

Biblical Parenting or Schooling at Home?

My husband, Bruce, and I have educated our six children at home all of their “school lives.” We began this journey more than twenty years ago. Most people who begin homeschooling wonder, “Can I go the distance? Can I homeschool all the way through high school?” They ask, “Will my children learn to function in society? Will they be able to get a job? Will they be able to attend college? Will they be normal?”

The answer to these questions is *yes*. You can adequately prepare your children for life. The Lord has given your children to you — not to the school system, not to the state, not to your great aunt who taught school for 35 years, not to your neighbors, not to the other families in your church or homeschool support group, and not even to your parents — all of whom may question your ability and your authority to teach your children. The Lord will direct your path — be open to His leading — after all, He is the one who called you to train up your children. He is ultimately the One to whom you will have to answer.

I would like to share a little about each of our children — not to boast, but to be an encouragement to you. Our oldest daughter Michelle is married and has two children. She and her husband are educating their children at home. As I believe education begins at birth, they are actually homeschooling already even though their children are not “school aged.”

Michelle was not interested in attending college. She began cake decorating at home when she was ten years old and later worked as a cake decorator for Publix supermarkets for seven years. In 2003, she entered a national cake decorating contest. She and her husband, Victor, traveled to Las Vegas for the competition, and Michelle took first place. She now operates her own custom cake business from home. Michelle has also illustrated several of my books, including *The Frances Study Guide* and *Successful Puppet Making*. She designed all the puppets in the puppet making book, which consists of 24 easy-to-make felt puppets. We are currently working together on a Bible story puppet book that we hope to publish in 2005. Floral arranging and interior decorating are additional areas where Michelle puts her artistic talents to use .

Our second daughter, Melissa, graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Tampa with a Major in English and a Minor in Art in December of 2003. Last summer she studied at Kent University in Canterbury, England. She is a member of the International English Honor Society and the National Honor Society. While in college she held a number of jobs, spending most of her time working in the technical department of a medical transcription company. Since she was a young teenager, Melissa has typed and edited manuscripts for a number of my books. She loves literature and dancing ballet and jazz. Melissa has been reading and dancing since she was three years old. She plans to continue her studies, perhaps pursuing a Masters Degree in English.

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The Lord will direct your path – be open to His leading – after all He is the one who called you to homeschool.

Our oldest son, Robert, participated in the dual enrollment program at our local community college during his last two years of studying at home. He received his AA degree and then joined the U.S. Marine Corps in December 2002. He is now stationed in Monterey, California, where he is studying to be a linguistic cryptologist. (It took me three weeks just to learn how to say that!) Robert is learning Arabic. He said, “Mom, it’s just like a unit study. We study about the culture, language, history, and geography of the Arabic nations — 5 days a week, 6 ½ hours a day — for 14 months!”

Our next son, Raymond, completed the traditional high school requirements in the spring of 2003. He also participated in the dual enrollment program at our local community college. In the summer of 2004, he will complete the courses necessary to obtain his AA degree in Computer Engineering. Then he plans to transfer to the University of South Florida to complete his Bachelor’s Degree in Engineering.

Both Robert and Raymond have worked extensively in the residential remodeling field with my husband, Bruce. I am thankful that they have had the opportunity to learn valuable skills and propitious lessons about life from their father. Raymond continues to work part time with Bruce while attending college.

We are currently educating our daughter, Mandy, who is 14 years old, and our son, Randall, who is 9 years old, at home. Mandy enjoys reading, writing, learning to play the bagpipes, sign language, doll making, and acting. As her brother Randall says — Mandy *lives* in books. Randall enjoys acting, dancing, photography, and Legos — including Lego Robotics. Each of our children has taken a different route. It is our prayer that the Lord will place people and events in our children’s lives to help them become the individuals He wants them to be.

When teaching our children at home, we must ask ourselves, “Are we going to reconstruct school at home, or are we going to provide our children with a meaningful education?” When we began our homeschooling journey more than 20 years ago, I tried desperately to re-create school in our home. I soon realized that I could not do it, but more importantly I realized that I should not.

And so I want to encourage you not to try to re-create school in your home because you have access to a superior mode of instruction. I think it is important that we not view education as a 12 year prison sentence — that is basically how I viewed it growing up. When does the Lord admonish us to teach our children? From 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., 5 days a week, 180 days a year, for 12 years?

No, he tells us in Deuteronomy chapter 6 to instruct them when we sit in our house and when we walk by the way and when we lie down and when we rise up. Education is to be a lifestyle. I believe it is important

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that whatever we teach our children, we teach them what we know — what we have a passion for — whether that is writing, cooking, sewing, painting, gardening, woodworking, baseball, or swimming.

Do you have a hobby that you enjoy? Can you devote as much time as you would like to this hobby? Years ago I wanted to learn about sign language. I did not have the time to pursue this on my own, so I studied this with my kids. Often when I want to learn about something or delve into a project, I include my kids and call it “school!” For that matter, whenever one of my children takes an interest in a topic, that topic becomes our unit of study. I want my children to know that their interests are worthy to be pursued.

I have to constantly remind myself that my husband and I are not preparing our children for a good job in the marketplace, but we are preparing them for a fulfilling life. This entails so much more than academic success. Academics are important, but living a full life is even more important. The most important lessons our children will learn are not about academics but rather are about relationships, and the best place to learn these lessons is in the surroundings of a loving home.

Most people equate schooling with a plethora of textbooks and workbooks. I want to encourage you to try some different educational approaches this year. Take on a project, go on a family field trip, do a unit study on something that interests you or your children. As we engage in projects, our children learn things they would never learn from textbooks. Most parents moan when the word “project” is mentioned, but I have never heard a child moan about participating in a project.

When submersed in textbooks and workbooks, children often groan, “I’ll never use this – why do I have to learn this anyway?” When absorbed in a project, children see the necessity for using basic skills in order to complete the task. Projects bring basic skills to life.

I also want to encourage you to spend time relishing the classics and other great books. You will be amazed at how your children’s vocabulary, composition skills, general knowledge, and thinking skills soar as you share great literature. There is more to education than is found between the pages of textbooks. I do not mean to totally discount the use of textbooks in our educational endeavors; however, do not allow textbooks to swallow up all of your time so that you have no time left for *real* books and *real* activities that will get your children excited about learning. Textbooks and workbooks are time robbers. They rob us of the time that can be spent engaging in real-life activities and projects, and in reading real literature.

Do you have young children who enjoy hearing a well-loved story again and again? Do you have independent readers who return to the same book again and again because it has become a household favorite? Do you

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We are not slaves to the textbook-workbook task master.

Unit Studies Made Easy

have children who pull that textbook off the shelf and hide it under their pillow so they can stay up half the night relishing its pages? Real books inspire us the way textbooks never can. Most textbooks are written by committees – committees that want to tell us what and how to think – real books are written by individuals -- individuals who are bubbling with enthusiasm about their story or topic of interest.

Great literature nurtures creativity. As my young children play I am reminded of the positive influence of literature in their lives. Several years ago when my youngest daughter, Mandy, was 7 years old, she began taking piano lessons. This sparked an interest in the lives of the great composers, so we read more than twenty biographies. Some were the easy-reader-type, which she could read to me, while others were more lengthy books, which I read to her. I was amazed at how she kept the events of the different composers' lives so neatly sorted.

This enthusiasm flowed over into her playtime where she centered her activities on a composer's era. She managed to draw her little brother, Randall, into her pretend world.

I recall one day in particular when Mandy and Randall were totally absorbed in their play. I rushed into the bedroom because we were hurrying to leave for an appointment, and there they stood – coats on (in the heat of summer) and suitcases in hand. I abruptly commanded, "Hurry up! We are going to be late for the orthodontist. Take off these things, and get into the van."

The children took no notice of me. I repeated my orders. Then Mandy said in an emphatic tone, "He's Mozart (pointing to her little brother) and I'm his big sister, Nannarel. Mozart is performing at a concert tonight in Vienna. We cannot go with you. We must be off to Vienna at once!"

"I'm sorry," I said, "Mozart can have his concert when we come back home. We must go to the orthodontist NOW!"

My teenage son, Robert, was listening from the hallway. He burst into the bedroom exclaiming, "Nannarel, Mozart, we must hurry! The last coach leaves for Vienna in five minutes!" Without a word, the two little waifs ran outside and jumped into the van. I stood silently in the bedroom for a few moments until my son put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Mom, you just have to meet them in their world."

I encourage you to begin building great minds as you assist your children in creating worlds of their own. A great book is a gateway into such golden worlds. Many people ask, "But how do you find time to read all those books?" The answer is that we have the time because we are not slaves to the textbook-workbook task master. Real books stimulate us.

Educators who are honest with themselves know that real books

are far more valuable to one's education than schoolbooks. When my daughter Melissa began college, she went to see the head of the English department because she had declared an English Major. The woman asked her why she had chosen English as a major.

Melissa went on to tell her about her favorite authors such as James Fennimore Cooper, Jane Austin, Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, and so on. She said, "A Tale of Two Cities is my favorite book. I've read it 5 times, and I've read all of Cooper's works." She added, "And Jane Austin taught me how to write. And I've memorized several of Shakespeare's plays." The woman was astounded and asked Melissa where she went to high school. Melissa said, "Oh, I was homeschooled."

The professor said, "I knew it had to be something – you don't get an education like that in any school." Then she said, "I have two little girls that I want to homeschool. Tell me about homeschooling." After awhile Melissa asked the woman to check her class schedule to make sure she had signed up for the right classes. The woman briefly looked it over and said, "Oh, it's fine. Now tell me more about homeschooling." When Melissa returned home she told me about this encounter and said, "Now who was counseling whom?"

A good book draws my husband into our homeschooling in a positive way as I choose a book for him to read aloud at dinnertime that somehow relates to a topic we are studying. I was frustrated when he would come home from work and ask the kids, "What did you learn today?" And they would reply, "I don't know." As he reads aloud, the children are reminded of details from our study, and a hearty discussion ensues.

When we conducted a unit study on the Revolutionary War period, my husband read aloud a biography of Patrick Henry at the dinner table — one chapter per night. When he finished the book, I asked the children if they wanted me to read an excerpt about Patrick Henry from an American History textbook. (I happened to have bought this textbook at a used book sale.)

The children agreed, so I read them the entire paragraph about Patrick Henry that was included in the textbook. The children looked at me and said, "Is that it?" I said, "Yes, that's it." They were amazed that this American History textbook only contained one paragraph about this man. Then my son Raymond, who was 5 years old at the time said, "Mom, they left out the best part!" I asked, "What was that?" And he said, "That Patrick Henry didn't make his kids wear shoes until they were ten!" Then the other children went on to add what important elements they felt were missing.

A stimulating analytical literary exercise is to read a book aloud

A good book draws my husband into our homeschooling in a positive way as I choose a book for him to read aloud at dinnertime that somehow relates to a topic we are studying.

A stimulating analytical literary exercise is to read a book aloud with your children, and then watch a movie based on the book.

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with your children, and then watch a movie based on the book. This helps to stimulate a discussion whereby the children compare and contrast the book and movie. It encourages them to become detail oriented as they search for similarities and differences. They learn to express their opinions as to whether they liked the book or movie better and why.

I remember the first time I read *Caddie Woodlawn* with my four oldest children. After finishing the book, we watched the movie that Disney produced based on the book. The children were outraged to find out how many details — details they deemed important — were either changed or left out altogether. They were ready to write a letter to the Disney studios and include their list of grievances. This has become a favorite practice of ours — to read a book, and then watch a movie based on the book.

Oral narration is an effective means for a child to recount a book that he has read. Rather than have a child give a written book report, he can give an oral presentation. Dinnertime is a great place for this as your child has a captive audience. I remember one day when my daughter Michelle had just finished reading a book by Gary Paulsen entitled *Hatchet*. I knew it would be useless to get Michelle to write a composition about this book — she disliked writing. So at dinnertime, I asked her to tell us about the book. I wish I had taped this because it was priceless. She used excellent storytelling techniques to keep her siblings perched on the edges of their chairs.

Hatchet is about a twelve-year-old boy whose parents are divorced. His mother is driving him to an airport where he will fly in a small plane with only one pilot to the Canadian wilderness. There he will meet his father who has previously arrived and has been busy setting up camp. The boy really does not want to go on this camping trip, and to make matters worse, his mother gives him a gift of a hatchet with a carrying case. Reluctantly he secures the case and hatchet to his belt. He thinks the hatchet is a corny gift, and he wonders how much worse things can get.

Well, he finds out how much worse things can get very quickly. As the boy and pilot are flying over a lake in the Canadian wilderness, the pilot has a heart attack and dies. Michelle then used her best dramatic capabilities to describe what follows this perilous scene:

“The plane plummets downward and plunges into the lake. The plane’s fuselage cracks from the impact. Down, down, down, it sinks to the bottom. Water rushes in as Brian struggles to climb through the broken windshield. He wrestles with the thick vegetation clinging to his body as he tries to escape the wreckage. His lungs are about to burst. Upward, upward he swims, with his hatchet still secured to his belt.”

The children were spellbound as Michelle wove her tale. She

knew how to agitate her siblings by pausing at the most dramatic scenes. The kids would beg her to tell what happened next. If Michelle had written a composition about this book, she might have written a paragraph, and it would probably have been very dry. I timed her oral narration of this account and it was 55 minutes long. I recorded this in our school log as **Oral Narration** for Michelle and as **Listening Comprehension** for the other children.

Some of the most meaningful moments we have spent together as a family have been while sharing great literature. I encourage you to make this a part of your curriculum. Even as your children get older, it is important to read aloud to them. Maybe they will do part of the reading aloud. This helps to relieve your own vocal cords and helps to strengthen their oral reading skills. Also, as your children read aloud, you are made aware of words they find difficult to pronounce. I remember skipping over the words I did not know when I read silently as a child.

I recall reading aloud *Ben-Hur: A Tale of Christ* to my boys, Robert and Raymond, when they were teenagers. My son, Raymond, was on the telephone with a friend when I told him it was time for us to read from *Ben-Hur*. I heard him tell his friend, “Well, I have to go now because my mom’s going to read to us.” Then his friend must have made a reply because Raymond said, “Doesn’t your mom read to you?” Finally Raymond responded, “Well, my mom still reads to us, so I have to go.”

Once we finished this book of more than 600 pages, we watched the classic movie *Ben-Hur* starring Charlton Heston. We had seen the movie many times before, but the boys remarked how much more they enjoyed the movie as a result of gleaning significant background information from the book. We also learned about the author, General Lew Wallace, and why he wrote this epic tale.

I have to remind myself to include my children in real-life experiences. Our children should help us with our daily tasks. A young child especially wants to spend time with Mom or Dad doing laundry, helping in the kitchen, working in the yard, repairing the kitchen faucet, and so on. My husband has always been a good example to me in this area by including the children in whatever he is doing. Often my thoughts are — I can do it better and faster by myself!

Our children learn from being with us and working alongside us. I know it helps me if I look at these often mundane tasks such as cooking, gardening, sewing, and cleaning, as part of our children’s education. Books must make way for real learning experiences, or we may find our children have head knowledge but not knowledge of the hand and heart.

If you keep a journal or log of your educational activities, you can include these tasks under headings such as **Home Economics** for cooking, laundry and sewing; **Auto Maintenance** for changing the oil in the car or

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changing a flat tire; **Child Care Development** for caring for a younger sibling; **Botany** for helping with lawn and garden chores. It is really all in a name — naming these activities makes them an acceptable part of “school.”

How many of you feel obligated to complete an entire textbook or workbook once you begin? What if your child already knows the material and he finds it repetitious? Rather than trudging through it for the sake of “completing the book” — put a check mark with the date at the top of the workbook page if he already knows the material. Or, if using a textbook, make an entry in your homeschool log stating that the material on pages 29- 39, for example, was covered. Oftentimes material can be covered quickly by allowing the child to complete it orally rather than in written form. Not every page of every workbook needs to be filled in.

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Games are an excellent way to learn new concepts and facts. Try turning one school day a week, or one school day every other week, into game day. Include money for the purchasing of educational games in your homeschool budget. Educational games can also be made using books like: ***Games for Learning, Games for Reading, Games with Books, Games for Math, and Games for Writing***. All of these books are written by Peggy Kaye. Peggy states, “Games put children in exactly the right frame of mind for learning difficult things. Children will throw themselves into playing games the way they would never throw themselves into filling out workbook pages.” Peggy offers simple-to-make games for Kindergarten through 3rd grade; however, they can be adapted for both older and younger children.

What better way for a child to exhibit all that he has learned about a particular topic than through the developing of a game based on that topic?

Children who are older also love making board games to accompany a unit of study. What better way for a child to exhibit all that he has learned about a particular topic than through the developing of a game based on that topic? As he plays commercial games, he learns details about game construction and development. As with other projects, children cultivate numerous skills when creating games.

My youngest children, Mandy and Randall, and I made a board game to accompany a unit study we created based on C.S. Lewis and ***The Chronicles of Narnia***. We read a biography of C.S. Lewis while reading all 7 books in The Chronicles of Narnia series. Mandy and Randall participated in our homeschool drama group’s production of *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*. We also attended a professional performance of *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* at the Performing Arts Center in Tampa, Florida.

While reading C.S. Lewis’ biography and the Narnia books, the children made up game questions at the conclusion of each chapter. They wrote the correct answer for each question, while also including three answers that sounded authentic. By making the questions multiple choice,

friends who may not have read all of the books, could also play the game.

The children came up with such believable “false” answers to the questions, they often had me wondering which answer was really correct! They also made non-question cards to help move the game along — such as one which reads, “You see Reepicheep fall overboard. Jump overboard to save him, and as you are rescuing him lose a turn!” Some cards move the player ahead a certain number of spaces or give the player another turn.

Once we finished reading all the books, the children typed the questions on the computer and made them into game cards. They downloaded pictures from the Narnia website to be printed on the game board and the backs of the game cards. They learned how to put these pictures in the Paint computer program and touch them up by removing unwanted details or adding more details. Mandy and Randall made free-standing game pieces representing the different characters, and they even constructed a game board that folded in fourths. They created a game strategy and typed up the game directions. You can imagine how many skills were developed as they created this game!

Projects are an important part of learning and should not be something we crowd in from time to time. We have to be willing to put the textbooks aside in favor of real learning. While engaged in projects, children begin to see how phonics and mathematics are necessary in order to read and comprehend instructions and measure and compute numbers.

Book making has been another favorite family project over the years. During our homeschooling years, my children have made more than 60 books based on my book *Creating Books with Children*. (See page 331 for more information.) This is a six-week book-making unit study guide whereby children learn about authors and illustrators while constructing their own books. As children study about their favorite authors and illustrators, they are motivated to create their own publications.

History comes alive as we study about real people in real space and time. For example, suppose while making a book your family chooses to study about Margret and H.A. Rey. Can you think of the name of a famous children’s book authored by this couple? That’s right – Margret and H.A. Rey were the creators of *Curious George*. The Reys were German Jews who sought refuge in Paris during World War II. It is fascinating to learn that the Reys fled Paris in June of 1940 only hours before the Nazis invaded France. H.A. Rey cobbled together two bicycles from spare parts, and he and Margret pedaled for four long days from France to Spain. All they took with them was a bit of food, their warm coats, and their manuscripts – including their *Curious George* manuscript.

The Reys sold their bicycles to the border guards and bought train tickets to Portugal. From there they secured passage by ship to America.

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Upon entering the New York harbor, they welcomed the sight of the Statue of Liberty. Within one week, they found a publisher for their *Curious George* story. Margret and H.A. Rey went on to write 6 more books about that lovable little monkey. This example offers us a unique historical perspective of World War II – far different from a traditional textbook perspective.

Many other skills are enhanced as children make books. They learn to be keen observers of books, noting how pictures and text are integrated. They learn about the structure of a book — about the copyright, summary, dedication, title pages, closing pages, and book flap copy. They learn how to include key elements in their books — such as the use of dialogue, action, description, and proper punctuation. They learn the basic structure of a story — beginning, middle, and ending. They learn that a story needs a conflict, problem, or mystery. They learn to include additional details about this conflict or problem. They learn to resolve the problem, thus wrapping up the story. The children learn about creating effective illustrations. They learn all of this and much more as they are active participants in the story creation process.

And best of all, they have a product they can be proud of when they are finished. Children are motivated to do their best as they know others – besides Mom and Dad – will be looking at what they have made. They know this is not just something Mom is going to stuff into a folder to be put in a file hidden away somewhere.

Relatives and friends who are skeptical of homeschooling will be impressed when they see hardback, hand-sewn, professional looking books made by your children. And to think that you – perhaps without any teaching credentials – could guide your children in creating such a wonderful book! “Well, maybe homeschooling isn’t so bad after all,” the skeptics remark.

Do you have preschoolers as well as school-aged children? Do you ever feel your preschoolers are “in the way” when you are trying to teach your older children? Do you include your preschoolers in your homeschooling? Did you know that educational psychologists claim that more than half of a child’s learning occurs during his first few years?

These are important years when many life-long habits are formed. I encourage you to include your preschoolers in your educational endeavors. Little children are sponges and will pick up more than we realize. Just try saying something around them that you would rather not have them repeat! I find it helpful to set up play centers in our school room to keep my preschoolers entertained while I work with my older children. As they play close by, they absorb much of what I am teaching. My book, *Making the Most of the Preschool Years* contains 100 ideas for setting up such play centers. (See page 329 for more information.)

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Although young children are very receptive to new ideas and concepts, do not try to push your little ones into workbooks. Hands-on learning is best for this age group. For example, a young child's creativity is stimulated through dramatic play. Have you watched a young child playing with stuffed toys or dolls when he did not know he had an audience? He uses different voices for each character and acts out stories all on his own.

Dramatic play helps a child build composition skills as he works at weaving his tale. His vocabulary is enhanced as he searches for the right words. Try making simple puppets with your young children, and encourage them to act out the stories that you read aloud to them. They will learn multiple skills as they help construct the puppets and as they work to retell a favorite story using dialogue and narration. It is through this play acting that children learn the basics of story construction.

Older kids will beg to make puppets and put on plays as well. If you need help creating simple felt puppets, my daughter, Michelle, and I wrote *Successful Puppet Making* — which includes patterns and diagrams to create 24 easy-to-make felt puppets featuring: Animals on the Farm, Animals in the Woods, and Animals in the Jungle. The book also includes a poem for each animal, a factual description of each animal, and a list of library picture books highlighting each animal, so you and your children can act out the stories with the puppets. Visit my website to find a free pattern and directions for making a cow puppet. (www.valeriebendt.com/puppet.asp). (See page 332 for more information regarding this book.)

I have talked about three types of projects to help stimulate creativity and encourage learning. They are game making, book making, and puppet making. Be on the look out for other ways to include hands-on-learning in your homeschooling. Your children will be glad you did, and you will be amazed at how much your children will learn from these real-life projects.

What about testing? Are you intimidated by standardized tests? I think it is unwise to subject children, especially young children, to standardized written achievement tests. Not only is it stressful for the child, but it is stressful for the parent. It can effect *what* and *how* you teach. This is known as “teaching to the test.” Would you breathe a sigh of relief if you could forgo end-of-the-year testing altogether?

Our own children did not take written standardized achievement tests until they were in their junior year of high school. The only written standardized test our oldest sons ever took during their homeschooling years was the SAT to get into college. There is no limit on the number of times a student can take the SAT. The first time or two that our children took the SAT, it was for practice. I told them not to worry about their

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It is foolish to invent artificial measurements to determine whether one child is educated and another is not.
—Karl Reed

I feel that maintaining a portfolio is far more valuable than test taking.

Portfolios are something your children will come to treasure rather than something they will come to dread – like the end of the year achievement tests!

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scores because I expected them to take the test again. They each said this made the test taking experience less stressful. It is a myth that children need to spend X number of years practicing test taking. The fact that the public schools place such a heavy emphasis on test taking and test results should be a clear indication that we should steer clear of this enterprise.

I would like to offer a quote from a book by Karl Reed entitled, ***The Bible, Homeschooling, and the Law.***

A very important point in the education of the child is that God makes every child special with his own special bent toward his own special calling in life, for the purpose of fulfilling a place in the community. That calling will normally generate into an interest, which leads to equipping him to fulfill his station in life. For that reason, if no other, it is extremely foolish to try and standardize children by standardizing their education. Herein also lies one of the dangers of the alleged “nationally normed standardized achievement tests.” It is foolish to invent artificial measurements to determine whether one child is educated and another is not. All children are gifted and each child is to be guided by the Creator at some point in his education to travel his own avenue in his pursuit of knowledge, in order to develop his own special gift or calling for the purpose of meeting his mission in life.

I feel that maintaining a portfolio is far more valuable than test taking. In many states, if you have chosen to register with your county school system, this portfolio can be assessed by a certified teacher in order to satisfy the evaluation requirement. A portfolio offers a better representation of what a child knows — what he has accomplished. It is more of a scrapbook detailing his or her educational pursuits for a given school year. We talked about doing projects. Although it is hard to slip most projects into a portfolio, you can easily include photos of completed projects. You can add photos of field trips, plays, and other productions in which your children participate.

If you visit a museum or other point of interest, grab brochures and put them in your children’s portfolios — being sure to obtain one for each child. Anything that documents your educational activities can be included in their portfolios. You only need to enclose a sampling of your children’s work – not every page from every workbook! Portfolios are something your children will come to treasure rather than something they will come to dread – like the end-of-the-year achievement tests!

As you teach your children, remember the Lord gave these children to you. You know and love your children better than anyone else. Therefore, you are your children’s best curriculum specialists. Pray that the Lord will guide you and reveal the proper course for your family. Have fun with your children and remember that learning lasts a lifetime!