

HOMESCHOOL



# Update

2021 | VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 111

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF CHRISTIAN HOME EDUCATORS OF COLORADO

## FALL INTO A New Routine

PAGE 6



Rocky Mountain  
Homeschool Conference



2022 CONFERENCE PAGE 21

### ARTICLES INSIDE THIS ISSUE INCLUDE

4

What is Your  
"Why"?

12

No Throwaway  
Seasons

18

Handicrafts to  
Harps

22

Inspiring a Love  
for Learning



# How to Homeschool under Colorado Law

HOME-BASED EDUCATION LAW	NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL LAW	CERTIFIED COLORADO TEACHER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>File a Notice of Intent (NOI) and follow Home-Based Education Law</li><li>Enroll in an independent (umbrella) school &amp; follow policies</li><li>Obtain a current Colorado teaching license</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>File a Notice of Intent (NOI) and follow Home-Based Education Law</li><li>Enroll in an independent (umbrella) school &amp; follow policies</li><li>Obtain a current Colorado teaching license</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>File a Notice of Intent (NOI) and follow Home-Based Education Law</li><li>Enroll in an independent (umbrella) school &amp; follow policies</li><li>Obtain a current Colorado teaching license</li></ul>

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INSIDE

CHEC Homeschool Update | Volume 3, 2021 | Issue 111

## Feature Articles

6 Schedules,  
Routines, and Times  
BY RACHAEL CARMAN

14 Refreshing Your  
Family Devotions  
BY MARCIA WASHBURN

8 Outside the Lines  
BY HOLLY DEHERRERA

16 Our Double Win  
FAMILY INTERVIEW

12 No Throwaway  
Seasons  
BY EMILY JENSEN

## CHEC Events

20 Rocky Mountain  
Homeschool Conference  
EVENT RECAP

27 Father Son Retreat  
EVENT RECAP

## Columns

4 Director's Desk  
18 Gen2  
22 Best of Blog  
26 Homeschool Leaders

28 Resource Review  
30 Government Relations  
34 Struggling Learners  
36 Partners' Page



Front Cover: iStock.com

Top of Page: Father Son Retreat  
Photography by Steve Riddell

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BY STEVE CRAIG

# WHAT IS YOUR "Why?"

During the last year, homeschooling has exploded around the world. It is truly an exciting time in the history of the modern home education movement! With this growth has come a broadening of the perspective on what it means to homeschool.

For example, one question we get from parents who call the CHEC office for homeschool guidance is, "Can you tell me how I can homeschool my child ... without doing any of the teaching?" Significant parent involvement (i.e., parents doing a majority of the teaching) has long been an important part of the traditional definition of homeschooling. Colorado's homeschool law

(C.R.S 22-33-104.5) which was passed in 1988 affirms this when it defines a "non-public home-based educational program" as a "sequential program of instruction for the education of a child which takes place in a home, which is **provided by the child's parent or by an adult relative of the child designated by the parent**, and which is not under the supervision and control of a school district." However, significant parental involvement is not always assumed by those exploring homeschooling today. While it is important for every homeschool parent to understand the legal definition and guidelines for homeschooling in their state, a much more fundamental consideration is the **why** of homeschooling. **This is because your heart-held reasons for homeschooling will shape how you define it.** For some, homeschooling simply means doing school at home. With this mindset comes a focus on academics and goals that are very similar to public and private schools, with the added belief that parents or the home environment can achieve these goals better, faster, cheaper, safer, etc. ... At the end of the day, this "why" isn't that much different than


institutional schools and so it is no surprise that the distinctives of homeschooling tend to fade over time. But what would happen if we took the Word of God and used it to form our "why" for homeschooling? Take Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (ESV) for example, which says *"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."* This passage describes a life-integrated, walk-along-talk-along conversation of the Word of God between a parent and child, which flows from the heart of a parent who loves God. It is not just commended by God, it is actually commanded by Him! It is really the same method of instruction that Jesus patterned with His disciples during His ministry with them. He taught them as they did life together during His ministry on earth. What if we said that our "why" for homeschooling is that we want to disciple our children after the command of Deuteronomy 6:6-7 and following the pattern of Jesus?

This would certainly cause us to define homeschooling differently than we would if academic goals were the primary motivator. This is the reason why our vision statement at Christian Home Educators of Colorado says **"We envision families honoring Jesus Christ by embracing home discipleship that is Christ-centered, parent-directed, and free from government control."** We firmly believe that if homeschooling is going to realize its full potential, it has to be based on a "why" that is greater than the here and now and reaches into eternity. Maybe you are new to homeschooling and have never thought carefully about your "why." The beginning of your homeschool journey is such a great time to settle your reasons and goals for homeschooling on the solid foundation of God's Word. It could change the course of your children's lives forever. And when I say forever, I literally mean forever. But even if you've been homeschooling for a decade, you need to make sure you are still clear on your "why." It is human nature to drift away from priorities that are truly important and your children desperately

“IT’S A GREAT TIME TO SETTLE YOUR REASONS FOR HOMESCHOOLING BASED ON THE SOLID FOUNDATION OF GOD’S WORD. IT COULD CHANGE THE COURSE OF YOUR CHILDREN’S LIVES forever”



need you to have a solid "why" for homeschooling them. Add to that, there are new homeschooling parents all around you that are looking for you to help show them the way. You can help shape their "why." Let's seize the moment for the Kingdom of God! At the end of the day, homeschooling is a context that will be shaped and filled by what is important to you. If we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in our homeschooling, we will undoubtedly experience the rich blessing of God and will raise a generation of Christians who will bring Glory to Him as they shine the Light of Jesus to our dark world. ■



Steve Craig is the Executive Director for Christian Home Educators of Colorado. He and his wife Tara are second generation homeschoolers and have a passion to inspire others toward biblical discipleship in the home. Steve and Tara live in Franktown with their six children: Carson, Christiana, Angelina, Jewel, Ariel, and Michelle.

## Finding community IN COLORADO

... is simple! Connect with other homeschooling families for fun, fellowship, and field trips throughout the year. Here are a few quick ways to get started:

- Homeschool Groups**

Parent support, co-ops, and so much more! Find a detailed list of Christian homeschool groups in Colorado at [CHEC.org/groups](https://checcolorado.org/groups)
- Community Calendar**

Upcoming free days, homeschool days, contests, and always-free opportunities are at [CHEC.org/events/community-calendar](https://checcolorado.org/events/community-calendar)
- Discussion Group**

Join the CHEC Colorado Homeschool Discussion group to ask questions and connect with other parents at [CHEC.org/fbgroup](https://checcolorado.org/fbgroup)





# SCHEDULES, Routines, and Times

BY RACHAEL CARMAN



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ISTOCK

I need to make something clear: this whole business of creating a manageable schedule has been something I have wrestled with for most of our 25 years of homeschooling. I am pretty sure that says several things about me and scheduling.

It surely says that it took me a long time to figure out a system that worked for our family. It says that there were many responsibilities, which were multiplying with each new child we welcomed to the family. More laundry, more groceries, more meals, more sheets, more books, more clutter. And that was just the household stuff. There was also more reading and math and experiments and timelines and spelling lists. Things piled up and my frustration poured over. It wasn't pretty.

I think the fact that I continued to wrestle and fight for a system says something, too. I kept

believing that there had to be a better way, there had to be an easier way, there had to be a way we could at least get *more* done even if we gave up on getting it *all* done. However, year after year I would surrender to failure. The schedule I had worked so hard to create and implement just was not working, or worse, it wasn't workable.

There were many reasons this was true, but two stand out. We consistently failed because:

- 1) I was trying to do too much.
- 2) I was trying to do it all perfectly.

Year after year, I was stubbornly optimistic. I thought this would be the year. It didn't work last time, but this time was different. Surely if I worked the plan hard enough, this time my system would work. All I had to do was do it better. I could fit it all in. I knew I could. I didn't need to lower my (unreasonable) standards. I just had to try harder.

Alas, it was not to be. I came close to giving up completely. I longed for order, but I'd run out of ideas. Finally, arriving at *desperate*, I gave in.

I wish I could credit someone for the new perspective that changed it all. It is not a new idea. In fact, it goes all the way back to Genesis chapter one. There in the

beginning, when God spoke order into the chaos, that is when it started. God established the original order. Reread it for yourself. He created spaces, then filled them. Don't miss it. God set things in order and then gave man and woman the responsibility of maintaining His established order. As a bonus, He gave them a day to *rest* from it all. God did not establish *rushing*. He did not establish *busy*. He established *order*. Rhythm. That is what I see in God's created order. A regular, predictable pattern. A cadence, a flow, a tempo. We see that in the consistency of the sunrise and the sunset; in the seasons of spring, summer, fall, and winter. God is a do-it-again God. I love that. Each new day is a fresh beginning. Of course, things carry over into tomorrow. There's still a fresh start as the sun breaks the horizon. These rhythms grant security, peace, confidence, and purpose. They encourage us to go forward with hope and joy.

So the question is threefold: How do we take the example of God's established order in His creation and apply that to our homes? How do we determine what we really need to focus on getting done? How do we lay aside and let go of those things that we do not need to be doing? I humbly suggest that the first step in answering these questions is to spend some time in prayer, seeking God.



Moms, ask Him to give you eyes to see those things that need your attention during this particular season as a wife, as a mother, as a homeschool teacher, as a home keeper. I encourage you not to rush this process. Take some time to pray, journal, and listen to Him.

Dads, pray for the Lord to guide your wife in this and support His guidance of your family's schedule.

In short, I have adopted weekly rhythms and daily "times." The weekly rhythm goes something like this:

- **Sunday:** Church, rest and relaxation, step away from to-do lists and devices
- **Monday:** Laundry day, school day
- **Tuesday:** School day
- **Wednesday:** Out day: as many errands as possible including grocery shopping
- **Thursday:** School day
- **Friday:** School day, wash and dry the sheets and refresh the beds
- **Saturday:** Family time, house projects, prepare for church

Other responsibilities were distributed throughout the week to the children, as I trained them in various household chores. And they had responsibilities for each day. Our daily rhythm was undergirded by six "times" that we prioritized:

- **Worship Time** — This is the time that sets the tone for each day. It helps to get everyone focused on God and His glory.
- **Responsibility Time** — This included chores and school work.
- **Meal Time** — This is an underrated time that can create an amazing family culture. Coming

together around meals ought to be guarded for conversation, discipleship, and sharing.

- **Reading Time** — This could be together or alone. We emphasized together reading when they were younger but continued even through high school.
- **Rest Time** — This was a daily nap time in the seasons where I could get away with it. In other seasons, it was just time alone or quiet time with books but no devices or electronics.
- **Outside Time** — This is vital. Kids need to be out in God's creation, wowed by His handiwork. They need to fall, stub their toes, and skin their knees. They need to catch critters and listen to the birds. Don't skip this one.

Motherhood is all about rinse and repeat. Our roles require that we do some things over and over: dishes, cooking, sweeping, flushing, cleaning, washing. Unfortunately, we've come to believe the enemy's lie that motherhood is meaningless and mundane. That none of it matters. That it is pointless. That anyone else can do it or that it does not need to be me, or you. You might think that you could more effectively and efficiently contribute to society in ways other than folding another load of laundry, cooking another pot of soup, going to another soccer game, or bandaging another booboo.

There is nothing meaningless in the everyday responsibilities of a mom. It all matters. It is all about leaning into it, trusting God with it, knowing that the rinse and repeat cycle is exactly what He does each morning when He cues the sunrise and sets the ocean's limit. There is tremendous power in doing things over and over. Habitual rhythms transform us, they change us, they make and mold us. Obviously good rhythms help us to rightly order our time and our love toward the

things of God. Bad rhythms cause the opposite. They contribute to confusion and disorder in our hearts, minds, and souls.

For what it is worth, I am writing this article the same week that I am dropping off at college the sixth of our seven kids. I have got a million memories rushing through my mind as I hug my six-foot, three-inch son. The one I nursed and snuggled, the one I remember strapping into his car seat, the one whose eyes have looked deep into mine, the one whose mind and ideas have challenged my own, whose energy is endless. As he launches, what can I leave with him? What do I hope he remembers when he's alone in his dorm room? I hope he remembers the rhythms we had, the family worship, the reading times, the rest days, the responsibilities, the importance of working diligently, and the value of being outside.

I will go home with one less child next week. And I will face adopting a new rhythm this fall. This one will not be for a family of nine, because now there are just the three of us at home. But even still, we will have our rhythm. We will still worship and read and rest. We will still work and do our responsibilities and go outside. As our family is dispersed across the country, each has taken from our home a rhythm and has created their own, using the same elements. Though we are apart geographically, our daily rhythms keep our focus on God. They keep our hearts knitted together. ■



Rachael brings a strong dose of encouragement to moms, equipping them to grow deeper in their walk with our Heavenly Father. Rachael will invite moms to love God and worship Him while sweeping up Cheerios™, doing laundry, and planning dinner.





# OUTSIDE the Lines

BY HOLLY DEHERRERA

“I don’t like to write. My mom made me take this class.” The suspicious teen slumped into her plastic chair in my creative writing class at the homeschool co-op.

When it comes to writing, many parents and students suffer from performance-anxiety. In my twenty-year-journey as a homeschooling parent, teacher in homeschooling co-ops and the public school system, and as an author and editor, I’ve learned some guiding principles. These fundamentals provide insight and encouragement that I hope will inspire any skeptic — both student and teaching parent.

**Prioritize: Expression first, then mechanics.** I’ve homeschooled all of my five children, so I’ve spent my fair share of hours scouring for great English curricula and I’ve tried many approaches. The general slant of writing curricula is to chiefly teach the mechanics of writing and mainly formal types of writing, like essays and research papers. Very few give instruction and

opportunity for a large array of creative writing. So, I take a different approach. Here’s the gist:

- Offer a wide array of opportunities for creative, free-writing in a fun notebook or in a document on the computer.
- Ask your student what nonfiction subject or fiction story grabs their interest, then apply that passion to write on a topic they enjoy or story they imagine — and also to each assignment.
- Provide your student time to free-write every school day.
- Read your student’s work. To build their confidence and freedom of expression, highlight and discuss areas of strength. Be specific and detailed in your positive feedback, avoiding unhelpful “good job” responses.
- Make a mental note of areas that need improvement (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling, organization of ideas) to address at a later time. Resist the urge to mark up your student’s writing.
- Over time, teach areas, one at a time, that need improvement by editing.
- When introducing a new, creative writing project, review any self-editing skills covered

previously. Ask your student to be on the lookout as they self-correct their work.

- Repeat this process for each writing project.

I never “grade” my kids’ stories. What’s the point? That only focuses on performance rather than the bigger picture — the beauty, story, and expression of ideas.

When your students are invested in their writing, they connect the value of the mechanics and grammar that improves their writing. Unrelated sentences or words on worksheets that are often used by some curricula, rarely carry over in the context of writing in the future — at least that’s my experience. I can’t tell you how many times my son spelled all his vocabulary words right on a quiz, then misspelled “when” as “wen” in his story. The mind dumps unconnected fragments and doesn’t integrate until value is evident.

**Connect writing to what interests or captivates your student.** I began the free-writing, multi-genre approach when teaching English as a Second Language to high school students. They all spoke different languages and their levels of comprehension and fluency differed drastically. I allowed students to write about what was safe and

important to them — their home, their culture, and their country. I also created writing assignments that included both formal writing and creative expression. The assignments ranged from writing a recipe for their favorite food from their country along with a memory of eating that food, to writing haikus about a setting from their childhoods. The jam-packed feeling and beauty of what they wrote brought tears to my eyes. I could easily have focused on marking up their work, rendering it nearly unrecognizable. However, I knew that would leave the students defeated and unwilling to try again.

In my multi-genre writing curriculum, *Unleash the Pen: Writing Outside the Lines*, students are tasked to complete a huge array of genre assignments that they apply to whichever subject they love, or whatever story they want to tell. From writing eulogies to newspaper articles to post cards, students are inspired, because they’re not boxed into a topic they care nothing about. Time and again, I’m intrigued and inspired by what my students create when given the space and time to write freely.

**Offer a variety of creative writing opportunities to jumpstart creativity.** I’m not sure who convinced us that English should result in writing the perfect five-paragraph essay. I experienced the pressure to produce that outcome in my own children. I feared they’d head off to college ill-equipped to impress their professors with perfect thesis statements, well-developed paragraphs, and eloquent points.

Instead, I find that offering varied writing topics and genres is more encouraging to children. For example, I love assigning a “list poem,” which is a fun, low-pressure writing assignment to develop description and word choice. Students list vivid words to describe a specific place. Or, to develop a fictional character, I task them to write a question-and-answer interview for a character in their story. The variety places the emphasis on the fun and expressive quality of writing. Multi-genre writing also ties the writing into any subject you’re teaching, which allows students to connect more deeply with that instruction.

When offered an abundant variety of creative writing opportunities, students grow to enjoy written expression, versus dreading writing. A range of

WHEN YOUR STUDENTS ARE INVESTED IN THEIR WRITING, THEY CONNECT THE *value* OF THE MECHANICS AND GRAMMAR THAT *improves* THEIR WRITING.

options clears away the fear and performance-anxiety for both parents and students. I’d even argue to focus solely on free-writing in the younger years.

**Provide time to free-write.** When our kids love to express themselves through the written word instead of feeling defeated or overwhelmed at the get-go, they’ll readily tackle more structured writing with confidence. I read aloud to my kids from great books every day, then they free-write their thoughts and ideas for 30 minutes in their notebook or computer file. To mix things up, and to tackle new writing concepts, I assign various genres of writing assignments. Simple, right?

Just as my students transformed from haters to lovers of writing, I believe the same is possible for anyone who naturally approaches writing with fear. The dejected teen, whose mom forced her to take my writing class, opened up like a flower peeling back for rain. At the end of my class, she began writing a novel.



Holly DeHerrera, homeschooling mother of five, teacher, and award-winning author, inspires ‘tweens and teens to find joy in written expression through her writing curriculum, *Unleash the Pen: Writing Outside the Lines*. Holly’s other published works include *The Orphan Maker’s Sin* and the middle grade series, *The Middlebury Mysteries*.

## Are you seeking a church

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## A MESSAGE FROM COLORADO RIGHT TO LIFE:

Thank you to all who stopped at our table, spoke with us, considered, helped, took information, and asked how you can help fight for the lives of our little pre-born neighbors.



At the Colorado RTL booth with Mark, teaching a young visitor about the value and worth of tiny Image Bearers in the womb.

## TESTIMONY FROM CONFERENCE ATTENDEES:

*Morning conference attendees:  
We heard your talk and it brought us to tears. How may we get involved?*

*Teen/adult booth visitors:  
The colorful info cards are so helpful! We'll have better answers to abortion questions.*

*Sam from Alamosa:  
We met at the CHEC conference and want to know if we can get CRTL materials for a peaceful rally at PP in Alamosa. Can you come join us?*

Learn how you can get involved: [ColoradoRTL.org](http://ColoradoRTL.org)



### Home-based therapy for struggling kids

*"Last year my son had so many meltdowns during school that I almost didn't try homeschooling him again. This year, he is a new kid. I can't believe how much happier he is!"*

*-Mom S.*

### COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Poor emotional control
- Sensory sensitivities
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Meltdowns/over-reactions
- Difficulty with reading and writing
- Difficulty with math
- Difficulty following directions
- Poor attention
- Difficulty staying still
- Poor balance and coordination
- Poor social skills
- Much more

Early Roots is a drug-free intervention program for children with learning, behavioral, social, or emotional problems. We assess each child for signs of immaturity in the central nervous system, also known as Neuro-developmental delay (NDD). We look to find the lowest point of breakdown in their development and then we create a program that works up from there. This allows us to target the root problem rather than focusing on the symptoms. If this sounds like your child (or a child you know) then visit our website at [www.earlyrootstherapy.com](http://www.earlyrootstherapy.com) to learn more.

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# No Throwaway SEASONS

BY EMILY JENSEN

**In an age of public sharing, we see people lament life's transitions more than we would have in the past. Moms post pictures of the moving boxes or the progression of their baby bumps with coordinated letter boards. They write about the sadness of the empty womb or express their struggle as they wait for a child's diagnosis. We're getting used to embracing the awkward and painful transitions of life by locking arms and coming alongside one another in the journey.**

There is some good in this trend. Acknowledging and validating the messy seasons of life assures us we're not alone. This gives us a sigh of relief. After all, Jesus wept with the hurting, and was cautious not to gloss over the hardship of struggle, pain, and death. But we have to wonder if positive affirmations and prompts to "look ahead" extend our gaze far enough for real hope.

I can relate to hard seasons of transition when our family size changes. When we had four kids three-years-old and under, one being a newborn, the days were incredibly long. One morning before church, my husband left early, leaving me at home with everyone else. I was determined to make food for a potluck we were attending after the service. In a couple of hours, I needed to nurse, shower, change everyone's clothes, and make a meal. There was much weeping and gnashing of teeth! When we finally made it to the potluck, I was so tired and frazzled, I misstepped and dropped the meal before placing it on the table. Seeing the dish shatter into hundreds of shards of glass on the concrete was an embarrassing representation of my heart during our transition to a new normal. I was a big, hot mess going a hundred directions, unsure of my usefulness in such a pitiful state.

Transitions are like that. They can bring out the worst in us, depriving us of what we think we must have to be happy, comfortable, and thriving until our true nature is revealed. God shows us our impatient exasperation when our husband works late every night or travels for weeks on end. He shows us our fickle hearts when a chorus of commotion from our children sends us to seek refuge in social media.

When a goldsmith wants to purify gold, he heats it until the impurities are revealed, so he can skim them off. Without the heat, the impurities stay embedded in the gold. Similarly, our circumstances turn up the heat until we see what's in our hearts. It's not that we used to be nice, energetic people, and now (due to this transition and things outside of our control) we're suddenly irritable and unkind. Those changes simply expose the hidden sin that existed all along in the ease and familiarity of our old circumstances.

In the same way, God allows us to experience the pain, difficulty, and discomfort of transitional seasons so our faith is tested and purified because this results in eternal glory and praise for Christ. (1 Peter 1:7). The transition you just want to end isn't a throwaway season — it's a time full of God's purposes, when hindsight will tell a story of sin and

need driving us to the Father and making us love more like the Son.

## A Better Thing to Look Forward To

We're right to look forward to something better, but we're often wrong about what that is. We don't just need to hang on until the end of this transition — until we're sleeping through the night again, until we're more familiar with the school routine, or until we unpack our moving boxes. Rather, we need to hang on until we meet Jesus face-to-face, finding joy and purpose in the meantime. God doesn't promise our current hard season or transition will end the way we want it to, but He does promise He'll be with us all the way through it.

In my season of transition to more children, I needed a promise of spring. I needed to see the value in the season of transition, when God was shoveling, tilling, raking — messing up the hard soil of my heart. He was ready to plant new seeds of faith that could later

**“THE TRANSITION YOU JUST WANT TO END ISN'T A THROWAWAY SEASON — IT'S A TIME FULL OF GOD'S PURPOSES.”**

produce a great harvest for the kingdom. He was not content to let the field of my life stay dormant.

The ultimate spring we all need to look forward to is the defrosting of Satan's cold grip on this earth, when the full and final sunshine of God and the Lamb lights up the streets of the New Jerusalem. (Revelation 21:23). That's the true end to this big, groaning transition we're all in, and it's the only thing we can count on.

Transitional seasons are part of life. We might not enjoy every aspect of them, but we don't have to fear them. God loves us too much to let us be comfortable and unscathed. Adoption, infertility, job loss, sick family members, new careers, and new school years might feel like transitions we don't want to bear. But let's rejoice when we have moments of joy and rest when we endure hard seasons, knowing that God has good purposes for today and a sure promise of our final destination. ■



*Emily Jensen is the co-founder of the ministry, Risen Motherhood, and currently serves as the content director and co-host of the weekly podcast. Her first book from which this article is excerpted, co-written with Laura Wifler, is titled, Risen Motherhood: Gospel Hope for Everyday Moments. Emily, her husband, and their five children reside in central Iowa. You can learn more by visiting [RisenMotherhood.com](http://RisenMotherhood.com).*

## HIGH SCHOOL AHEAD?

**Bring your teen and get equipped to finish their homeschool career with excellence at CHEC's High School & Beyond Seminar. A special guest speaker from HSLDA and experienced homeschoolers will share sessions on:**

- Developing a 4-year high school plan
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**Sign up for this all-day seminar in January 8, 2022 (8:30am-4:30pm). Cost is just \$69 for parents and their student, and includes lunch!**

**Learn more & register at [CHEC.org/HSB](http://CHEC.org/HSB)**



Are you looking for a fresh start for your family devotion time? Are your younger children distractible and distracting when it's time to pray together? Is your prayer list so long it feels like you're reciting the entire phone book each day with no time to personalize each request?

Perhaps the idea of family worship is a new one to you. Many of us grew up in families that didn't really talk about the Lord at home. Perhaps you went to church on Sundays, or maybe you were a "ChrisEaster" family (you attended church on Christmas and Easter only). Maybe you're new to the Christian faith yourself. Or possibly you

are already having a time of family devotions and just want a fresh outlook for the new school year.

The book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament has rich insights for us on this topic. The people of Israel had been taken away to Babylon but, as God had promised, were now returning to Israel after seventy years in captivity. Nehemiah had led the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

In Nehemiah 8, we read that Ezra the priest gathered everyone together — men, women, and children — in front of the Water Gate to hear God's Word. Likewise, a father acts as the priest for his own family, praying for them to God and teaching them His ways. When possible, Dad should be the one to lead family worship.

It is interesting to note that before he began reading, Ezra praised God and the people joined him in worship. Start your own devotions with reminders of the goodness of God and perhaps by singing a song or two. Songs that are easy to learn, and little ones often

enjoy, include *Jesus Loves Me*, *This is the Day (That the Lord Has Made)*, *Be Careful Little Eyes*, and *All Night, All Day*.

After the reading, the Levites explained the Word to the people. Most of these people had never heard God's Word while they were in captivity, so this would have been quite necessary. In our family devotional time, we should leave time for discussion and questions, too. Don't worry, Mom or Dad, if you don't have all of the answers. Search out the answers together using a good study Bible and supplementary resources such as a concordance, a Bible handbook, etc. Realize, too, that some answers are hidden in God's heart and won't be revealed until we get to Heaven.

Talk about practical applications for what you have read. Do you need to repent? Ask forgiveness of someone? Ask God to help you conquer a fault? Does the passage make you want to love and worship God more or, perhaps, have a celebration as the people in this passage did? Notice that the next day the heads

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# Refreshing Your FAMILY DEVOTIONS

BY MARCIA WASHBURN



of families were called together for a period of intense teaching. Today, we might call this a men's retreat.

They took action on what they heard. Imagine the excitement of the children in this passage as they built booths for a camp-out. Find ways to bring the Scripture to life for your children, perhaps acting out the stories you read or illustrating them in a special notebook.

If your family hasn't made a habit of meeting together for family devotions every day, here are some tips to get you started.

- **Have Dad take the lead:** I read about one family that went to bed early so they could get up to have devotions with Dad before he left for work at 6:00 am. If you are a single mom or Dad isn't willing to lead, then you lead them, Mom.
- **Start simple:** Say a short prayer asking God to teach you through His Word. Read a short passage aloud. Talk about it. Ask God to seal it in your hearts. You might review a memory verse. Have a short time of prayer and perhaps a hymn or song. If your children are young, keep

it to just ten minutes or so. You can increase the time as they get older.

- **Family devotions shouldn't replace your personal devotional time:** You need to feed on God's Word for yourself, too.


Consider assembling a Prayer Notebook to help children focus as they pray. This could be used as a part of your family devotions or sometime during the school day. It can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose. We assigned a page or two to each school day, posting names and pictures as memory boosters.

On Mondays we prayed for our immediate family. On Tuesdays we prayed for our country and its leaders. (Don't forget to pray for the Board and staff of CHEC, our Homeschool Freedom team, and those who guard homeschooling interests in the legislature.) On Wednesdays we prayed for their friends, many of whom they would be seeing at church that night. On Thursdays we prayed for missionaries and mission groups, both local and around the world. You might include a world map on this page. On Fridays we prayed for our extended family — grandparents,

aunts, uncles, and cousins — whom we might be seeing over the weekend. Of course, there will be times when you are intensely praying for a special need and will bring that need to the Throne of Grace every day. The Prayer Notebook concept is simply a way to inspire more far-reaching prayers than, "God bless our family."

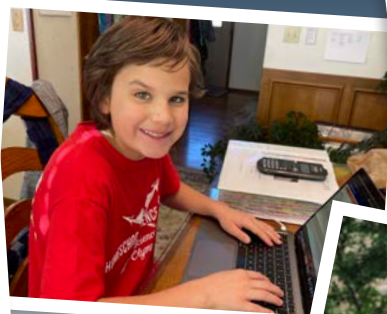
Whether you are new to family devotions or are veterans, remind yourself that the most important thing you will ever teach your children is to love the Lord with all of their heart, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). Set the tone for the day by putting God first. ■

Footnote · <sup>1</sup> Nehemiah 8:9-12



©2021 by Marcia K. Washburn who homeschooled her five sons for nineteen years. Looking for encouragement? Request a free copy of *The Ideal Homeschool Mother* at [Marcia@MarciaWashburn.com](mailto:Marcia@MarciaWashburn.com). See [MarciaWashburn.com](http://MarciaWashburn.com) for other great resources including her bestselling music appreciation course, *Beethoven Who?* Family Fun with Music.





# Our Double Win!

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PUHEK FAMILY

*Note from the Editor: This issue's interview is with a team of homeschool families who accomplished something truly remarkable together — they won both the middle and high school divisions of the statewide Science Olympiad! I asked them to share about their experiences during their award-winning season and some of the benefits that come from teaming up with others for God-honoring competition.*

## WHAT IS THE EXCITEMENT ALL ABOUT FOR THIS TEAM OF HOMESCHOOL FAMILIES?

**A.** Homeschool Science Colorado, a Science Olympiad team based in El Paso County, won both the middle school AND high school divisions for the state of Colorado during the 2020-2021 competition season. Science Olympiad is a national organization that invites schools and homeschools from all over the country to assemble teams of up to 15 students to compete in 23 events. These events cover multiple scientific disciplines including astronomy, biology, chemistry, engineering, geology, physics, and general inquiry.

This was an unusual year because due to COVID, all the tournaments were virtual with teammates competing from computers at home. After winning the state title, Homeschool Science Colorado joined homeschooled teams from Montana, Idaho, and Tennessee along with teams from public and private schools representing the other 46 states at the National Science Olympiad competition, which took place in May.

## WHAT MADE THE HOMESCHOOL-ONLY TEAM UNIQUE IN THIS COMPETITION?

**A.** Homeschool Science Colorado is unique in several ways compared to teams from public and private schools. "We have a very high level of parental involvement," shared head coach Cindy Puhek. "Homeschool parents have taken full responsibility for directing their respective children's education, and that commitment carries over to their involvement with the team. I feel like every parent is a coach and that makes my job much easier and the team more successful. We also have a strong family component to the team with siblings competing together, sometimes across both the middle and high

school teams. This gives some unique mentoring opportunities to the older students."

Maddie Schuermann, team co-captain this year, concurred. "We are not just two separate middle school and high school teams, but instead, we work as a unit. I have younger peers and helped them learn and grow as scientists and members of society. I will forever be thankful for this opportunity." Maddie will take these leadership skills with her as she prepares to attend the United States Air Force Academy.

For many of the students, making friends and becoming part of a team were favorite aspects of being part of Homeschool Science Colorado. "I've made so many great friends through the Science Olympiad and will miss every one of them after graduation," said team co-captain Caleb McIrvine. Caleb is headed to the University of Virginia next year.

Juliana McIrvine agreed with her brother, "Through HSC, I have met many smart, dedicated, and like-minded people that I wouldn't normally encounter in an institutional school or a regular homeschool co-op. I developed lasting friendships through working with my partners all season."

## WHAT OTHER BENEFITS DID THE TEAM EXPERIENCE?

**A.** Another great blessing of being part of the team was learning areas of science that one might not otherwise study. "My favorite event was Digital Structures," said Michael Ratliff, who along with his partner won a national medal in this event. "It uses CAD (computer-aided design) which is something I would like to go into in college and possibly for my career."

"I thoroughly enjoyed my focus on Chiropterology (the study of bats). Bats are very fascinating creatures and I really loved learning about what they eat, where they live, and their crazy anatomy," stated national medal winner Helena Puhek.

Hudson Puhek discovered a new passion for astronomy through Science Olympiad. "The study of astronomy is fascinating, and the mathematics skills

learned are invaluable and applicable elsewhere." Hudson would like to study aerospace engineering once he graduates from his homeschool and he's grateful participating in the Science Olympiad gave him the opportunity to study this area that is beyond a normal high school curriculum.

## WAS YOUR TEAMWORK ALL ABOUT SCIENCE?

**A.** Developing non-science skills is another benefit gained from competing with the team. Juliana McIrvine says she has honed skills that will serve her well throughout her life. "Science Olympiad has really taught me a lot about a variety of science-related topics, as well as important study habits, time management, how to work with a partner, and many other things, some of which normal homeschool curriculums don't include. I have taken so many timed tests that I feel confident going into

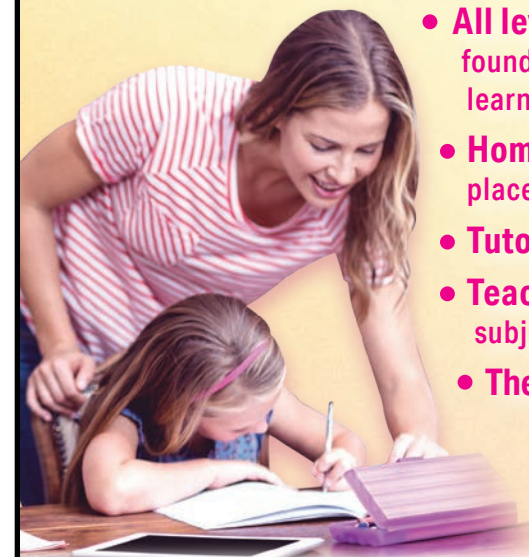
any exam, even major standardized tests like the SAT and AP exams."

Hudson agrees with Juliana and adds that he has learned how to manage competition pressures and has been motivated to study harder than he ever thought possible because of the Science Olympiad competition opportunity.

## WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

**A.** It was an extraordinary year full of many memories for the team members. For Michael Ratliff, his favorite memory was nervously waiting with his teammates for results to be announced, "There was such a strong feeling of companionship as we all waited." Joe Applequist said, "My favorite memory was sitting at the computer watching the state awards and hearing that we got to go to Nationals!" ■

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BY DALE WRIGHT

# Handicrafts to HARPS

**Do you ever wonder if homeschool graduates are successful in life as adults? Our Gen 2 column seeks to encourage you that the answer is, “Yes!” We hope you'll enjoy reading this family's story of their graduate's homeschool outcome.**

**H**omeschooling was a big decision for us. Educated through public schools, my wife and I went on to earn graduate degrees from state universities. After experiencing the shortcomings and social programming embedded into our education, we were drawn to homeschool our children.

But as we got into a rhythm of schooling at home, we experienced a curve in the road that we had not anticipated. None of our boys had academic interests nor the desire to attend college. With this development, we adjusted our course and prayerfully considered how to advise them individually in their career development and life choices.

Each of our sons is unique in his personality, interests, aptitude, and faith. Their stories are different, but there are common themes and spiritual principles that guided us as a family. Whether your child is college bound, will be working as an employee, wants to become an entrepreneur, or is on a different course altogether, these principles may be useful as you educate your children, helping them establish their lives beyond your home.

## Teach them and know them.

If parents desire to direct their children in their career choices, they must do the hard work of teaching them and knowing them. We can only discern our

children's unique qualities when we spend a great quantity of time with them. We rely constantly on God, and through this Heavenly support we are able to use His wisdom to discern and come to know our children deeply. We read to them, study with them, and teach them ourselves. We must keenly observe our children with the intention of offering guidance when the time is right. As our Father seeks to know us, we are to search to know our children.

## Find what God put inside of them that stirs their souls.

As you teach and observe your children, look specifically for what energizes them. Where are they drawn to in their free time? What are their strengths? What do they dream of? What do they see as God's direction for them? The answers are sometimes seen in early childhood, but may not appear until later in their schooling, or even after home high school graduation.

## Be present in the transition years.

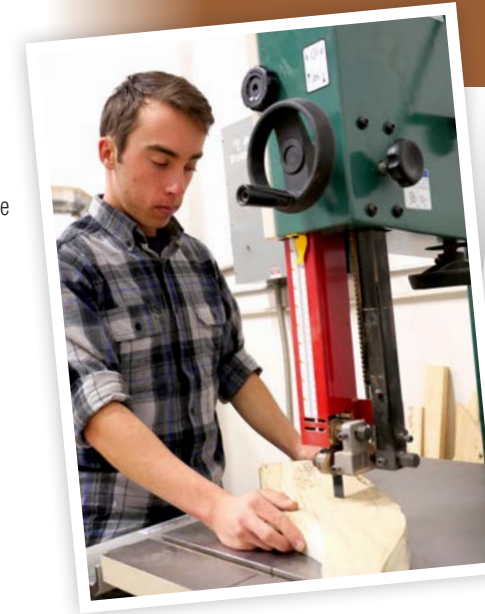
One of the tragedies of our society is that parents raise children, then after graduation, distance themselves at a critical life-forming time. As children try out different ideas, parents can be there doing the actual work with them, experiencing their successes and struggles, meeting their friends and the people they work with and plan their futures with. This takes selfless parents who are willing to put their plans aside, willing to sacrifice personal time and income to be present and supportive in this critically important transition period.

Now, I would like to take you through our second son's journey from homeschooling to owning a business and show how we applied these principles.

We learned over the years that Jamin, our middle son, liked to create and work with his hands. During his free time, we would usually find him crafting something. We were fortunate to have a “craft room” in our home. This area contained miscellaneous stuff to glue, tape, paint, hammer, stick together, build, destroy, disassemble, and reassemble. We purposefully did not require our children to clean up their mess each time, but allowed the room to look like a mad scientist had spent weeks hard at work there! This fun and messy space allowed our children to explore their interests and talents without structure.

When Jamin outgrew the craft room and moved into the garage to build things, we saw him emerge with wooden swords, knives, catapults, and eventually furniture (while our cars were evicted outside into the harsh Colorado weather!). He then moved into “the iron age.” We tore down the wood play set and reconstructed it into a makeshift blacksmith shop. As Jamin's interest shifted from blacksmithing back to woodworking, we paired him with a Christian brother who had a woodworking business. He hired Jamin as a part-time apprentice at the age of 15. Jamin worked for him part-time for three years,

WE MUST *observe our children* WITH THE INTENTION OF OFFERING GUIDANCE WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT. AS YOU TEACH YOUR CHILDREN, *look* FOR WHAT ENERGIZES THEM. WHAT ARE THEY DRAWN TO? WHAT ARE THEIR *strengths*?



then full-time for one-and-a-half years after home high school graduation.

We have taught each of our children to be a blessing in whatever they do, not a burden on others or a dependent of the state. This applies to every part of life: as a student, a guest in someone's house, and working for money. We realize that in the case of a child with a disability or other unusual circumstances this may not always be possible, but it is an ideal we taught our children and guided them to achieve. This value is especially important for a young man. With this in mind, we helped Jamin create a budget that reflected his current wage, and also the highest wage in his field. Through this, Jamin learned that in his current position, he would not be able to provide solely for a family someday.

As he realized he needed to seek other sources of income, we searched and prayed for other opportunities for him to use his woodworking skills.

God's providential care directed us to discover a man who, after building Celtic harps for 26 years, was ready to retire. With our help, Jamin purchased Blevins Harps in 2018 and began a new chapter in his life using his gift of woodworking in a way that could someday allow him the opportunity to provide for a family.

This is our family's story and yours will be different. We encourage you to remain close to your children in the transition years from homeschool to work and family in their adult years. It starts early and takes intentionality and energy to be there for your children, but as our Lord is ever present with us, we are to be the same with our children. ■

*Dale Wright is a Christian husband and homeschool dad of five children. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor and entrepreneur. Teaching young people about the love and power of living a life in Jesus is his passion. Visit [BlevinsHarps.com](http://BlevinsHarps.com) to see the harps that Jamin creates.*





PHOTOS BY SARAH LEE BRYANT

Over the course of three days in June, we had 4000+ individuals gather at the Rocky Mountain Homeschool Conference in Denver to be encouraged in their homeschool vision, journey, and faith.

This year's conference had been in the makings for over two years, and wow, did we see the Lord's blessing! We had 45 speakers, 130 exhibitors, and family fun for all. Throughout the entire conference, children filled the hallways heading from one activity to the next, parents filled the conference rooms listening to speakers encourage and refresh their souls for their homeschool year ahead, and families and friends fellowshiped over meals and during hallway chats.

We were privileged to hear Chelsea Cameron's heart for homeschooling and family discipleship. Stephen Kendrick testified on praying first and described what a courageous father looks like through words and film. Dr. Carlton McLeod brought our focus back to our family and encouraged us to remain vigilant in our pursuit of Christ. Through the solid, biblical teaching brought by these and many other speakers, we were challenged and equipped to continue on with our high calling of raising a new generation that will love and follow Christ!

The weekend was packed with lasting memories and experiences for everyone. We are so thankful to our generous sponsors, helpful Crowne Plaza staff, capable RMHC planning committee, faithful volunteers, and most importantly, our Father in Heaven for creating an impactful and powerful conference. ■



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# Inspiring a LOVE FOR Learning

BY KERRY BECK

Many parents pull their children from school because they want to give their kids a better education and a love of learning. How do you inspire your kids to love learning on their own? Let's take a step back and ask a few questions.

**Do your kids love learning? Do you love learning?** You need to be honest as you answer those two questions. Do your kids groan when you say it's time for school? Do they complain about school? My kids complained about school sometimes, but now they all love learning as adults. How did that change occur?

### Tip #1: Model a Love of Learning

I modeled a love of learning for my kids. They saw me day-in and day-out, reading and learning. I didn't tell them I loved to learn — they saw it. As I did this, I was patient and trusted God for the change in my children. Let's face it, changing attitudes takes time.

Your kids know what you like. They see what's important to you. If you truly love learning, you will model that for your kids. After all, they learn to imitate us as we show them how to write and solve a long division problem, so it makes sense that we need to model a love of learning as well. I'll let you in on a secret: I was not a reader growing up, but my kids would all tell you I'm a voracious reader now.

A few weeks after we moved to Idaho so my husband, Steve, could attend seminary, our son, Hunter, visited a friend for the first time. To enter his friend's home, you walked through their dad's office, which was

basically a library. The room was octagonal-shaped with floor to ceiling bookshelves, books on the desk, books on the couch, and books on the coffee table. Books were everywhere!

Hunter walked in and said, "My mom would love this room."

A few hours later, Steve and I picked up Hunter. I walked in that room and said, "I love this room." Everyone started laughing, so I asked, "Why are you laughing?"

They replied, "That's exactly what Hunter said you would say when he entered the room."

Hunter knew I love to read. I didn't spend time saying, "Hunter, I want you to know I love reading." It was something I naturally showed him in my life.

You are modeling something. Are you modeling a love of learning?

### Tip #2: Read Aloud with Your Kids

Another way to encourage a love of learning is with read-aloud books. As we know, a love of learning is tied to a love for reading. After our family devotions at breakfast, reading aloud was the next most important part of our homeschooling day.

Why did I start our day with read-aloud books? During our first year of homeschooling, I read aloud after lunch. As I began to read, you might guess what happened. I got tired and sleepy, dozing off as I read. Many days, I had to ask one of my daughters to finish reading for me.

Ouch! That's not the example I wanted to set. I didn't want my kids to think reading puts you to sleep or is boring. I had to make a change. The very next year, we started each morning with a read-aloud book. Although I heard complaints such as, "I won't finish my math if we read first," I stood firm. My kids slowly adjusted to our new schedule of starting our day with a half hour of reading aloud together.

I soon realized that whatever you do first thing in the morning, that is what's most important to you. You do it first because you want to be sure you get it done and that it's done well. So, how do you start your day?

On a practical note ... my kids didn't sit on the couch like perfect angels as I read. Sometimes they folded laundry. Sometimes they played with Legos. Sometimes they drew in their journals. When their hands were busy, they listened better.

### How Can Read-Aloud Books Encourage a Love of Learning?

- Use voices and inflection ... make it enjoyable and fun!
- Don't make your kids sit still on the couch.
- Don't use read-aloud books to teach ... ENJOY the books.
- Share your favorite parts about the book you're reading, but don't force your kids to do the same. Let them voluntarily share.

- Don't stop in the middle of your read aloud time to analyze or discuss vocabulary or other literary items ... just enjoy!
- Read books your children are interested in (not just your own interests!). Rotate topics if necessary.
- Don't stop reading when your child can read independently. Keep reading through high school. We did!
- Read every day. ■

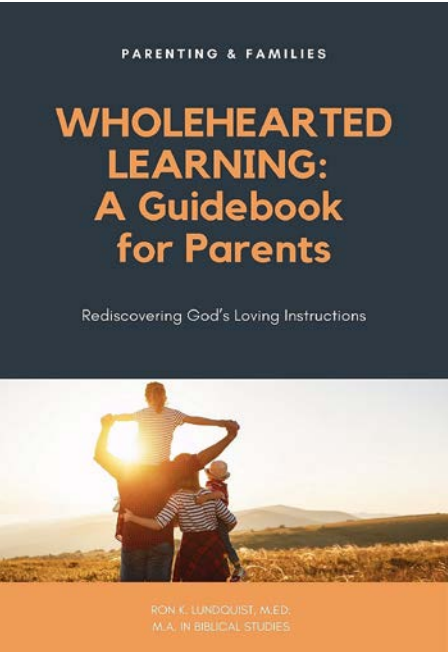


Kerry Beck helps you get past the perfect Instagram image and move on to real life ways to encourage your kids to love learning, think critically, and influence those around them as adults. She also inspires moms with her personal stories of moving from rejection and bitterness to joy and freedom. Kerry has a free ebook for you at [HowToHomeschoolMyChild.com](https://HowToHomeschoolMyChild.com).

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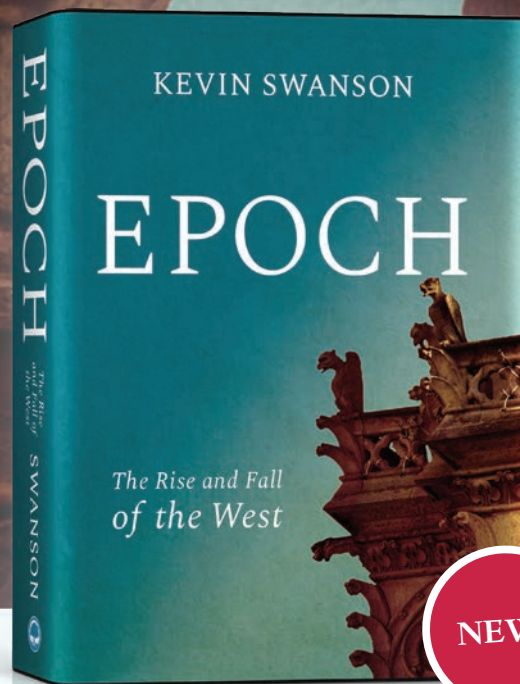
Unleashing the Hebraic model of learning by doing, this book helps to guide parents back to the bedrock of becoming role models. Building on this foundation, Ron helps to equip parents with understanding how to love, bond, discipline, and mentor their children during the three phases of growth from infancy to young adulthood. With illustrations from real family life and writings from their three children, this guidebook reveals the actions parents must take to develop the hearts and character of their children resulting in meaningful accomplishments and fulfillment in living for a lifetime! This provides the foundation for families using any home school curriculum.

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a moment when we must understand the times in order to know what to do, and how to respond. The West has already fallen, although the news has yet to sink in with most Europeans and Americans in 2021. The East is on the rise. The Christian faith is fast moving east and south, and the glory has departed from the West.

*Epoch* carefully chronicles the phenomenal impact of Jesus Christ and His people upon the culture, economy, religious character, charitable institutions, educational systems, science and technology, and worldview of the Western world—and the West's subsequent impact upon the whole earth. The book then traces the devastating decline and fall of a civilization, identifying the principal defectors and key provocateurs along the way.

Yet, the war is not over yet. The world goes on. So *Epoch* concludes with an international vision for the Christian church, and a clarion call for Christians to press forward in the work of discipling the nations in the generations to come. An absolute must-read for any Christian seeking to understand the times and seasons in which we live.

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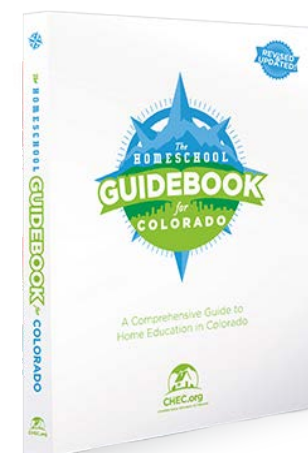


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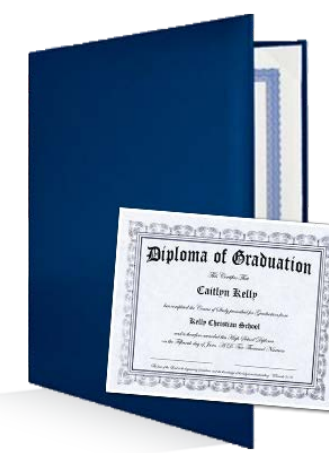
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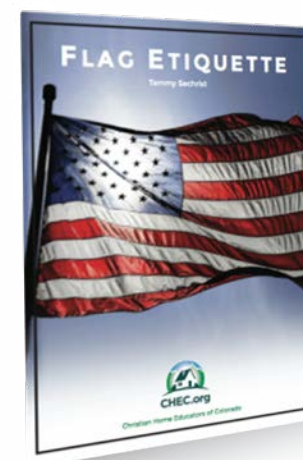
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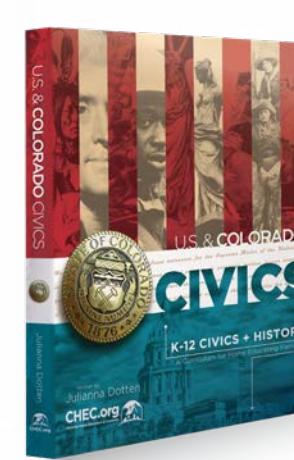
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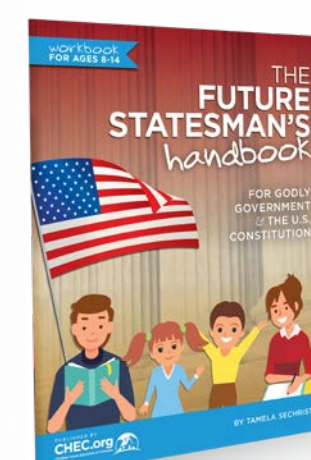
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# Turn Off the BUZZING

BY KRISTEN SCHAFFNER

I hate flies. Yes, I know as Christians we are not supposed to hate things, but I think flies are an exception. As I sit quietly during my devotions, they buzz around my head, pulling my thoughts away from my Creator, distracting me from my reading at hand.

Then I'm struck with the correlation between flies and distractions. I can't even finish a thought with all this buzzing! I suppose I must stop what I'm doing and deal with the buzzing beasts. If I ignore them, they will lay eggs, eventually multiplying, creating a bigger problem down the road. I sense the familiar tap of the Holy Spirit on my shoulder. Hmmmm ... that sounds a little like the negative thoughts or distractions I've been struggling with lately.

Distractions are such a mixed bag. They are handy when a child needs to be redirected or

I need to escape an empty conversation. But, when they keep us from focusing on what is important or from following our purpose, they need to be reined in.

Especially in fall, when many homeschooling parents are carving out plans for the upcoming school year, it seems easy to become distracted with too many choices. I remember feeling like Moses coming down from Mt. Sinai with the plan for our first year (only to have it thwarted when the baby stopped taking a morning nap).

Have you ever asked God what His purpose is for your homeschool this year? He alone knows the future of this upside-down world we live in. I believe He has a purpose for you, personally; for each of your family members; and for your school year. I challenge you to ask Him to show you what His plan entails, even though you are now already a month or more into it.

I recall being in an especially challenging season, teaching five small children, running on fumes, and just being thankful to make it through the day. By the grace of God, I had managed to get to the Rocky Mountain Homeschool Conference in time for a keynote session. As the words of the opening hymn, and the magnitude of the responsibility of teaching these little blessings God gave us washed over me, I remember silently pouring out my heart to Him. With-


out even realizing it, I prayed, "How in the world am I going to teach them everything they need to know?" Without skipping a beat, His answer resonated within my heart, "It's my job to teach your children; it's your job to trust and follow Me."

Relief flooded my soul. I knew this to be true. Isaiah 54:13-17 (NKJV), *All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you. Indeed they shall surely assemble, but not because of Me. Whoever assembles against you shall fall for your sake. "Behold, I have created the blacksmith who blows the coals in the fire, who brings forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the spoiler to destroy. No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me," says the Lord.*

That was a foundational purpose in our homeschooling journey, an altar moment for me. After that, every year I would ask God for a theme verse for the school year, plus a passage of Scripture for our family to memorize together. It was always so fun to look back on each year and see the Divine correlation between our purpose and activities. For me, the

Lord confirmed for me Habakkuk 2:2, *Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it* (NKJV). Keep your purpose and corresponding theme verse(s) in a place where you can reflect on them daily.

To hear clearly, we often have to purposefully minimize the distractions. I would also encourage you to turn off the buzzing in your mind, quiet your soul before its Creator, and position yourself to listen. He is speaking, often in a still, small voice. My attention is drawn back to flies ... the graveyard pile on the coffee table in front of me is a testament to my diligent swatting, which has now made the air peaceful. I breathe deeply, thankful for the battles won ... and lost, thankful for second chances, and how He is leading you and me. ■



Married to the love of her life for 29 years and blessed to be the mother of five wonderful children, three amazing sons-in-law, and four beautiful grandkids, Kristen Schaffner loves living in rural Colorado, teaching, mentoring and encouraging others. Along with her husband, David, she has served as support group leader for HEART of the Plains for the last 21 years. They just graduated their last senior in 2021. Kristen received the 2021 CHEC Support Group Leader of the Year award.

## DONATE BOX TOPS TO CHEC ONLINE

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(The CHEC office will continue to process unexpired clipped box tops until they are no longer available.)





### FATHER SON RETREAT

2021 RETREAT RECAP

Over 315 dads and sons from around the nation gathered for our annual Father Son Retreat in Westcliffe, Colorado. Here are some highlights from the three days they spent together in the mountains.





PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSICA

# FACT DRILL FUN

BY CINDY PUHEK



**T**eaching a child to read and learn their math facts provides many opportunities for sweet (and maybe sometimes not so sweet!) moments between student and teacher.

I have fond memories of sitting side-by-side on the couch, individually with each of my six children, watching their eyes light up as they began to read. And while nothing can ever replace a parent's involvement in this process, sometimes a child requires more practice with phonics and math facts than a parent has time to give. *Reading Eggs* and its companion, *Math Seeds Play and Learn* are thorough, online programs for 3- to 13-years-old, designed to drill and reinforce math and phonics skills in an enjoyable, sequential, and interactive way.

The reading portion of this program has several different areas where a child can practice his or her phonics skills, including *Reading Eggs Junior*, *Fast Phonics*, *Reading Eggspress*, and the main section — *Reading Eggs*. *Reading Eggs* focuses on teaching and reinforcing phonics sounds through fun, short activities. The skills the student gains incrementally increase and are consistently reinforced. In one lesson, designed to teach the “oa” sound, the student works through 10 different short activities which include dragging “oa” words to match the pictures, making an “oa” word family, and putting pictures that tell a story into the correct order. Every lesson ends with a quiz which a student must pass before progressing onto the next lesson, and students can go back to previous activities or previous lessons and review as many times as desired or needed.

*Mathseeds* is similar to *Reading Eggs* in that the lessons have short, fun activities to help students practice math skills. The lessons begin on a kindergarten level and progress through third grade. The games are interactive and enjoyable. Some require accuracy to pass the game and others allow the

student to try the activity as many times as needed before progressing.

There are workbooks that can be purchased for *Reading Eggs* and *Mathseeds* with exercises corresponding to the lessons the student completes on the computer. This program has been a blessing to my family and I have been impressed by the depth of it. My daughter used it daily for over a year and I feel we have barely begun to explore all it has to offer. The extra drilling from this program has also been instrumental in her becoming proficient at both reading and math. With a price of \$69.99/year for up to 4 students, it is very economical as well. ■



Cindy Puhek resides in Colorado Springs and has been married to Peter for more than two decades. They are well into their second decade of homeschooling their six children who range in age from toddler to high schooler. Cindy holds a master's degree in chemistry and has written dozens of articles to encourage others in their homeschooling journeys. You can visit her blog at [HomeschoolEnrichment.com/blogs](http://HomeschoolEnrichment.com/blogs).



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# Guarding Our VISION

BY CAROLYN MARTIN

PHOTOGRAPH BY ISTOCK

**V**ision is a funny thing. Often you can't tell your eyesight is going bad until you notice yourself squinting or your head starts to ache. Young children never seem to notice their poor vision on their own. They don't have an expectation that they will always see clearly because they've never been told what normal vision is.

Most of us understand that the vision of our country — the land of the free and the home of the brave — has become blurry. There are factions redefining the ideals our forefathers clearly understood. We know that there is nothing normal about the times we are living in. Yet, we are like the small child who doesn't know what normal really is, especially when it comes to our God-given, unalienable liberties or the uniqueness of our Republic.

*"CHEC envisions families honoring Jesus Christ by embracing home discipleship that is Christ-centered, parent-directed, and free-from-government control."*

The three values enshrined in CHEC's vision are grounded in fundamental, unalienable rights given to us by God and inherent in our humanity. We live in a country that honors and protects these rights — that is until its people willingly give up those rights. We give up our rights when two things happen: we fear man more than we fear the Lord, and we lack knowledge of what liberties God has given us.

Unfortunately, we are seeing the government take, or severely restrict, the liberties given to us by God. In the five years I've been advocating for homeschoolers at the Capitol in Denver, there has not been a year when the rights of parents and of Christians were not being threatened. For the past three years, our parental rights and our religious liberties have taken significant hits in Colorado. Due to the explosive growth in homeschooling and its impact on the declining enrollment in the public schools, I fully expect there will be a bill dealing specifically with the homeschool law in the upcoming 2022 legislative session.

What are we to do to guard this vision of home discipleship grounded in the foundational principles of our country and the fundamental rights given by God?

**Put first things first.**

With Jesus, all things are possible just as without Him, nothing is possible. The prayers of the saints and an abiding faith in His goodness is what has kept me going. Prayer, as we seek Christ first, must be the starting place if we want our vision to align with His will.

**Clarify and embrace the vision.**

Solidify God's vision for your family and for our country. Learn the truth about our God-given liberties and the role a citizen has in a Constitutional Republic like ours. Seek to fully understand the three values CHEC believes are essential to maintaining homeschool freedom — Christ-centered, parent-directed, free-from-government control — and ask God for the ability to live them out and articulate them well.

**Go where you have been called ...**

I wholeheartedly believe every person who claims citizenship in this state has a role to play in rebuilding what has been broken. It begins with seeking Him in prayer, but it doesn't end there. There is a precious prayer warrior who comes to the Capitol every week to pray with me. Not because she homeschools her children, or she loves politics, or she already knew me. She comes solely because God told her to come, and she has been faithful to do it. Her greatest vision

is to follow the Lord. Likewise, seek what He has for you and be obedient to do it.

**... and even when you haven't.**

The time is now for all homeschooling families to engage with legislators at the state Capitol. Start by graciously getting to know your legislators and by them becoming acquainted with your family. Relationships go a long way in helping legislators see the impacts of the laws they make. Those leading our state are looking through lenses that distort their vision. It is up to us to make sure those representing us in our government do not lose sight of God's vision of liberty which enables all people to thrive. ■

**To stay up-to-date on legislative matters, join the Colorado Homeschool Freedom Team at [chec.org/freedom](http://chec.org/freedom).**



*Carolyn Martin, CHEC's Director of Government Relations, and her husband, Todd, began homeschooling their three children in upstate New York before moving to Colorado in 2004. Her passion is to see homeschooling remain free from government intrusion for future generations.*

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## You must guard your own COLORADO HOMESCHOOL freedom!

Every family in Colorado has an opportunity to make a difference for their liberty now — and for future generations.

Sign up at [CHEC.org/freedom](http://CHEC.org/freedom) for:

- Legislative updates (sent every other Wednesday, January – May)
- Prayer updates (sent every Monday, January – May) that include bill reviews and action items




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# Off to a GREAT START

BY TERI SPRAY

**If this were to be a great school year for you, what would that look like? Perhaps if we write down a few ideas, visions, and dreams for the school year it would help.**

This could become “the year of victory over times-tables,” or this is “the year of keeping our routine.” It could be “the year of volunteerism for our family,” or “the year of fun field trips.” Once you have a vision, you can even make goals for your school year. S-M-A-R-T goals are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elavant, and **T**imely. Here are some examples:

- Field Trip Fun — Goal: Complete eight field trips between Labor Day and Memorial Day.
- Volunteerism — Goal: Our family will complete a total of 100 hours of volunteer service by June.
- Times-tables — Goal: Student will complete times-tables’ worksheets within two minutes at 90% accuracy by the end of the school year.

Do you have a child who would rather be playing outside than doing school? Here are some ideas to help a reluctant learner get into the academic groove:

**Gentle Beginnings:** As you beckon your children inside, introduce one or two subjects one week and add another subject each week until you have a full schedule.

**Joyful Journey:** Seasonal decorations, with special foods for special days, and great excursions, can add fun to your journey. If you lack wall space for learning materials, we have used the inside of doors for this purpose. Plan celebrations for achieving goals and add photos to your memory books. Then you have documented a great school year!

**School DAZE!** I love to start each school year with new school supplies. We put bright labels on large clear plastic tubs which hold books and pencil boxes. These are fully stocked with fresh pencils, sharpeners, erasers, markers, colored pencils, scissors, and tape. Struggling students often prefer clearly defined work-spaces with organized learning materials.

**NEED, DO, DONE:** Many struggling learners need help to keep school and life from being overwhelming. Teach these simple skills to help with learning, chores, and projects. Parents find that

posting reminders of these three prompts for their students can bring peace and joy into their family’s learning experience.

1. **NEED** — What do I need? Do I have the supplies needed to do the task? Get ready!
2. **DO** — What exactly am I expected to do? Do I understand what to do and how to do it?
3. **DONE** — What is expected? When will I be done? What do I do when I am done?

Now that you have decided what will make your year great, and you have ways to enjoy your journey, remember to apply the power of God’s Word as you bless your children and yourselves each day: *May the Lord bless you and keep you; may He make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; may He lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26 KJV).*



*Teri Spray taught in private schools, learning centers, and special education programs while her husband served in the Air Force for nearly ten years. Teri’s early teaching experiences spanned five states, all twelve grade levels including gifted and learning disabled. Eventually, she opened up a one-room school in her home. Thus, ChristianCottage.org was born.*

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**CHEC.org/events/spelling-bee**



# PARTNER with CHEC

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**“Now what would You like me to do, Lord?” This was my prayer that started almost two-and-a-half years ago.**

My husband and I graduated our son in 2017 and our youngest was entering her sophomore year in high school. I could see that my homeschooling journey was coming to an end, and I knew that my schedule would soon open up. I began to pray that prayer, seeking God's direction on my next stage of life. I prayed. And prayed. And prayed! At times, glimpses of answers would seem to appear, but after further prayer, I would still hear “wait.”

Fast forward to November of 2020. My husband and I were making plans for our daughter's graduation, and I still had not heard anything clearly from the Lord about my next steps. Then one day, I read an email from CHEC and I sensed the Holy Spirit telling me to reach out to the CHEC office to see if they needed any help. After more prayer, I heeded the Holy Spirit and a few weeks

later, I was ecstatic to share with my family that I had been asked to come on board the CHEC team to build a mentoring program!

Now, I understand why I heard “wait” so many times before. He had this opportunity for me that I would not have been equipped for any earlier. Can you guess what the most exciting thing about the entire process was? Recognizing God answering my prayers in the moment! So often, I can look back on situations and see how God moved, but to see God's hand actively working was a huge boost to my faith.

So here we are, the '21/'22 school year is at hand and instead of ordering curriculum like I've done so many times before, I'm heading up a team of wonderful mentors who have walked the road you're walking now and volunteer their time to serve in the CHEC Mentor Mom Program.

So how does the CHEC Mentor Mom Program work?

- It is an additional benefit to your CHEC Independent School membership.
- Simply log in to your All Access Benefits Zone page and click the Mentor Mom Program button/link.

- Review the online catalog of topics and select the one that most closely matches your question.
- Choose a Mentor from the drop down list and find a time that is right for you.
- Complete the form to schedule your 30-minute telephone session with the Mentor.
- The Mentor will call you on the scheduled date and time to answer your question.

I feel so blessed that God answered my prayers the way He did, and I have already seen Him at work through this ministry. Now, I pray that those of you who need some help and encouragement along your homeschooling journey will find it through the CHEC Mentor Mom Program. I eagerly anticipate God answering that prayer. ■



*Katrina Wright is the Mentor Mom Program Director for CHEC. She and her husband, Rich, enjoyed the homeschooling journey with both of their children all the way through high school. Now, Katrina looks forward to sharing some of her experience and encouraging other moms! You can reach her at [Katrina@CHEC.org](mailto:Katrina@CHEC.org).*



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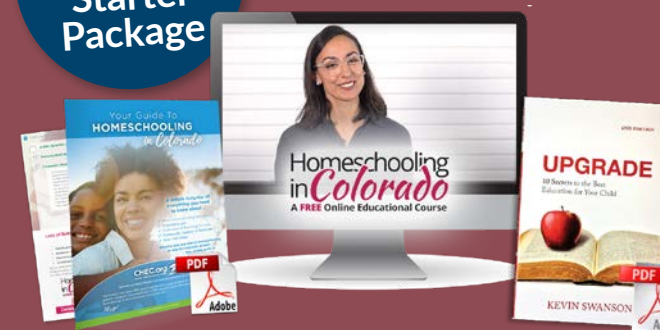


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