another child to teach it how to be a child.

Our children need committed, consistent godly role models to compare themselves to and who will also train them in righteousness. There are two temptations we and our children can fall for: one is the class of excuses illustrated above: “My background, lack of care and resources, etc., have made me unfit to excel as a Christian, let alone a parent educating my children at home.” The other temptation is to consider ourselves or our children in isolation: “My child will decide or determine for himself what his area of endeavour will be and what level of accomplishment he will attain.”

Be done with such thoughts! The Scripture says plainly: deny yourself. Paul said he considered his many admirable attributes to be dung (Philippians 3:8). Well, if we are carrying some baggage from our past which really *is* dung, all the more reason to dump it, deny this aspect of ourselves, and no longer consider it. In fact, the Scripture says to “consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11).

Here we meet the Lord’s incomparable provision: He tells us to deny ourselves....yes, that seems tough sometimes, but if our backgrounds included violence, hate and injustice, why would we want to hang onto that?...He tells us to deny ourselves, **and** to take up the Cross! We are to compare ourselves to Him, occupy ourselves with Him and grow up into Him. “No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the One Who enlisted him” (II Timothy 2:4). “For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Count on the Holy Spirit’s work within you. “He who calls you is faithful, and He will do it!” (I Thessalonians 5:24).

Over a Cuppa



Unplug the TV

by Elizabeth Bird in North Carolina

People used to think we were weird because we home school — since we unplugged our television, people think we are crazy!

We turned off the TV about six months ago. Allow me to share with you some of the blessings God has brought forth from our TV-free lifestyle. We spend more time praying, conversing, playing games, and walking our grateful Labrador retriever. Our daughters, ages 5 and 7, still argue; but the frequency and intensity of their squabbles have diminished. The girls’ attention span has increased, the 5-year-old has started reading, and we have completely escaped the detrimental effects of advertising. My husband has suddenly found time to do a peace-making devotional Bible study with our girls — he acquired the materials almost a year ago, but with the distractions of the NFL, NBA, and the NCAA, he just never “had time” to do it. As for me, my weakness was movies; even though I knew it was unproductive, I would watch a movie I had seen several times already.

Since unplugging the TV, I have made progress toward two of my long-held dreams — I’m taking Biblical Greek and have plenty of time to do my homework, and I’m teaching free English-as-a-second-language classes as an outreach ministry — again, I now have plenty of time to prepare.

For people who have considered unplugging their television, but haven’t, consider this. I recently became friends with Michelle, a lovely 36 year old Christian woman and exemplary wife, mother, chef, friend, musician and evangelist. She grew up as a missionary kid in Africa with no TV or radio. While my sister and I were watching “Gilligan’s Island” and listening to KC and the Sunshine Band, she was spending time in true fellowship with God and with others and developing into the fullness of godly womanhood. Her lack of knowledge of pop culture doesn’t make her weird. Her intimacy with the Lord and her refreshing innocence make her a joy to be with. May we all be more like Michelle — who is more like Jesus! I know that being TV-free is moving our family toward the abundant life that is ours in Christ.

Calling Single Parents

Hello, I am a single mother of three, two boys aged 11 & 9 and one girl nearly 5. I have been on my own nearly 5 years and divorced for three years. I started homeschooling this year and would love to talk to any other single parents who also homeschool, feel free to e-mail me at <sjfield@infogen.net.nz>
Sandra

Letters



Testimonies

Many times I have been encouraged by the personal testimonies of so many families that were presented in *Keystone*. Craig and Barbara, we want to pass on a word of gratitude to you both for your diligent commitment. Thank you.

Kathee Toon
Nelson

thankful that at least our slow plodding is far ahead of that.

I guess the flexibility of extra music practise and lessons we have with homeschooling also brings benefits when the girls passed recent piano exams with flying colours.

God bless you both in your ministry to Christian homeschoolers.

C & A
North Island

Learning Experience

We had our ERO review a few weeks ago. It was a really positive experience and Mr Williamson is very easy going and apparently pro-homeschooling. I particularly appreciated the way he put the children at ease. He just talked a bit to me about each subject area then looked at their work and talked to them. They showed off all their art and crafts so he didn't even get a chance to look at much other stuff! He was with us for about an hour and half, but it seemed too short and afterwards we thought of lots of things we still wanted to tell him about. I think even the review should be seen as a learning experience for the whole family. Even though little preparation should be necessary, it is good for setting your own priorities straight, reviewing your goals and strengthening the vision you have for your children's education. It can and ought to be a very encouraging process. Thank you for your encouragement and support through the magazine and personally.

Christian Greetings

Ilse Boessenkool
Wellington

"Wrap-around Newsletter"

Just a quick note to thank you both so much for the wonderful *Keystone/Teach* package which arrived in the post last week — complete with all its enclosures. And thank you too for the encouragement & perspective in your "wrap-around" newsletter which accompanied all the stuff. We are so grateful for all the work you do on our behalf as home educators I pray God will continue to bless & provide for your family, in ways even beyond your dreams. Have a fantastic time returning to the USA — safe journeyings and may you be encouraged and nurtured.

Loran Reid
Auckland

I Know Why!

Thankyou for all the effort that you put into *Keystone* and *TEACH Bulletin*. We look forward to all the encouraging articles in each issue.

Some days I wonder why we keep struggling on with homeschooling, but after billeting a 12-year-old-boy for the weekend, during a school music workshop, I know why we keep going! We don't want our children to end up the same way -- unable to communicate with new people....plus the language...!

Currently A... has just successfully hatched out 9 mallard ducklings under a clucky bantam as the children disturbed the mallard's nest accidentally and she didn't return to it. Unfortunately the question now arises as to what to do with all these wild ducks when they are no longer cute and fluffy, and couldn't possibly be eaten!

Getting back to the joys of homeschooling, when I think about a friend whose boy has been in a "Christian" school all this year and still has absolutely no idea how to read because they use the look and guess method, then I can be

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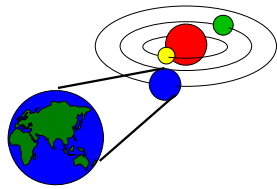
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World Views in Focus



A Letter from a NZ Home Educating Mum to Her Son, January 2002, Part 1

My Dear Son,

The beginning of a new year is commonly a time for reflection. We survey what we have accomplished in the past and make plans for the year that lies ahead. This year you will be seventeen years old, a time when you are no doubt very aware of the approach of adult responsibilities, and wondering where your future lies.

The year of 2001 has been a very unsettling one. The events of September 11th appear to have ushered in a new era of world-wide instability and apprehensiveness. At this point in time, fanatical Muslims present as the most immediate aggressor, with Osama Bin Laden promising greater devastation to the “Western Satan”, but in reality no one is one hundred percent sure what, in the end, poses the greatest threat to our peace and safety. More terrorist strikes? Treachery from within one’s own borders? Collapse of the world economy? Chemical warfare? Nuclear attacks? Ecological disaster? Anarchy? The emergence of fascist leadership? Descent into a new era of pagan barbarism? These are some of the fears that people express in today’s political and social climate, and I’m sure you must have some concerns too as you consider where your own future may lie. I want to take a little time to talk through some of the issues that confront you, in an effort to help you achieve a settled, God-centred perspective, with a sure anchor of hope in a sea of outward confusion and uncertainty.

First of all, let’s remember that unrest between nations and between people of conflicting ideologies is nothing new. The seeds of war are in the heart of every child of Adam. The war between good and evil began in the Garden of Eden and has raged ever since, even in complacent days of apparent peace and safety, the setting in which both you and I have grown up. Haven’t the Psalms we’ve been reading through in our evening devotions taken on new life in the context of our latest world situation? “Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing?” are the opening words of Psalm 2. That was written three thousand years ago, but nothing’s changed except the weapons.

We do well to pause and ponder the message of Psalm 2. It depicts nations in turmoil with their leaders plotting and scheming. Their ultimate dilemma, even though they may not acknowledge it, is whether or not they will bow to the Lordship of Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Indeed, the main theme of this Psalm is the triumph of Christ’s Kingdom and the destruction of His enemies. He is given the nations of the earth as His inheritance for the asking, and His power ultimately brooks no resistance. The Psalm ends

with the salutary warning to leaders to “be wise”, “serve the Lord”, “kiss the Son”.

“Kiss the Son”. This is the only real solution both for the nations and for every individual on the face of this earth. Submit to the King of Kings Who has the ultimate claim on our lives and Who is infinitely worthy of our loyal, willing and loving service. As members of His Kingdom, we are assured of triumph over every kind of evil, danger, and even death itself, regardless of our present outward circumstances. “Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him,” are the closing words of this Psalm. Here is the anchor of hope. But if we refuse to “kiss the Son”, then read Psalm 2 and tremble.

In a television interview shortly before September 11th, our Prime Minister declared that there was no threat to the peace and security of New Zealand as a sovereign nation. One could detect the inference, “We have evolved into a mature people who solve all our problems with intelligent dialogue. People are basically good, and, if we treat each other with tolerance and respect, we will all continue on the upward path to an earthly utopia.” I think you will find that she misjudged the situation because her statement was based on a worldview which isn’t founded on the truth. The majority of our leaders today have become enslaved in a battle which has raged in the western world in the post-Reformation era — the battle for the mind -- and their statements simply reflect how they have been trained to think. You see, terrorist attacks are not our most imminent danger, for the inroads the enemy has made in the battle for the mind are fast destroying our civilisation.

Stated at its simplest, the battle for the mind is the struggle between Humanism and Biblical Christianity. The Reformation of the sixteenth century gave God His rightful place, resolving that man should “think God’s thoughts after Him”. The Enlightenment of the seventeenth century, otherwise known as “The Age of Reason”, put man’s reason centre-stage and regarded the technological progress that began in that era as man’s brain-child, God being irrelevant. Whenever we, consciously or subconsciously, place man centre-stage in our reckoning instead of God, we are thinking as humanists. Indeed it is the natural instinct of our fallen nature. Whenever we ask ourselves, “What would my friends or neighbours think of me if I do this?” and forget to consider, “What does God say?” we are, in essence, practising humanism. Churches are guilty of the same fault when they ask, “How can we make our church services attractive to people so as to draw the crowds?” instead of prayerfully searching the Scriptures with the question, “How does God wish to be worshipped?” And so you will recognise this struggle as part of our personal lives and of our churches’ lives, as well as that of our culture.

You may be more familiar with the word “secular”, the secular having its focus on the here and now, in distinction from the sacred with its focus on eternal realities. To a secular humanist, the here and now is exclusively what life is concerned with. He sees himself as the product of chance evolutionary progress, with no God Who gave him being to answer to, and so no

eternal consequences to his actions. For him there is only the present. Inevitably such a worldview has far-reaching effects on how he lives and makes his decisions.

The humanist sees the secular and the sacred as two distinct and unrelated spheres. He regards the secular as based on the scientific and objective, and relating to the “real world”, while at best he relegates the sacred to the realms of subjective personal beliefs which have no relevance or bearing on “the real world”. Too often even Christian people fall prey to this type of thinking by separating their lives into compartments -- the sacred and the secular. On the Lord’s Day they join fellow worshippers and worship, think and talk as Christians. On Monday they go out to work where they are mixing with non-Christians, and their thinking is based on a frame of reference constructed by the secular mind where the Bible is irrelevant. Small wonder that we have so little impact on our culture! Christianity should not merely be something which makes us behave morally and charitably, admirable though that may be, but, if we are to have any impact on our generation, it is vital that our very thinking and understanding should be regulated by the light of God’s revelation. For a very good discussion of this topic, I urge you to read Harry Blaimire’s book, *The Christian Mind*.

The world views which now dominate western civilisations took firm root when Darwinian Evolution began to be taught as scientific fact in the public schools of what were regarded as Christian nations. It was introduced subtly posing as “scientific”, and therefore free from religious indoctrination, appropriate in a “secular” education where “objective facts” are taught to the exclusion of “unscientific religious dogma”. In fact, even some mighty men of God living at the end of the nineteenth century faltered over this issue, struggling to find ways by which they could reconcile the “new scientific evidence” with the first chapter of Genesis. Thomas Chalmers, for example, popularised the “gap theory”, proposing that there must have been an enormous time gap between the first two verses of Genesis 1. Interestingly, although the media chose to ignore it, many leading scientists of that era — Louis Pasteur, Lord Kelvin, Joseph Lister, Richard Owen, to name only a few -- firmly rejected evolution as being unscientific. It was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that so much literature has become available, written by men of science, refuting the hypothesis of evolution and demonstrating that all of creation trumpets the glory of the Creator, and that all the scientific facts simply reinforce the first chapter of Genesis. It’s good to soak up the information in the literature and videos produced by the Institute for Creation Research. You will be staggered at the wonders of God’s creation, your confidence in God’s word will be strengthened, and you will be equipped with a powerful tool in combating the evolution-based worldviews which dominate our present age.

In a battle you need to be able to recognise your enemies, so let’s take a quick look at the more familiar of the different faces humanism wears in our Western world.

“If it feels good, do it.” That’s the language of the existentialist. If there is no God as creator and ruler of this universe, there are no absolute rules for life. Mankind is the only source of morals and values. What feels good to me is good for me, what you want to do is your business so long as you aren’t culturally or politically insensitive and don’t bother me. Isn’t this philosophy well and truly entrenched in the New Zealand psyche? The tragedy is that it can only lead to loneliness and emptiness, because ultimately no one really cares and life is meaningless.

“If it works, use it,” says the pragmatist. The Oxford Dictionary defines Pragmatism as the “Philosophical doctrine that estimates any assertion solely by its practical bearing upon human interests.” Some time ago I was on the hunt for books about teaching young children to think logically. I thumbed through a number of books in our local bookshops, all of them dealing with decision-making, and this is the basic method they all followed:

*List all the possible solutions to your problem.

*Study each possible solution and sort out what the consequences of each course of action would be.

*Choose the solution which has the most desirable consequences. (Desirable for whom? I wondered.)

In total contrast, the Bible teaches us not to make concerns for our own comfort and well-being the criteria for our decision-making. Proverbs 3 v 5,6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path.” In other words, choose the course that God requires and leave the consequences with Him. Because the pragmatist does not take seriously the need to acknowledge God in his ways, God gives him over to his own foolishness and unprincipled behaviour. Why are thousands of unborn babies murdered every year? For pragmatic reasons.

Don’t ever make the mistake of thinking that only the Godless and Christless can be infected by pragmatism. Only a few weeks ago we were dismayed to hear a well-known and highly respected evangelical openly espouse pragmatism, tragically, I fear, influencing some lovely Christian people. We are all constantly bombarded by the thinking and attitudes of our culture and are never more susceptible to their influence than when people put us on a pedestal. Make no mistake. The hearts of the best of us love centre stage. We must respect and love God’s people in the truth, but never forget that they are flawed vessels of clay. If God gives you great gifts, pray for humility and faithfulness to His word. The nobility of the Bereans did not consist in their being respected as leaders or authorities, but in their diligence in searching the Scriptures to see that even what the Apostle Paul taught was Biblical. Subtle counterfeits are more dangerous than blatant lies. The only real way to easily recognise the counterfeit is to be thoroughly familiar with the genuine. Be a Berean. Study the Scriptures -- the only ultimate authority — daily, and let it’s principles govern your life.

One of the most destructive facets of what is regarded

as “the real world” is an inordinate emphasis on consumerism. “More, more, more!” is its language. “What next?” “We need them bigger!” “We need them better!” The question “Why?” never comes into the equation. There is no time for that. Materialism has become our tyrant, driving us on mercilessly in the bid to keep up with “progress” and avail ourselves of the technological aids and comforts for which the constant bombardment of advertising has created a perception of real need. Goods have become gods, and the God Who made us for Himself is crowded out and discarded as irrelevant. The electronic age has made a world of information, communication and entertainment available at the click of a button, consuming our every spare minute, unless we are very careful. Industry is perpetually delivering goods — improved models, sleeker models, more cost-efficient models. But can anything in our materialistic world deliver satisfaction? Indeed the very pace of life itself becomes a mask for mankind’s emptiness and hopelessness.

How is a Christian to be strong in the Lord while functioning in such a world as this? Certainly, the advertising industry has become something of a monster, grossly inflated and fed upon by greed and warped standards. We need to be watchful that our standards and motives are Biblical. We must test everything we see, hear or read by the light of God’s word, as well as our own thoughts, words and actions. Then Christ must have the “firstfruits” of our time and money. However, we cannot write off technology itself as evil. God Himself created man’s creativity and the physical laws he is harnessing. And God must always have His rightful place in our hearts, with technology as His servant, used by us for His glory. What we cannot sincerely ask God to bless we must “pull the plug” on.

Despite the fact that Secular Humanism and Marxism did its utmost to ensure that the very thought of God was dead and buried, they could not for ever suppress mankind’s yearning for spiritual satisfaction. The emptiness and hunger for spiritual answers had not been satisfied by the rationalism of The Age of Reason, and a new generation turned to the mysticism of what came to be known as The New Age Movement. When Satan felt threatened that his captives would turn to God to satisfy their spiritual appetites, he introduced into Western society a counterfeit from the East, which is, in essence, the antithesis of Biblical values. Its thrust was to replace the One Living and True God with Pantheism -- “everything is god, and god is everything. Mother Earth is in and the Eternal Father is out. You are god and I am god — we only need to achieve greater self-realisation. Our nagging feelings of guilt are nothing other than low self-esteem, brought about by problems in our up-bringing, especially by the negative influence of religion with its concepts of sin and evil.” You will, of course, recognise this as another form of humanism, or man-centredness: “I and nature are one, and there is no distinct Other. I can get in touch with the god inside of me and around me and achieve inner peace by meditation, self-affirmation, positive thinking

and identifying with Mother Nature. I talk of values, but not absolute values because there is no absolute, distinct lawgiver. Everything is relative. Nothing is ultimately good or bad, only good or bad for the individual in as far as he perceives its impact on his personal experience.” Ultimately, the tragedy of having no absolute standards by which to measure value, truth, purpose or beauty, is that it allows no basis for any real meaning to life, and so nothing of substance to satisfy man’s spiritual yearnings. It even leads many people into occultism. The words of Augustine of Hippo echo down through the centuries:

Thou, O God, hast made us for Thyself,
and our souls are restless till they rest in Thee.

The Enlightenment promised mankind fulfilment through the unstoppable progress of human reason, but the “evolutionary progress”, supposedly demonstrated by man’s ever increasing ingenuity, has failed to deliver the expected utopia. Society is not becoming more civilised. World peace and stability are more elusive than ever. Mysticism has also failed to deliver. This realisation has given rise to a pessimistic world view which has been dubbed “Post Modernism”. It may sound like a contradiction in terms, but if we understand “Modernism” as the belief that “Modern man has come of age, having discovered truth for himself,” then the name seems to fit. (To say that it “makes sense” would be inappropriate, because nothing makes a lot of sense to the Post Modernist!). It describes a looking back to promises that could not be delivered, with a present awareness of chaos that holds no promise of anything unless it be more chaos.

What a tragedy! This is just a little glimpse of what must have been on the mind of the all-knowing God when He said to Eve in the Garden of Eden, “What is this you have done?”

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What is the Muslim World View?

Douglas Pratt, director of religious studies at Waikato University said, "Islam is a religion of peace. Muslims are passionate for their faith. They are passionate for God. The word "God" in Arabic is Allah. Muslims believe in only one God – the same God as for Jews and Christians. As a people of faith, as religious believers, Muslims are no different to dedicated and passionate peoples of other faiths. Most Muslims are not terrorists. They are not destroyers of civilisation. They do not hate the West. Most Muslims are as much the victims of those who usurp Islamic ideals, in the name of a dogmatic and exclusivist ideology, as is the rest of the world." (*Waikato Times*, 11 October 2001.)

Mr Pratt's own world view colours how he understands the Muslim world view. Others see something quite different when they examine Muslim thought (and of course their world view colours what *they* see):

Muslims killed 3,000 Americans in New York and Washington on September 11; they execute Christian converts in Saudi Arabia and enslave a million Christian children in the Sudan. In 1998 there were approximately 165,000 Christian martyrs and in 1999 there were more than 170,000 (*Voice of the Martyrs* and *Jesus Freaks*, Albury Press). Most of them were in the Muslim world. In the Sudan approximately 500 Christians are killed daily (*Voice of the Martyrs*), over 2 million so far, all under the direction of Islamic General Umar Bashir. There are the suicide bombers in Israel, those who stabbed and shot up tourists in Luxor, Egypt, and the Algerian throat-slitting terrorists. The Muslim Turks slaughtered a million Christian Armenians in 1915-16. Muslims have killed over 300,000 East Timorese Catholics since 1975. Hundreds of churches have been burned to the ground in Indonesia, and Christians have been tortured and murdered in Egypt (Michael Horowitz, *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 July 1995). On September 11, there were celebrations throughout much of the Muslim world, dancing in the streets, including Beirut, Palestine, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, etc. (Dr. George Grant's briefing in Nashville, 18 October 2001). Nearly 1,000 people have been arrested in the USA on suspicion of being involved in the terrorist acts of September 11. Many of them were detained because the FBI intercepted congratulatory phone calls from the Middle East (*New York Times*, 28 October 2001). Were the September 11 attacks consistent with Islamic law? A Gallup poll in Pakistan found that 24% thought so. A Bir Zeit poll in the Palestinian Authority came up with a larger 26%. (*The Washington Times*, 25 October 2001, p.A23.) It is obvious there are many Muslims who still believe violence is a tool available to the Islamic faith.

Yes, the Christian world had the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition and many persecutions. Today Christians are embarrassed by Paul Hill who murdered a doctor outside a Florida abortion clinic in 1994. Jews are burdened by Dr Baruch Goldstein who killed 29 people in a West Bank mosque the same year. Only extremists of either religion would justify these aberrant acts. However, Islam today has Osama bin Laden.....and it is not at all clear whether he represents an extreme fringe or a more widely-followed Islamic position.

"[One] school of thought holds that Islam, by its very nature, is in permanent competition with other civilisations. This is the theory expounded by Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, who coined the term 'Islam's bloody borders' -- a reference to the fact that wherever Islam rubs up against other civilisations -- Jewish, Christian, Hindu -- wars seem to break out." -- Jeffrey Goldberg, *The New York Times*, 23 September 2001.

What Some Muslims Say

Yasser Arafat said, "Be assured that the many indignities heaped upon our people since ancient times must and shall be avenged. Surely the judgement of Allah is reserved for them until Palestine is transferred from Holy War to the House of Islam. Ishmael shall have his revenge." (1)

The late Hashemi Rafsanjani of Iran stated, "Every problem in our region can be traced to a single dilemma.... The everlasting struggle between Ishmael and Isaac (which) cannot cease until one or the other is utterly vanquished." (1)

The late Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran quoting the Koran and Hadith said, "Muslims have no alternative but armed holy war (jihad), the conquest of all non-Muslim territories. It will be the duty of every able bodied male to volunteer for this war of conquest. Islam does not allow peace between a Muslim and an infidel. Islam makes it incumbent on all adult males, provided they are not incapacitated, to prepare themselves for the conquest of countries so that the writ of Islam is obeyed in every country of the world. But those who study Islamic Holy War will understand why Islam wants to conquer the whole world.... Those who know nothing of Islam pretend that Islam counsels against war. Those [who say this] are witless. Islam says kill all the unbelievers. Kill them and put them to the sword and scatter [their armies]. Islam says: Kill in the service of Allah.... Islam says, whatever good there is exists thanks to the sword and in the shadow of the sword! People cannot be made obedient except with the sword. The sword is the key to Paradise that can be opened only for Holy Warriors! There are hundreds of other Koranic Psalms and Hadiths [sayings of the prophet Mohammed] urging Muslims to value war and to fight. Does all this mean that Islam is a religion that prevents men from waging war? I spit upon those foolish souls who make such a claim." (1)

Elias Canetti, who won the Nobel literature prize for his book *Of Crowds and Power*, wrote that Islam is "A religion of war -- literally a killer religion."

Jesus told His followers to disciple all nations, and they **preached** His name everywhere with great success. Within 250 years, many of the nations where Paul preached were, in large part, Christian. What did the disciples of Mohammed do? The first four successors of Mohammed -- Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman, and Ali -- drew the sword and conquered one land after another, killing multiplied thousands as they did, and established a system of financial punishment (the Dhimmi tax system) for those who would not convert. Mohammed's first followers knew very well that Islam was a religion which condones war as a means of advancing their faith, and that jihad is the obligation of every able-bodied male. Many Muslims do not believe this approach is still valid for today, but millions of them do.

The Prime Minister of Italy, Mr. Silvio Berlusconi, is the only world leader who has accurately portrayed the situation. In a speech given 26 September 2001, he stated that the war on terrorism is, at bottom, a clash of civilisations. "We should be conscious," he said, "of the superiority of our civilisation, which consists of a value system that has given people widespread prosperity and respect for human rights and religion. This respect certainly does not exist in the Islamic countries."

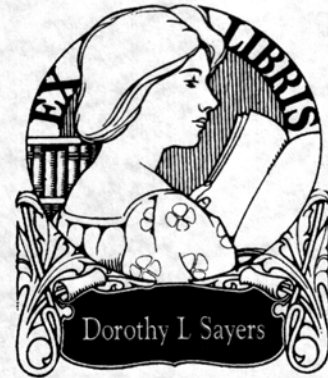
(1) Quoted From Dr. George Grant's book, *The Blood of the Moon*.

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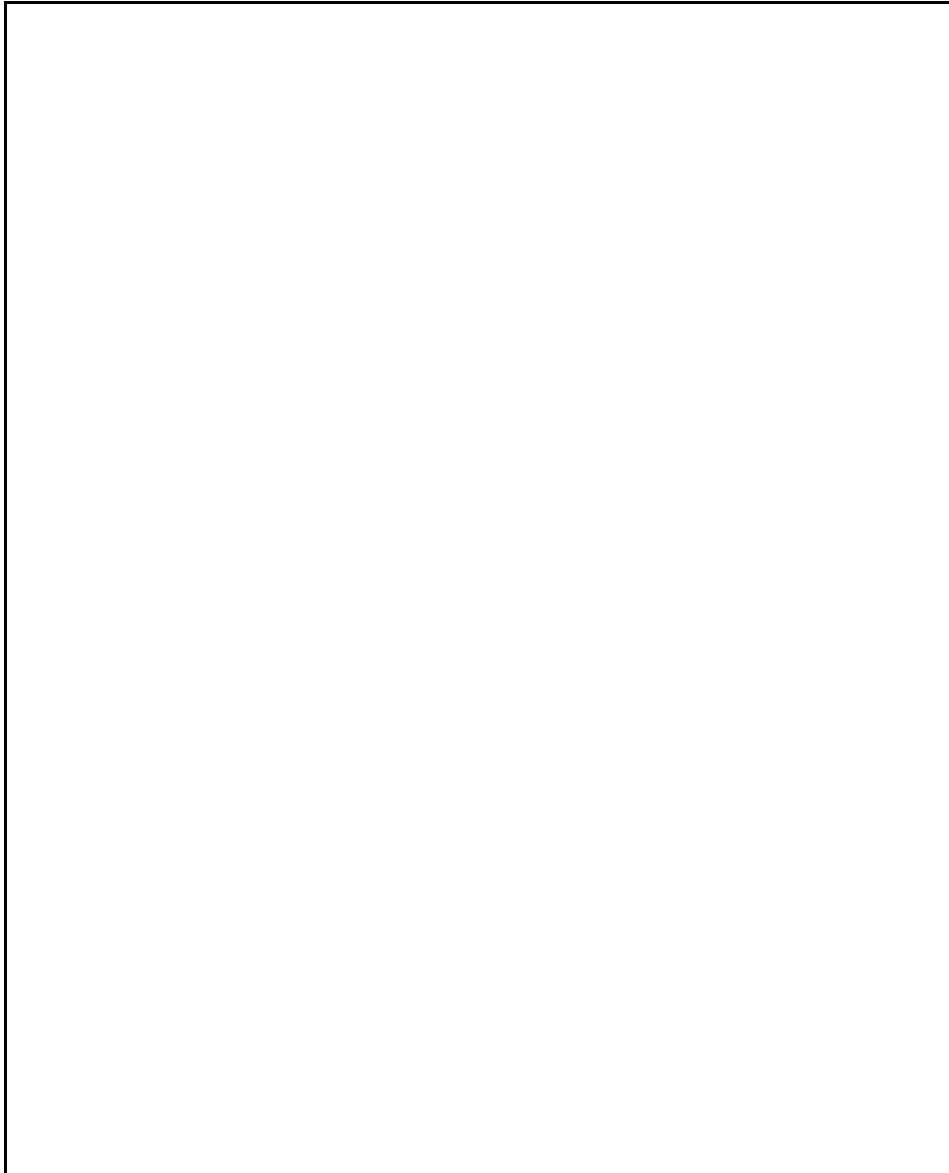
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CUSTOM-DESIGNED PROGRAMS

Those who successfully homeschool LD and/or ADD youngsters tend to design programs that are child-centered. If the student has special interests and talents, they get top priority. Also, there is a strong commitment to teaching the basic skills. Most homeschooling families are absolutely adamant in their belief that all children must master reading, writing, spelling, and math. The time schedule might not coincide with the sequence set out by regular schools, but teaching parents rarely give up until the goal is achieved.

It's not unusual for home educators to postpone formal reading instruction until a child is eight or nine. On the other hand, many teaching mothers introduce phonics to four-year-olds. It's a matter of readiness and a personalized curriculum that fits the student's capabilities and the parent's teaching style. Faced with an area where a youngster's development is slow, many homeschoolers have the courage to wait for a window of opportunity where interest and desire motivate the child to leap into the subject with enthusiasm and optimism. It's the teacher's job to be alert to the subtle signals that indicate when a new stage of development has prepared a youngster for success in previously unexplored territory.

Alice, a pert little ten-year-old, had not mastered even the most basic elements of mathematical computation. She'd gotten stuck somewhere in the first grade and never progressed. Every year, her mother introduced her to a new book and a new set of teaching techniques. Every year, the child resisted instruction and gained no new skills. As a youngster, her mother had been slow in catching onto arithmetic. She had complete faith that her daughter was merely following the same pattern and would catch up.

In the summer vacation between fourth and fifth grade, Alice ran across an old first-grade math workbook. One rainy afternoon, she curled up in the porch swing and worked her way through all the problems. She had so much fun that she asked her mother if they had another book of "number games." By bedtime, the child finished the material in the second-grade book. To finish the third-level workbook, she needed a little instruction. With her mother providing guidance when needed, Alice played with her math books for the rest of the summer. By the time the family resumed homeschooling in the fall, Alice was doing fifth-grade arithmetic, just like she should have been. Somehow, over the summer, reasoning with numbers came to make sense to her.

Many homeschoolers have had similar experiences. Some children just can't seem to learn to read when the basic literacy skills are introduced in first and

second grade, then suddenly catch on somewhere in their early to mid-teens. Although they get a late start, it all comes together for them, and they're on grade level within a few years.

That seems to have been what happened to Winston Churchill. He was a nonreader until the age of thirteen or fourteen. He was well versed in the classics and world history, because he was homeschooled and his family read to him. In his mid-teens, he was sent to a military academy, where he learned to read and write and spell well enough to become a war correspondent when he was only nineteen. In his mature years, Churchill wrote several highly respected volumes on the history of World War II.

Albert Einstein followed a similar pattern. As an adult, he often referred to his "retarded development." Although he did not learn to read until he was a teenager, he was a successful student in a major university in his early twenties and was a prolific letter writer throughout most of his life.

Many students have trouble when forced through a fixed curriculum at a predetermined pace. For those whose intellectual growth does not progress in accordance with standard developmental patterns, homeschooling has the flexibility to let the student's readiness be the determining factor in deciding which skills and topics are introduced. When a student is really ready, learning is a natural, spontaneous, pleasant process.

CAN PARENTS REALLY TEACH LD AND ADD CHILDREN?

Families who make the choice to homeschool their LD and/or ADD children get the information they need about materials and instructional methods through support groups, conferences, and a network of specialists who help home educators develop the skills they need to successfully teach their children at home. LD children will still have trouble learning to read and write and spell when schooling is done at home. In most cases, the teaching parent keeps changing the curriculum until one is found that works. Homeschooled youngsters with an attention deficit disorder still have difficulty sitting still and paying attention. Through patience, determination, a thorough understanding of the child, and a commitment to providing everything necessary for successful learning, most homeschoolers figure out ways to keep ADD students organized, on task, and energetically involved in academic activities.

In the hands of the right parents, LD/ADD students thrive in the quiet, noncompetitive environment outside the regular classroom. When asked if such a radical commitment was worth it, these parents usually beam with delight as they say, "We've got our child back."