

Keystone

The Journal of Christian Home Schoolers

of New Zealand

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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

Pat & Phillipa Ashton
Matthew (14), Amanda (12),
David (10), Jessica (9), Lydia (1).

KEYSTONE

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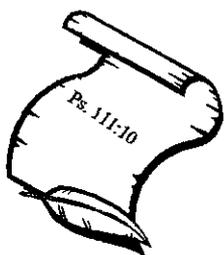
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KEYSTONE is intended to inform, challenge, encourage and inspire. The trustees of CHomeS believe that the Christian faith is being undervalued. Christianity alone is fully able to present a world view that is comprehensive, coherent, consistent and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

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Editorial



We want to say a big "Thank You" to Sheryl Rogers of Auckland who has been a foundation Trustee of Christian Home Schoolers of NZ, Inc., from the day of its legal incorporation. The need for the Trustees to be in closer, more constant contact has made it difficult with the others being in the lower North Island, so Sheryl has stepped down. She and husband John are still home educating four at home as well as making time for their new granddaughter. Thanks Sheryl and John!

The HefNet, Home Education Foundation's email discussion group, has had a rip-roaring six months since its beginning! There were 54 messages posted in August, 104 in November, 177 in December and so far in January (today's the 19th) there have been 145! There have been great discussions on unschooling, curriculum materials for history, feminism, coping with toddlers, feminism, the social welfare system and feminism, Christianity, atheism & feminism, unemployment and the spectre of having to send your children back to school. See page 4 for details of how to join.

The kids next door, for whom we babysit for at least 2 hours five days a week, had a month of D.A.R.E. (Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education) at the school up the road. It was right through the curriculum. In spelling, the words were related to D.A.R.E., and I also learned that the kids get to choose their own words to learn for their spelling quizz each week. Here are the lists from the 9-year-old: Week 2: glue, gin, drugs, pills, crime, smoking, feelings, beer, wine. Week 3: support, jail, tobacco, police, respect, dope, petrol, caffeine, nicotine. Week 4: choices, panadol, whiskey, drugs, smoking, cannibis, nicotine, sharing, spirits, misuse.

Well, judging by the words, this poor 9-year-old knows more about drugs, intravenous use, booze of all types, the effects of them all, where to get more information and support, and the legal penalties associated than I did when I was a 15-year-old who had just spent 14 months travelling all over Europe staying in the cheapest (ie, sleaziest) parts of every city. Back in '68 we had a day or two at school when a cop would come and talk about Mary Jane (MJ, marijuana) and even pass a joint around class on a paper plate. Listen, those kinds of lessons couldn't teach us anything: one time the paper plate came back to the cop with TWO joints on it. Those who knew about it knew ALL about it; those who knew nothing, didn't want to know, but got their minds dragged through it anyway, whether they needed it or not....just like dogs on the dosing strip or sheep in the sheep dip. It is the same with sex education classes: they take remarkably clean minds and fill them with smut. I'm here to tell you we would never treat our children at home the way they would treat them in the state system if we gave them 1/2 a chance.

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The Home Education Foundation Presents:

KEYSTONE

TEACH Bulletin

HefNet

KEYSTONE is the Journal of Christian Home Schoolers of New Zealand, Inc., (CHomeS) a charitable trust established to promote the concept of home education. First published in November 1989, **KEYSTONE** is intended to inform, challenge, encourage and inspire by providing a number of regular columns such as Letters to the Editor, Home Educators Did It, Home Education Research, Tough Questions People Ask, Learning Disabilities, Bits of Books, Over a Cuppa and several others. **KEYSTONE** will feature a different New Zealand Christian Home Educating family each issue. The A4 sized, 28-page Journal is published six times a year for an annual subscription of \$28 or two years for \$53.

TEACH Bulletin is a monthly newsletter of TEACH Publications (Thorough Education Achieved in a Caring Home). Articles deal with political developments which may affect 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 four to six page newsletter comes out 11 times a year (none in December) for an annual subscription of \$16 or two years for \$30.

HefNet is the Home Education Foundation's email list discussion group. Established in July 1998, this group has expanded quickly and includes home educators with a wonderfully diverse range of political, religious, philosophical, and methodological views. This mix makes for some red-hot yet edifying debates! Subscription is free by emailing the message "subscribe" to hefnet@xtra.co.nz.

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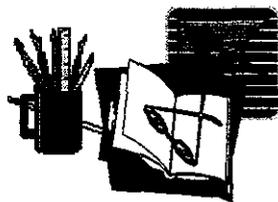
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Home Education Research



Choosing to Home School

By David W. Kirkpatrick
BS (Ed), MA (History)

The most rapidly growing segment of education for students at the K-12 level is home schooling. Estimated to include only about 10,000 students in 1970, it grew to perhaps a quarter of a million by the mid-1980s, and now some say the total is as high as two million, although the U.S. Department of Education says it may be only 500,000.

Home schooling is now legal in all 50 states, although the specific requirements vary from state to state. It would be hard to top Delaware as the most cooperative state in this regard. Anyone wishing to home school there need only send a one-page form to the state Department of Public Instruction notifying them of their intentions. Background checks, teacher certification, curriculum requirements or final tests are all unnecessary, nor is any state or accrediting agency given authority over these students. In 1995 State Superintendent Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., said that he hadn't seen any egregious problems.

And why should any be expected, at least in comparison to traditional schooling, whether in a government or an independent school? Home schooling has a long and successful history, extending back to the nation's earliest days and beyond. In the 17th century William Penn was among this group. In the 18th century so, too, were many of the Founding Fathers, not least of all George Washington. In the 19th century it included Abraham Lincoln, who not only received home schooling but, like many others, was largely self-taught. Nor were these exceptions; this was the rule since there was no educational system during this time, and relatively few schools of any significant nature.

The public school system began emerging with a common school law passed in Pennsylvania in 1834 and the work of Horace Mann in Massachusetts during the next two decades. Still, home schooling continued. Among its 20th century products are Associate Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, William Buckley and his nine brothers and sisters, Pearl Buck, and anthropologist Margaret Mead - whose grandmother said she wanted the girl to get an education and therefore refused to let her attend any school at all.

Of course those who home school, and those who represent them, claim the students do far better than

those who go through the conventional process. Anyone who thinks that this is only special interest pleading has not reviewed the evidence. Departments of education in such states as Alaska, Tennessee and Washington have conducted studies that found the typical home schooled student comes out ahead on virtually every significant measurement. Achievement tests in the 1994 school year found that these students averaged 30 percent higher than both public and private school students.

Established education groups, having lost the battle on legal and academic grounds, often cite the need for social development, as if a public school is not only the only place where that can be done but that it is done better there, neither of which is true.

Self-esteem is a much proclaimed goal for students by many public educators, a goal that, whatever its merits as a theory, has created much controversy across the nation. A 1986 study found that home-schooled children did far better when measured for this attribute, only 10% even being below the national average.

Studies by Cornell University Professor Urie Bronfenbrenner suggest that, at least until age 10 or 12, students who spend more time with other children their age than with their parents tend to rely on other children for their values. The result? They tend to have a lower sense of self-worth, of optimism, of respect for their parents, and, ironically, even of trust in their peers.

Furthermore, more than 200 colleges, including such prestigious institutions as Harvard, Yale and Princeton, actively seek to attract such students because of not only their high SAT scores but their advanced social skills as well.

A study for the Smithsonian Institution by Harold McCurdy concluded that genius is more likely to develop among children who spend more time with their parents and other adults, less time with their peers, and have freedom to work out their fantasies. McCurdy also suggested that the public school system tends to do the reverse and restrict the development of geniuses.

Martin Engle, head of the National Demonstration Center for Early Childhood Education in Washington, D.C. some years ago said children sense rejection if they are schooled too early. Raymond S. Moore, citing Engle in a September 1985 PHI DELTA KAPPAN article, included the comment that "early schooling may be the most pervasive form of child abuse in the Eighties."

That may be carrying things a bit too far, but one wonders why, in the face of all this evidence, so many public school people seem to resent, or even be hostile to, home schooled students. In district after district they

are rejected when they try to participate in a limited number of school activities, academic or extracurricular.

As Stephen Arons wondered, in his 1983 book, *Compelling Belief*, "Why is it that millions of children who are pushouts or dropouts amount to business as usual in the public schools, while one family educating a child at home becomes a major threat to universal public education and the survival of democracy?"

As in so many other instances, however, the public schools are gradually being forced to reconsider their intransigence. As of mid-1996, seven states have laws requiring public schools to allow home-schoolers to take part in interscholastic events. Increasingly, school districts are voluntarily allowing homeschoolers to be active in various school events. For example, 24 of Pennsylvania's 500 operating school districts are now in this category.

All of this ties into the school choice movement for a number of reasons.

First, not everyone is a home schooler because that is their first choice. When their school district will not allow them to send their child to a school other than the one the district selects, and they cannot afford tuition at an independent school, they home school of necessity. If full school choice grants existed they would have many more options of both government and independent schools as well as at home.

Second, even those who voluntarily home school tend to do so at the elementary level. One-third or more of these students transfer to an established school, usually a public school, at the secondary level. Grants, again, would open up the options to them.

Third, as noted, students who are homeschooled and, for whatever reason, spend more time with adults are better adjusted, more likely to be creative, and, therefore, more likely to be successful and contribute to the common good.

Fourth, homeschoolers are doing the public an economic favor, as well as helping their children. The cost of attending an average independent school (cost, not just tuition) is about one-third to one-half that of a public school, but homeschooling is only about one-tenth of the public school costs. A grant to a homeschooling parent of \$800 per child is a bargain compared to spending \$8,000 or more in a public school, even if the results were only comparable, rather than as superior as they are for the home-schooled student.

The problem, therefore, is not one of academics, social adjustment or the public interest one. It is political because of the difficulty of convincing legislators or, more importantly, their constituents that there are sound reasons to assist parents in educating their children if they are so inclined. Certainly no one should be

persuaded to do this if they aren't interested, since home-schooling is a major commitment not to be undertaken lightly. But since those who voluntarily do so have an unmatched track record literally going back for centuries, to give them a modest bit of assistance would be in the public interest.

Home schoolers have much to gain, and to give, by supporting the school choice movement. Just as the restrictions have been relaxed, or eliminated, on home schooling as the number of participants, thus constituents of elected officials, have grown, so, too, would the availability and flexibility of full school choice expand.

Evidence exists for this belief also, although it is often unknown or overlooked by those who are so afraid of government regulations, or cynical about government itself in today's environment.

Pennsylvania regularly is at or near the top in the percentage of students who attend independent schools, in the general range of 17-18% of all students compared to about 10% nationwide. Yet attorney Philip Murren, a leading Pennsylvania legal expert on this subject, and a member of the law firm of William Ball who has defended a number of school freedom cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, has publicly said that the state has the fewest regulations on the independent sector of any state in the nation.

This is not coincidental. As the constituency for a given position grows, the likelihood of its being heard, and being successful, grows. Can you imagine the outcry that would result if millions of parents, sending their children to any school, or no school, as they chose, were faced with prospective stifling government laws or regulations restricting their freedom? The outcry in 1995 when Rep. George Miller (D-CA) proposed an amendment in Congress which appeared to require only certified teachers in nongovernment schools - which resulted in only his vote being cast for it - would seem mild by comparison.

Home schoolers and independent schoolers would gain from full school choice, and huge numbers of public school students and their parents would have alternatives to the educationally deficient, not to mention often personally dangerous, school environments in which they presently find themselves.

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David is the author of *Choice in Schooling*, 1990 and *School Choice: The Idea That Will Not Die*, 1997. He is an independent researcher/writer, a Senior Fellow with the Allegheny Institute for Public Policy in Pittsburgh and Director of the Institute's School Choice Project.]

Feature Family



Pat & Phillipa Ashton of Motupiko

Frequently referred to as the Ashton Clan, we are Pat, Phillipa, Matthew (14 1/2), Amanda (12), David (10), Jessica (9), Johanna (5), Nicolas (3 1/2), Lydia (1), and a baby due in May.

Pat grew up in the Nelson area and came from a family of 4 boys. He was raised in a home with a nominal Christian mother and an unbelieving father. All the boys attended Sunday School and Rally for varying numbers of years.

Phillipa spent her childhood shifting to many different areas around NZ and came from a family of 4 girls. She was not raised in a Christian home and never had any type of Christian input.

We met when Pat was 17 and Phillipa 14, and have been together since. We were married in 1980. Our first year of marriage was when the Lord began to reveal Himself to us and we both gave our hearts to the Lord in October 1981 at a Barry Smith meeting in Nelson.

Our early years of marriage were really busy. We were very involved in a large social circle, and after giving our hearts to the Lord we found it quite difficult to be a part of the church and not do the same things (Bad company corrupts good character). So we jumped boots-and-all into any Christian service, seminar or whatever that we could find. You will all know that was a recipe for disaster and within a few years we were pretty burnt out and spent the next 7 years or so in a desert, spiritually speaking. But ... God who is faithful to complete in us the work that He began ... slowly but surely started to restore us.

It really began with a decision at the end of 1990, to home educate our children following some negative situations in the state system with Matthew. We had talked about home schooling a few years before this - then suddenly, there we were - the parents of a 5 year old! So off to school he went. I remember well, watching Matthew walk out across the paddocks to meet the school bus and my heart just grieved. Somehow it just didn't seem right. God used the negative situations that had developed to flush us out of the woodwork and be committed to His plan of education for our children. I know this might sound rather spiritual, but let me tell you what happened - true - . Phillipa made the decision to homeschool Matthew and

I decided to support her. It was a couple of years down the track before I saw this schooling way of life as a conviction before the Lord and not just an educational option for now.

It would be fair to say that this decision has for us been the catalyst for more change than anything else in our lives, except our initial decision to follow the Lord. It has been and still is a journey of change and growth, trial and error, good times and hard. Sometimes we look back at photo albums and the likes, and realize we are not the same people that we were. Be warned: home education, when committed to the Lord, will change your life.

At the time we started out on this journey, there were only a handful of other families all over the Nelson Area that we had heard of that homeschooled, so the support mainly came via anything that could be read. As time went on a bigger local group became the main source of support.

What a mighty God we serve!!

We have always been actively involved in the Support Group and were co-ordinators for a period of time, including doing a *Top*

of the South Newsletter. Over the years both us and the children, have formed some really good friendships. We have always felt this to be a valuable lifeline during the times of doubt that inevitably come along. I must say though, that even in this area there has been much change. Shifting to Motupiko (the western ranges of Nelson, about 50 minutes south of Nelson City) and having a larger family have made it more difficult in the last couple of years to keep up the level of contact that we have previously been able to.

As far as curriculum is concerned, it seems to me that it can be an endless abyss, one that has the potential to swallow every dollar Pat can bring into the house if we are not careful. Most of it has good points and not so good, and what seems to suit one family will not suit another. I feel cautious to mention anything by name because it is easy to leave someone out there feeling discouraged. So then what have we found? Well we have used a variety of different materials over the years ranging from a semi-workbook + projects to unit study only, and a full package workbook type. We have had stints of all sorts of in between for periods of time too.

It seems that change is inevitable along the way, simply because our family structure is always changing and we are (hopefully) always growing wiser, I'm sure that is a key. If at all possible, involve Dad as much as possible in choosing and deciding on materials. They change their minds much less, and do not seem to be so affected by how they feel on the day. I have found it easy to be dissatisfied just by talking to someone who is excited about something new they are doing. Instead of always changing we have found it better to really pray

and know from the Lord what is right for us to do, then when a problem within the programme surfaces (which is inevitable) we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater, but pray for a way to deal with the problem, within what we already know the Lord has shown us to do. We are finding that there are many ways of being very flexible, so long as we stay focused on our long term goals for the children as individuals and the family as a whole. Having said all this, still we must in all areas of our lives be open to the Lord showing and leading us in a new way. It really is a walk of faith and I think that is why home educating has changed our family so...much.

Now that we have children coming into their young adult years, we are realizing even more that there is no way to really know how to guide the children other than having more of God's wisdom. No wonder the book of Proverbs talks so much about wisdom. Having older children as well as little ones makes us feel very much like we need to be a jack of all trades and them some. For us having Pat working from home has been a very big plus. I need to maintain a fairly good standard of organisation so that the day-to-day things run as smoothly as possible. We have always involved the children in this and consider that they are part of the team in terms of the whole function of this family.

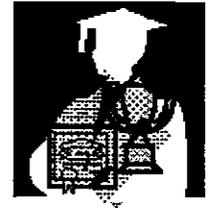
When we first shifted to Motupiko, about 7 years back, we knew the Lord was leading us to a more family based lifestyle. First of all we bought 50 acres of land, then built a house. Of course, like most kiwi pioneers, we moved in way before the house was finished. I thought at this point I would allow myself 2 years commuting to work and then I must work from home. Just over 2 years later we started a small business making wooden furniture, called Homewood Products. As all you self-employed folk will know, that's when the trials really begin, but God is good and He blessed us in many ways we could not have imagined. From the furniture business we developed a furniture wax product which we decided to pot up and market. Before too long the furniture had taken a side step and now our family business is making and selling beeswax polishes. Financially speaking, this hasn't been a bed of roses, however this has allowed us the freedom to plan each day as we feel appropriate before the Lord.

About 2 years ago we started meeting with several other families in a home fellowship situation. This has proved to be a time of blessing as the Lord has challenged our thinking about church, missions and family.

Once again this is a journey, and like all other areas of our lives these journeys will only cease if we choose not to be open about moving on or when we go to be with the Lord.

We'd like to leave you with the words of Jesus - "Take heart! for I have overcome the world." (John 16.33b) What a mighty God we serve!!

Home Schoolers Did It



Bill Richards

Born in 1909, Bill was living in Hamilton in 1991. He is an author and poet on the early days of NZ. His books include *Off the Sheep's Back*, *A Pioneer's Life*, and *The Ballads of Bill Richards*. One of nature's gentlemen, he is polite and quietly spoken. Richards said having his story published changed his life. Whereas he'd always seen himself as an uneducated hermit, he found he was capable of producing literary works and meeting a lot of new people.

His isolated Raglan upbringing had left him with little self-confidence. The development of this state is traced in the book, but its matter-of-factness leaves no room for self-pity.

Mr. Richards went to school in a nearby shed for just two years, from the age of 12 to 14. He was the only boy there, as well as in his own family. He said he had "no teenage life" and never learned to dance. This led to a feeling of awkwardness in mixing with people.

Because he didn't have companionship, Richards believes his senses were developed more than most people's. His memories of sounds and smells from his youth are vivid. "I recall everything and see it very clearly before me when I write it."

Work was a pleasure for the young Richards, as he revelled in the respect and companionship of first his bushfelling uncles, and later his shearing mates. He was treated as an equal, away from the demands and inequalities of his home life.

When it came to shearing, he developed more than respect. A childhood injury, which had been brushed aside as malingering, had left him with a permanent weakness in his left arm and hand. Under his Uncle Fred's guidance, he developed a new way of holding a sheep, using his knees and keeping the animal on a point of balance. Brute strength was no longer an issue. However, Godfrey and Ivan Bowen have largely been credited with developing this method.

Richards said with a quiet but fierce pride that he met the Bowens four times in shearing contests, and beat them four times. While one was shearing, the other would take notes on Richards' shearing method. They eventually called it "the Bowen technique". But both Bowens sheared differently, said Richards, "So which is it?"

Shearing is still part of Richards' life, and he's a keen

supporter of another famous set of brothers--David and John Fagan. There's more pride as he reveals how he recommended John Fagan for an MBE for services to farming. It was duly awarded in the year's Queen's Birthday Honours list (1991).

On society in general, Richards said there's too much money, people are not working hard enough, and there's too much leisure time, beer, radio and TV.

(By Sally Holloway in Manawatu Evening Standard, 10 August 1991, pg. 5.)

George Fairweather Moonlight

Born in Arbroath, Scotland, 1831; died in bush near Hope Saddle, 16 July 1884. Contemporaries wrote the following of him to raise money for his headstone:

"The name of George Moonlight is a household word throughout the length and breadth of the Colony, wherever mining is, or has been, an industry. From the earliest days of Otago, up to the time of his death, he was the foremost leader of the many hardy pioneers of civilisation. Scorning a life of ease, and ever longing for the arduous and often ill-requited search for new goldfields, generous and open-hearted to a fault, George Moonlight died as he lived, with his harness on his back, far from the haunts of men."

The oldest diggings in the Grey Valley claim his name as their discoverer. The extensive country in the upper Buller owes its present development more to his energy and perseverance than to any other man. As a pioneer of settlement, he ranks as a hero in a humble walk of life.

In 1864-5 he came with others to Grey River and prospected streams on the north side. He found large nuggets in a stream now called Moonlight Creek, which was dredged up until 1940's. The whole district is now called Atarau, moonlight in Maori.

Other diggers seemed to follow him to work the same areas, so he began to file claims under his partner Jack Tarrant's name. George built the Commercial Hotel near the old town of Hampden, which became the first building on the modern site of Murchison. He named a few creeks after American rivers he knew: Shenandoah, Rappahannock and Minnehaha.

Little is known of his early life, except that he went to sea as a boy. In later years he told friends that he had never been to school in his life, but as a youngster had tramped from York to London, there to ship as a cabin boy for South Africa.

Moonlight stories and legends still linger. The most notable thing about them is that not one word stigmatises the man's integrity. The respect accorded to his memory is probably his finest memorial.

(From New Zealand's Heritage, Vol. 3, Part 39, Paul Hamlyn Ltd., Wellington, 1972.)

Heather Sheen

Howdy! I'm Heather Sheen, and I am in my fifteenth year of home schooling. My parents are the Home School Leaders for the State of Connecticut in the U.S.A.

Of course, as a lifelong home schooler, I am privileged to have been locked in a closet all my life. I have no idea what the real world is like, and I don't have any friends. I will be allowed to meet someone my own age when I turn twenty-one—if I'm really good! Sound familiar?

It's always a blessing to be able to share with someone the REAL benefits of home schooling—and it's not sleeping in every morning! It's having a wonderful, strong relationship with my family. It's actually having my SISTER for my best friend! It's being able to read...and even write! And most of all it's having a vibrant relationship with the Lord, which I probably wouldn't have had time to develop if I were in a traditional school setting.

Some people look at me a little strangely when I tell them I am home schooling through college (university). I know they're thinking, "She had the opportunity to get away from her bossy parents and go to college and she STAYED HOME???" But I loved being home schooled! It seems to me that if it worked for thirteen years, why not continue it?

Now, in addition to being a home schooler, I am also a State Leader's kid. This carries some special benefits with it. For instance, I have had the opportunity to lick literally thousands of stamps. I have collated reams of legislative alerts. I'm pretty sure I've mastered some—SOME—of the intricacies of bulk mailing. And at our state convention I have the high honor and privilege of wearing a name tag that says "OFFICIAL GOPHER!" (meaning people ask me to "go for" note paper, a new OHP bulb, water for the speaker, things like that.) Now if that doesn't cause a swelled head, I don't know what will.

But seriously, there's a real benefit to being a state leader's kid. And it is that all that mailing and collating and gophering is helping parents all over Connecticut raise their children—children who, I believe, are the next generation of America's leaders. Raising children is something that will impact the world till the end of time. Your children and your children's children are a legacy that will continue to affect the world long after we're all gone—long after people have forgotten about our work, our jobs, all the trivial things—like licking stamps!—that seem so important right now. The trivial jobs are important, but they're important because they help parents toward the real goal—raising up godly men and women.

And I get to be in on helping parents do that!

Fully Equipped



The Final Word

by Gregg Harris

Bob Pierce had a wonderful opportunity. He was going to found one of the largest Christian relief organizations in history. We know it today as World Vision. But Bob realized he would never be able to meet the demands of his international ministry and fulfill his duty to his wife and children at home.

So he neglected his family. He left them for up to ten months at a time while doing "the Lord's work" around the globe.

In her book *Days of Glory Seasons of Night*, written lovingly but honestly by Pierce's daughter, Marilee Pierce Dunker, we see a man's life ruined by opportunities in conflict with basic obligations. No doubt about it, Bob Pierce loved his Lord. His decision was sincere. "Doesn't Luke 14:26 say we must hate mother and father, wife and children to be Christ's disciple?" he would ask. "Well, that's what I'm doing." In response to questions about his long absences from home he would reply, "I've made an agreement with God that I'll take care of His helpless little lambs overseas if He'll take care of mine at home."

At first glance this might look like heroic dedication. But God didn't accept the "agreement." One of Pierce's three daughters committed suicide. His marriage ended in separation. He himself died alone.

"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim. 5:8). Bob Pierce had no problem paying the bills, but providing for one's family involves more than just material goods. Love and emotional support are part of the obligation.

Mr. Pierce, like many men today, allowed opportunities to distract him from his obligations.

Obliged, I'm Sure

God never relieves us of our obligations to one another. Instead, He relieves us of our obligations toward Himself. In a sense, He sets us free from our duty to serve Him so that we can fulfill whatever moral or legal vows we have made. That is what it means to be "the Lord's freedman" in I Corinthians 7:22. "For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave."

God will not allow people to serve as "Christ's slave" by shirking their other obligations.

On one occasion, Paul sent a very helpful brother in Christ named Onesimus back to his master, Philemon, with a letter requesting the runaway slave's freedom. We do not know what the answer was, but if Philemon waived his rights to this slave, Onesimus became Philemon's freedman, and therefore free to serve God with Paul as Christ's slave. If Philemon refused to waive his rights, God deferred to Philemon and waived His claim on Onesimus' time. The young slave, no matter how talented or helpful in the Lord's work, was then required to be the Lord's freedman. God would not allow him to run away from his obligation to his earthly master.

Is it any wonder that Paul consoled his readers who were in bondage, "Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let it trouble you." In other words, God understands -- there is no condemnation. Paul also advises, "If you have opportunity to become free, do so." And he adamantly warns others, "You were bought with a price. Do not become the slaves of men." God wants us to avoid entanglements, but if we have made a vow or a contract, He wants us to keep our word.

God is Family Friendly

"But," you say, "we are talking about family life, not slavery." Paul applies the same principle to all moral and legal obligations, and specifically marriage.

The obligations of marriage demand time and attention. Paul is clear on this. "I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs -- how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world -- how he can please his wife -- and his interests are divided" (I Cor. 7:26-28).

There we have it -- marriage is a moral and legal obligation. God understands that marriage and family will divide our interests. It is acceptable to God for us to take some time away from "world missions" to be a good husband and father. There is no condemnation in keeping your marriage vows.

Bob Pierce was wrong.

Husbands, Wives, and Children First

Not only is it okay to be a good spouse and parent, God will not let a runaway spouse serve him any more than he will let a runaway slave.

Though we are called to "hate" all human relationships in comparison to our love for Christ, we may not neglect our marriage obligations after our salvation, even if our spouse is an unbeliever (see I Cor. 7:12-14). As He did for Onesimus, God gives married Christians the liberty needed to fulfill their obligations without

condemnation.

To some extent, married people are the Lord's freedmen. We are excused from all aspects of service that are incompatible with our family responsibilities. We need not feel too bad about this. After all, the normal status of an elder in the church is "married with children." Not many adults have the special ability to remain single without falling into immorality. God is not surprised or disappointed with this. His plan reserves a special place for faithful husbands and fathers, a place that is perfectly compatible with our family obligations.

Waiting for the Right Season of Life

Was founding World Vision a mistake? Not entirely. The opportunity was wonderful and the need obvious. Bob Pierce was clearly the man for the job. It was the timing of Bob Pierce's endeavor that caused the disaster in his family. He was a runaway married husband and father. If he had waited just a few years, perhaps until his wife and children could be part of his team, the casualties would probably have been far fewer.

If Pierce had fulfilled his obligations, his wonderful opportunity would probably have still been there. To be sure, some degree of personal sacrifice would still have been required, for there is no crown of glory without a cross of suffering, but the severe casualties in Bob Pierce's family need not have happened.

It is sometimes said of Christian homeschooling parents that we are self-centered because we don't give as much time to "the Lord's work" as we did before we started to home school. It has even been suggested by a pastor or two that we have made an idol of our families and forsaken our callings to serve Christ.

I don't believe that's true in most cases. Most of us are merely fulfilling our obligations in this very special season of our lives. We are avoiding Bob Pierce's mistake.

Someday we will no longer be mommies and daddies. Our children will be older. We will have more time and more freedom. Our experience in managing our households will have prepared us in ways mere academic training could never do. And we will be able to embrace wonderful opportunities to serve our Lord with no casualties and no regrets.

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Learning Disabilities



Totally Teachable

by Tom & Sherry Bushnell

"I do it!" shouted the independent two year old, stubbornly pouring the heavy pitcher of milk, overflowing the cup onto the floor.

Sound familiar? The lord brings situations into our adult lives to remind us how teachable we need to be. We can show our children how to be teachable and how to teach, by our example.

Scripture is full of prayers for receptive hearts. "Show me thy ways", "Teach me thy paths", "Give me wisdom and understanding." Someone with an eager-to-learn attitude is a pleasure to be around. The person who is proud, having a closed heart, is a frustration to work with.

Before we begin teaching in our home, we check for teacherable hearts. If they are not, we need to find out why.

Let's look at five potentially troublesome areas.

1. Are they in pain, sick or tired?

If our children are having a bad day with pain, sickness, or if they seem overly tired, their attitudes will naturally be negative towards learning. Our children probably have not learned the self-control to continue when they are not well, but we can model how to have a good attitude, in spite of how we feel.

2. Do they have an angry heart toward a parent, brother or sister?

When we are consumed with anger or bitterness, our attitude toward life and learning is closed. Think of the opposing attitudes. One child, with eager eyes and a watchful attitude, soaks up information hungrily. The other child, with darting eyes of fire and a mind that is set on getting even, may be looking at the paper or parent, but his mind is far away, scheming about how angry he is and how wrong the other person is.

Have an attitude check. Are our hearts troubled? Was there something amiss at the breakfast, lunch or dinner table? This is our first clue that things may not be OK.

3. Are they frustrated with the task or work?

Once in a while it is good to give assignments that are a little more difficult than normal. However, if the tasks are consistently a big challenge, and it takes a

In Line with Scripture



I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. — Philippians 4:2

Because people are all different conflict happens wherever people get together. Conflict is therefore also a reality in the church, in our families, in our support groups. We can deal with conflict in various ways.

The easiest way is to leave and go elsewhere. That happens repeatedly... but it really shouldn't be an option for Christians. In the church at Philippi two ladies didn't get on with one another but leaving for another church just wasn't an option - the nearest neighbouring church was a two day walk away. Paul challenged those two ladies to deal with conflict the hard way - to work it out.

Leaving a church fellowship, like leaving a support group, over an area of disagreement has several negative consequences. First: by walking away we're not dealing with our own involvement in the situation. Second: we are modelling to our children and young people that walking away from something is okay. Third: we are breaking fellowship which always causes a measure of pain to some of those left behind.

Another way some of us within the Christian community deal with conflict is to talk about our unhappiness. We let everyone know how we have been wronged, or that we are no longer content with the status quo. Openly airing our unhappiness also has negative results. First: it usually results in others taking sides so that we gain some support, but we also alienate others. Second: we often become more entrenched ourselves as other unhappy people encourage our self pity. Third: the conflict, instead of being resolved often deepens.

Eugene Peterson wrote about this problem of conflict in the church (*Subversive Spirituality*) and suggested that a more God-honouring way is to begin with ourselves. He suggests we ask ourselves three questions.

First, is the matter a serious and central issue or is it a peripheral issue? Often it is little things that get us worked up so we need to ask: Is it important?

Secondly, am I speaking my concerns about this matter as someone who is committed to this church? Often a lot of the talk in areas of discontent is merely sniping by people who take no active role.

Third, how can I go about making a difference? Improvement and change in the situation may well come about as you begin to meet with others to pray for those

involved.

These three questions are good to ask when you have a problem with your church. But the same questions can also be helpful when it comes to conflict in your family, your support group or in your marriage. Is this issue in my support group important enough to get worked up over? Am I dealing with it as someone committed to the group? What can I do within the group to make a difference?

You don't get a choice about conflict - it happens. You do get some choices as to how to handle those conflicts. Paul urged resolution: "I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord."

Many home education support groups are beginning to experience growing pains. Those few mums who were often also long-time friends who would make a few phone calls to organise an outing for themselves now find themselves heading a rather large and growing support group. They can feel pushed along by it and by the demands of some members who are often only names on a list, rather than old friends. Being eager to please and thinking how grateful they would have been if someone had done for them what they are now doing for others, they go to a lot of time, trouble and personal financial expense to organise a top-rated outing. And what has too often happened? The ones who lobbied most for it don't turn up. Half the ones who said they'd think about it apparently didn't and there is a mad rush on the phones at the last minute to make up the required numbers. A newsletter and complicated phone tree is needed. Too many "subscribers" never actually pay their dues. The leaders, who started by simply organising things for themselves, now feel pressured into organising things for other people, even though they themselves aren't interested. They are still leaders simply because everyone else is happy to let them do the work; and they, being the pioneers, have always done all the work themselves and are not that good at delegation.

Then "the new kid on the block" comes along. "This isn't effective/fair/democratic! Back in our support group in Waikamukau we did it this way," and the deadly seeds of discontent are sown. If the group has one, its constitution is hauled out and the wording examined with a fine toothed comb.

This is a dead give-away that the problem is spiritual in nature, a personality clash; resorting to legal documents will only result in heavy legal fees and NO change to the root problem.

Growth does require new organisational methods, but the transition can be very difficult on some people. Pay particular attention to the peculiarities of the support group's history and defer to the volunteer leaders as the martyrs they are. Above all, I plead: agree with one another in the Lord.

(by Rev. J. Westendorp and Craig Smith)

Tough Questions People Throw Your Way



How Can Anyone Possibly Teach a Child or Two and Cope with Toddlers at the Same Time?

by Kathryn van't Wout
of Christchurch

I can empathise with you! We have been home educating our children for ten years. During that time we have had 5 more babies. We have one-year-old twins so I am going to be needing all the ideas I can get! At the moment the playpen is very helpful.

Several years ago I heard a woman talking about home educating young children. She felt that the question "What do I do with my little ones?" was one of Satan's lies. Our little ones are as much a part of our home education programme as the older ones are.

The secret is in training your little children to behave in the way you want them to. That takes time and means that we may have to interrupt "teaching" time to deal with a situation, but in the long run it is worth the effort. I have to say that I have not always got this right. I wonder if I ever have!

Some ideas are ...

- a drawer/shelf/box/whatever with special activities and toys to be used only during teaching times;
- be prepared and plan activities ahead of time, eg. today they can play with puzzles for 20-30 minutes, look at book for 10-15 minutes, then play with play dough, or whatever;
- insist your child does what you want them to do — in the long run it will bring you rest and your child will feel secure in knowing the boundaries;
- have a set activity for each day, eg. play dough on Monday, painting (horrors!) on Tuesday, play in the bath (or paddling pool) on Wednesday, puzzles on Thursday and whatever on Friday;
- if you have more than one older child have one of them do an activity with the little one while you spend time with the others;
- spend some one-to-one time with your toddler so they do not feel left out and they will be more likely to play happily while you do something else;
- include them where possible in activities eg. if the older ones are doing a project that involves cutting and pasting paper, have some there for the toddler to do too;

- give up with teaching for the day!

Training your child to do what you expect of them is so important in order to be able to get things done and not be ruled by them. We need to meet their needs but not necessarily their demands!

We have ten children. The oldest are 15 year old triplets and I would like to encourage you that you WILL get there in the end. The going can be really tough at times and there have been times when I have thought that I must be crazy teaching my children at home. However, I have never seriously considered sending them to school. It is all part of the learning and growing process. What the older children don't learn now they will learn when they need it!!

Now, regarding the "chaos!" Tell me about it! No, don't! At this stage in our family life we have regular duties that each child is responsible for. They are done after breakfast, after lunch and before dinner. So, in theory, the house will look tidy (for a short while!) three times a day. I remember in past years vacuuming the floor around the toys! I just moved them over! I found it was a case of doing what I could, what was REALLY necessary, and leaving the rest. Train your children to help with picking things up and what ever else needs to be done. I came home one day and watched my 7 year old son as he tidied the garage (a weekly duty). I was so impressed with the way he tackled the job. It would have made an adult feel daunted by it and here he was doing his best. It wasn't done as well as I might have done it but he did his best and it looked better than it had before!

Sometimes I do get frustrated that work isn't being done and the place is a mess, but we are in here for the long haul. It has taken years of training for the children to learn these skills. I believe it is a very important part of their education. I become very irritated when the place is a mess so I insist that the living areas are tidied properly at duty time. The rest of the time they can have their toys every where and that is alright, at least it is manageable!

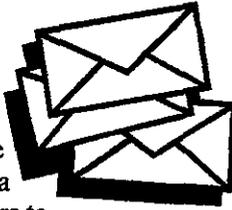
I have considered that I could have my place nice and tidy for a few hours if I sent my children to school!! But I KNOW I would rather have my children at home, mess and all! I just have to watch MY attitude.

Now that my twins are becoming bored with their play pen, I am going to be challenged again as I try to keep things running smoothly!

I am looking forward to hear other people's ideas on these subjects.

Keep up the good work!
Kathryn

Letters



(Here is one lifted from *Home Education Magazine* in the USA....I'm hoping it will spark a bit of controversy...and some letters to the editor! — Ed.)

Christian Unschooling (?)

The most loved and read section of your magazine for me is Linda Dobson's News Watch and FYI/Updates. (FYI=For Your Information). It is always thought provoking and she always adds her own special sarcasm for spice. But I do feel compelled to respond to her one sarcasm that appeared after a short FYI about a *Los Angeles Times* article called "Unschoolers Set Own Curriculum." This particular article dealt with the differences between unschoolers and Christian homeschoolers and how we ended up with the "relaxed homeschooler" phrase coined to include those that are Christian but shy away from prepackaged curriculum or very strict schedules. The ending comment from Linda was "Like we need to split even more hairs in the homeschooling movement."

I, myself, believe this is a very large hair that is being split, grown out of desire to do what is best for our children and at the same time be in submission to God. Fundamentalist Christian home educators who use an unstructured type of natural learning are constantly walking a tightrope. One side pulls us toward child-led

education that says the child will learn what he wants, when he needs it. On the other side we believe in "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." [KJV] Unschoolers are determined not to use bribes, rewards or corporal punishment. But Scripture says "He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him." [KJV] Again on one side we have the view that children should be allowed ample time to think, become bored, then time to resolve that boredom and move on to their next point of interest. But when I see my children seemingly "doing nothing," a Bible verse pops into my head: "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." [KJV]

This fine line is walked every minute of every day for many of us who want a Bible-based education but choose a path of educating our children that blatantly opposes it. It is obvious Mrs. Dobson has already chosen the side she stands on. She is comfortable where she is. But a few of us are on the fence and every question asked, every book read and every example set for our kids must first pass a kind of mental test: It is best for my child? Does it go against Biblical truth? Is it letting my child grow in an unhindered way but still in compliance with my faith?

Then there is the support group dilemma that we "relaxed homeschoolers" go through. We sometimes feel like outsiders of both the strictly Christian groups (who avoid you if you are not a full member of a church or if you don't adhere to the guidelines put forth by the state) and the unschoolers who say I am robbing my kids of a childhood because I don't allow them to believe in Santa Claus, tooth fairies, or Easter bunnies.

To some people this may seem like "splitting hairs", but to others like me it is an issue that looms larger than life. For some of us, it is a perpetual balance between two worlds. Some will choose a strictly unschooling approach that answers to no one but themselves, and others will look for freedoms set forth by the Creator. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." [KJV]

Carol Rivers
Rochester, New York

(from *Home Education Magazine*, PO Box 1587,
Palmer, AK 99645, USA.)

Huge Blessing

Merry Christmas and a blessed 1999 to you all!! The last Keystone was great. You all looked fantastic on the front cover!! You all are a huge blessing to the world of home education. Thank you for what you are doing. May our Lord richly bless your efforts. Our 5th baby is due this week and we are all waiting "patiently" for it to arrive! Hope you are all well.

Sam & Cheryl Brunke & Family
Ashburton

Puzzles



The Boat and the Log

A speedboat which travels at a constant speed in still water leaves a ramp and goes upstream in a river flowing at a constant speed. After travelling 5 km, the boat meets a drifting log. It continues upstream for 30 minutes, then returns to the ramp, arriving at the same time as the log. At what speed does the river flow?

The Joggers

Jack and Jill stand at the same spot on a running circuit. At the same instant that Jack begins to jog in a clockwise direction at 11 km/h, Jill heads off anticlockwise at 9 km/h. They continue at these constant speeds until they arrive back simultaneously at the starting point. How many times do they pass each other between starting and finishing?

Aunt Maud

Aunt Maud is nine times the age that Cristina was when Aunt Maud was Cristina's present age. When Cristina is 17 years older than Aunt Maud is now, the sum of their ages will be 100. How old are Aunt Maud and Cristina?

(Answers on page 21.)

This must be our starting point; it is not an idea God is suggesting; it is His command to our children — and it is parents' responsibility to ensure compliance.

We are told that demanding obedience is repressive, or even inhibiting, but it is not wrong to repress or even inhibit sin; indeed, it is our responsibility. God has so designed us that there is joy in obedience — the same joy as in "serving Jesus".

Fundamentally, the issue is sin and how we are to deal with it. If man is essentially good then the psychologists have a good point and about the best we can do is heed their advice. If, however, sin is the issue then no humanist psychologist will be able to deal with the problem. Sin can only be dealt with by someone who has overcome the problem — and that person is Jesus Christ. So it is with behavioural problems — the answer is obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ and that works out in obedience to earthly authorities — parents. One of the greatest gifts parents can give their children is to teach them obedience, because that is God's basic, and most important, instruction to children. It is the one commandment of the ten that relates specifically to children.

Conclusion

After all the rhetoric and opinions of men have been heard and considered there is still only one fundamental answer to behavioural problems — godly correction, designed to result in the child's obedience. In God's economy it matters little with what "disease" your child has been inflicted, he will be judged according to his obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Parents: do not make excuses for your child on the basis of some humanistic conclusion. Ensure your child's obedience to your word and instruction. Take heed to the Bible's method of gaining that obedience and your child will have an inheritance that will suit him well for eternity.

Answers to Puzzles

The Boat and the Log

The boat travels at the same speed relative to the log, whether up- or downstream. Thirty minutes away from it and 30 minutes back to it, a time of one hour, and the log travels 5 km. Therefore, the river flows at 5 km/h.

The Joggers

The first time Jack & Jill meet, the total distance run between them is one lap at a ratio of 11:9, Jack having run 11/20 of a lap, and Jill 9/20 of a lap. They will subsequently meet at various places, but the next time they meet at the point they started is when the total distance run between them is 20 laps, Jack

doing 11 and Jill 9. Not counting this final meeting at the original starting point, they pass each other 19 times.

Aunt Maud

Using algebra, let M=Maud's age and C=Cristina's age. The first sentence of the puzzle refers to a time when Maud was Cristina's present age, (M-C) years ago. So Cristina would then have been aged C-(M-C) years, or 2C-M years.

$$M=9(2C-M) \Rightarrow M=18C-9M \Rightarrow 10M=18C \Rightarrow 5M=9C$$

The second sentence refers to a time when Cristina will be 17 years older than Maud is now: M+17. This will be in (M+17-C) years time, when Maud will be aged M+M+17-C or 2M+17-C years old.

$$(M+17)+(2M+17-C)=100 \Rightarrow 3M+34-C=100 \Rightarrow 3M=C+66$$

Solve for the simultaneous equations 5M=9C and 3M=C+66:

$$9 \times (3M=C+66) \Rightarrow 27M=9C+594$$

$$(27M=9C+594)-(5M=9C) \Rightarrow 22M=594 \Rightarrow M=27.$$

$$\text{Therefore, } 5(27)=9C \Rightarrow 135=9C \Rightarrow C=15.$$

Aunt Maud is 27 and Cristina is 15.

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and so they begin to live beside, but not with each other. Home schooling can be instrumental in bringing the covenantal life back to the family, back to its rightful place, thus better serving the Church of Christ and the propagation of His Kingdom over all the earth (Is.59:21).

Conclusion and Suggestions

One of the challenges for parents in South Africa who intend home schooling is establishing a Reformed curriculum in the Afrikaner language with the situation at home in view. The work that has been done already in connection with private schools can in this respect be of great assistance for home school development. Here, the unity of life in the covenant can again be maintained and mutual knowledge, skills and experience about Reformed upbringing be shared with each other.

Finally: In answering where and how I will rear my covenant child, home schooling is a responsible, Reformed option that merits solid consideration, especially with a view to the present developments in South African schools. Reformed home schooling is and must not be individualistic, and must not work in isolation of Church and society. We must work together as covenant parents in order to stimulate a Reformed vision of education and way of life. As with private schools, the view of the covenant and calling in home schooling shall be determined by the purpose, content and method of the instruction, and also by the faith, character, and view of life of parents and teachers.

Let us be careful in this respect and not rashly develop a critique of something of which we are largely ignorant, without having made solid research, before truly concluding the matter. As parents of covenant children, let us strengthen each other when we wish to instruct our children in the way of the covenant; and in prayer and deed, humbly depend upon the Lord, with our eyes directed to the calling and task before us, as Prof. B. Holwerda said at one time:

"The mouths of little ones, including the tatter of babes, is a mighty instrument that He will use to break the rule of Satan, and whereby He will establish His Kingdom and re-conquer the world. ... the motive of the great enemy (the antithesis brought about by Christ) must again move us. Let us work to establish this in all the areas of life; in all relationships, the Name of God must again be hallowed. Then we, most of us as parents of covenant children, will truly know what Christian education is, and stand behind it! Then we will be immovable like our fathers, and say: Here we stand we can do no other. Here on earth we confess the Name of the Lord! We will give our children to no one else, or for anything else, never".

[From the Ezra Report (ESRA VERSLAG, P.O. Box 12303, Hatfield, 0028, Pretoria, South Africa. E-mail address: slecornu@tn.co.za), 4 November 1998, translated from the Afrikaans by Gilbert Zekveld]

CHomes Roundup

The Bible Code



(This article is a review of a book written by Dr Gordon Wenham, a noted Old Testament commentator, criticising "The Bible Code" by Drosnin. It seems to sound the kind of sober warning we Christian home education parents need to heed: check out sensational stories and wonderful reports confirming things we fervently want to believe BEFORE we teach them as fact to our children or proclaim them from the housetops....and thus lose all credibility with our neighbours. Come to think of it, why don't evolutionary theorists have to be just as careful? Because their myths are believed by the majority these days. Therefore, being the minority, we must ensure all the more carefully that what we embrace will stand up to serious investigation.)

According to this book the Bible predicts the assassinations of Yishaq Rabin, Robert Kennedy, the bus bombings in Jerusalem, McVeigh's bombing of Oklahoma City, the Gulf War, earthquakes in California, Japan and China, and the end of the world in a nuclear holocaust in 2000 or 2006.

Presumably it is the last prediction that has made this book a runaway best-seller. It is a symptom of millennium fever, the widespread fear that something cataclysmic may happen at the turn of the millennium. These frightening predictions are backed up by impressive displays of Hebrew text and statistics that may awe the uninitiated. It all looks very learned and scientific. But do these claims stand up?

First, I should explain how Drosnin reaches his conclusions. When we read a text, we normally read the letters consecutively. For example, in reading, 'Love divine, all loves excelling', we start with the letter L, then letters O,V,E, etc. But you could read the text by looking at every other letter, so L,V,D,V,N, etc, or every third letter, L,E,V,E,L. Most of these new combinations of letters will prove to be nonsense, but reading every third letter will produce a sensible new word, which one could say was hidden in the text. One could take the first verse of the English bible, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' and count every fifth letter and find the name NOAH hidden in it.

Drosnin has taken the first five books of the Old Testament and done this process many times over. He has not simply counted every third or fifth letter, but all possible steps till at least every 40,000th letter. He has also looked for words spelled backwards. By this means he has created a text 80,000 times as long as the original. The first five books of the Bible contain 300,000 letters, so Drosnin's text is now 24 billion letters long.

Next he thought of various words or names and asked his computer to find them in this expanded text, e.g. Clinton, Rabin, Kennedy, Shakespeare. I suppose he could have looked for Gordon Wenham or Tony Blair, if he had been interested. With any luck, if the name is not too long, it has a good chance of being found. Drosnin asked his computer to search for words like 'world war', 'earthquake', or 'atomic holocaust.' How does he transcribe such names or words into predictions? Suppose that, by looking at every 30,001st letter, he discovers the name Clinton. He then writes out the part of the Bible where the name appears in lines of 30,001 letters. Clinton then appears as a vertical column of letters somewhere in the table. He then does a word search in the vicinity of Clinton. Can he see anything to do with Clinton written near his name? It can be written horizontally, vertically, diagonally, upside down or back to front, but with regular gaps between the letters. Presumably Drosnin looked for words that could be associated with Clinton, e.g. Bill, Hilary, USA, president. He just found the last, not the great coup, for the word 'tribal leader' occurs 69 times in the Pentateuch and is the word used for 'president' in Modern Hebrew.

Not only is it easy to find words in this word search, because the horizontal lines in the tables he constructs are all copied straight out of the Hebrew Bible, but there is another feature of Hebrew that makes it quite easy to 'find' words in a Hebrew text. Many Hebrew words consist of just three consonants with the vowels left out. The reader is expected to supply the vowels. So if we did this in English and saw the letters B, D, we could read them in at least ten different ways e.g. bad, bed, bid, bod, bud, abide, abode, abed, body, bead. Drosnin also looks for words spelled backwards, so dab or deb would count just as well.

Hebrew, like Latin, uses letters to write numbers. Thus MCM in Latin means 1900, MCMXXX = 1920 and so on. So Drosnin looks for words like 'earthquake' or 'world war' and then sees if he can find a combination of letters that looks like a date nearby. On this basis he claims the Bible predicts earthquakes in 1905, or 2006 and so on. Given the huge text he is operating with, it is not surprising that he sometimes can find interesting words with combinations of letters that could be interspersed as dates nearby. But I should like to be more specific.

1. Firstly, it is silly to look for modern Hebrew words in ancient Hebrew text. Words like "atomic" certainly do not occur in the Bible, and words that in modern Hebrew mean "president" or "holocaust" have different senses in the Bible. Drosnin's theory means no-one except late twentieth century Israelis can understand its predictions.

2. Second, Drosnin connects names or events in his vertical lines with dates and information about them in a quite arbitrary fashion. Sometimes the data is quite close to the name or event, at others it is several lines

away.

3. Third, owing to the immense length of text he has created, any seven-letter word is likely to occur about ten times just by the chance combination of letters. Longer words will occur less frequently and shorter ones more frequently.

4. Fourth, he is using a modern text of the Hebrew Bible whose spelling undoubtedly differs from the original. If he were to try to base his calculations on a more archaic spelling, his "discoveries" would disappear. Indeed, some who have tried to replicate his calculations have concluded that names he has found only appear if you use variable gaps between letters.

5. Fifth, this method can only be used to find names or events which you already know. It cannot be used to predict, say, the name of the next President of the US or the next Prime Minister of Israel, until you know their names. Then you can ask your computer to find the names in the text and you can look for any interesting words or dates in the vicinity.

6. Sixth, when Drosnin did try to make a prediction, the method did not work. Near the words "atomic holocaust" he found the date "1996", the place-name "Pisgah" (where Moses died) and upside down a combination of letters which he read as "Libyan artillery man." So, if this book is to be believed, he persuaded the Israeli army to go on a search of the northern Dead Sea area for a Libyan soldier with an atomic shell. Surprise, surprise, they did not find anyone.

Finally, Drosnin sometimes takes the Bible literally where it is not meant to be. Speaking of the fall of Jerusalem, Jesus says "the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven." Naive readers like Drosnin tend to suppose that this is a description of the end of the world. But if they had read the Old Testament more carefully, they could see that Jesus had borrowed his phrases from Isaiah's description of the fall of Babylon. Both these cities were very important in their time, and by describing their destruction in these lurid terms Isaiah, and later Jesus, were underlining the universal significance of these events. So "The Bible Code" is nonsense and need not be taken seriously. But what can Christians say about the future to those suffering from millennial fever?

1. First, we are in the last days of human history. According to the New Testament the "last days" began with Christ's first coming and will end with his second coming. But we do not know when that will be. The Bible is very emphatic about this. Jesus himself said, "Of that hour (i.e. the time of his second coming) no one knows not even the angles in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Matthew 24:36). The last days have already lasted 2,000 years; they may last another 2,000 years or they may end tomorrow. We do not know. Jesus says he will come like a thief in the night,

taking the world by surprise.

2. Second, the future is in God's control, therefore we do not need to be anxious about it. There is no need to get worked up by false prophets such as Drosnin. The spookiest book of the Bible is the last, the book of Revelation. It is full of frightening pictures of bowls of divine wrath, plagues, battles, dragons, lakes of fire, stars falling and so on. If you take this imagery literally, it is enough to give you hysterics. But it is not meant to be read in this way. It is a way of assuring us that, whatever calamities strike the world or the church or us as individuals, Christ will ultimately triumph and bring in his perfect reign of peace and justice. When he comes, all earth's troubles will be over. That is why the book ends with the prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus."

But if we are in good health and enjoying life, we find it hard to pray this. We seem to imagine that the coming of Christ will cut short our enjoyment of this life. The Bible assures that it will not be spoiled, but enormously enhanced. I recently saw an advert by the British Diabetic Association which read: "No more blood tests, no more needles, no more watching food. Imagine the future. Imagine a cure."

The Bible promises much more than a cure for diabetes. It teaches: No more crime, no more terrorism, no more war, no more genocide. No more heart disease, no more cancer, no more arthritis, no more suffering, no more death, no more sorrow. No more anger, no more lust, no more bondage to unhealthy habits, no more sin. No more injustice, no more exploitation, no more hatred.

The Bible says, "Imagine the future. Imagine the coming of Christ." That is why Jesus taught us to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That is why the early Christians prayed "Maranatha, come Lord Jesus." We should do the same.

Over a Cuppa



Do We Really Want Correspondence School After All?

My oldest son Zach, 16, is on Correspondence School at the adult rates (far cheaper than the rate for students...unless they have been expelled!!!!) Anyway, he is doing 6th Form Chemistry. To work out the pH concentration of some liquid, they taught in the official text which calculator buttons to push. Zach has a different style calculator than the one they have at the Correspondence School apparently, for the recommended sequence of buttons did not produce the desired answer. So Zach fiddled around and finally discovered a sequence of buttons to push for HIS calculator to get the same answer they had. As if this wasn't bad enough, to do the calculation in the reverse direction the text showed a more complex sequence of buttons to push with a few options along the way depending on the type of calculator you have!!! I was fairly frustrated by now, for nowhere did it explain the actual mathematical process that was taking place or the relationship among the variables. It involved logarithms, so it would have been a little complex, but at least a sketch to increase understanding would have been nice.

Once again, Zach's calculator would not perform as the text said it should. He rang his tutor at the CS. The tutor told him to buy a calculator that had the correct button on it!! I just about went ballistic! So I got down some old book on Logarithms, and before too long, drawing on vague memories of this stuff from 30 years ago, I figured out an equation that very simply explained

the relationship between the three variables involved....and then found that the sequence of button pushing, to get the answer they wanted, was far simpler than what they had illustrated! And now both Zach and I understand the whole concept whereas before neither of us did.

Moral of the story: teaching your child yourself, learning with them if you have to, is more effective than paying big dollars for fancy text books and far-away tutors and expecting the children to learn it themselves.

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