

Winter 2009

The Virginia Home Educator

Home Educators Association of Virginia News Magazine

ATTITUDES OF THE HEART

Beware of Bitterness

Playing Life's Game

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 *Convention
Information
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FROM THE EDITOR

Mary Kay Smith

I have never seen someone so happy to die. It hadn't been her plan to die, however. My adopted "aunt" loved and studied prophecy and was convinced and determined that she would live to see the Rapture. Then late last summer she phoned me to tell me she had changed her mind. She had been talking with God and had become persuaded that she was being selfish to insist on being raptured out of here; maybe God had many more people He wanted to see saved before that time. And she, being in her 80s, didn't want to hold Him back.

At the time, I thought it was funny and teased her about giving God permission to do what He is going to do anyway. Two months later she phoned me to say she was in the hospital, and I needed to come and clean out her house. I flew to Vancouver and was with her for five wonderful days before she died. And then—for the second time last year—I had the sad task of cleaning out a home and closing a chapter of my past.

Here is the interesting thing: last summer, long before Aunt Shirley knew she was sick, she had apparently told her pastor and all of her friends that she expected to be dead by mid-October. Both her actual burial in eastern Canada and her memorial service in the west occurred on October 15. How did she know? I think maybe God told her, and this was a lady so close to God that, rather than be upset that she would miss the Rapture she had looked forward to all this time, she adjusted her attitudes to fit with what He was doing.

It is easy to take our hopes, expectations, and training and determine a direction and set out on a path. But it is sure hard to adjust when that path gets bumpy or veers off course. In this issue, we talk about our reactions when we have unmet expectations, disappointments, and close calls. We have three thought-provoking articles for you on the topic and hope you find them helpful. I think it is only when we count our blessings and adjust our attitudes that we can agree with Shakespeare, "Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer." ☺

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The Virginia Home Educator

Home Educators Association of Virginia News Magazine

The purpose of *The Virginia Home Educator* is to provide information, resources, and encouragement to Virginia homeschool parents. The views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of Home Educators Association of Virginia.

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INTER 2010

Letters

SELLING HOME-BAKED GOODS?

Thank you for the inspiring articles in the fall 2009 Home Educator on starting a home-based business. This was just the boost I needed, especially the article by Joel Salatin where he mentions that in Virginia, home-baked items are exempt from government oversight. Could I get a little more information about that? I have always wanted to make and sell this wonderful cookie that my mom used to make, but I don't know the rules of selling home-made food here in Virginia.

Thank you for any help you can pass my way, and God bless you for all you do for us Virginia homeschoolers!

Peggy Edwards

Editor's Note: Joel writes that he was referring to the "Home Kitchen Bill" that was passed in March 2008. For more information, log on to the Virginia Independent Consumers and Farmers Association website at www.vicfa.org/about-us.html, or contact your delegate or state senator.

Thinking about a home-based business? Don't miss the Entrepreneur Track at this year's convention. Joel Salatin and Nick Logan offer specifics on the how-tos of beginning, marketing, promotion and more!

VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

The article in Freedom Watch about virtual schools was timely for us in Rockingham County, since we received letters yesterday offering to enroll our children in a free Calvert homeschool program through the county schools. I knew I was not interested and it meant giving up my freedoms. However, I received a call from a first-year homeschool mom who was unaware of the potential consequences, so I sent e-mails to the co-op leaders in our county. The one who responded so far couldn't find that article online. Is it available to forward to homeschoolers here?

Linda Sundquist

Editor's Note: The magazine is available at www.heav.org/resources/home-educator.html. Please let us know if you have any problems.

THANK YOU TO HEAV

I just picked up an e-mail from HEAV regarding discounted museum events and was thinking about you and all that you have given to the homeschooling parents of Virginia. I just wanted to say thank you. May the Lord honor your service to Him.

Robert Hewitt



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FROM THE DIRECTOR OF HOMESCHOOL SUPPORT

Yvonne Bunn

Are you busy? Or tired? Are you having a hard time fitting in all the activities? Is your homeschool year going the way you expected it to go? The winter months are a good time to reevaluate your family schedule, check attitudes, and make some adjustments.

For many homeschooling families there is some place to go and something to do everyday—soccer practice, co-op, music lessons, library story time, gym day, field trips, and more. Drive here, pick up this one, drop off that one—on and on it goes.

There are many reasons why our schedules get so hectic. It happens when we say “yes” to things we feel pressured by others to do. It happens when we feel guilty we might not be giving our children a “well-rounded” education unless they participate in the “extras.” It happens when we try to keep up with all the activities in which our homeschooling friends are involved.

But what do we get in exchange for adding more things to our already busy schedules? We typically get stress and an exhausting lifestyle—not such a good trade.

It’s so easy to lose sight of the simple things. As homeschooling parents, we have a unique gift to give our children: the gift of quality time. We have time to read with them, talk with them, eat meals with them, play with them, share life experiences with them, encourage them, and train them. Because of this wonderful gift of time, we can develop a close relationship with our children. When we give our children our time, it translates into love which results in security and self-confidence. What a privilege to lay this foundation in their lives!

Protecting this gift of time is our responsibility, yet it’s so easy to let time stealers creep into our lives. There are never-ending opportunities for us to do more! It is the little foxes that spoil the vine. It is the many good things that keep us from the best things. How can we stop the “busyness” that steals away the time we have with our children?

We can stay home more. I know that seems simple, but it works. We can set priorities for our family, then make conscious decisions about outside activities. When faced with a new activity or project, we should ask ourselves, “Does this fit with the goals I have for our family? Will doing this further our children’s education?”

If we don’t bring balance to our lives, chaos will reign. We’ll continue to have fussy babies napping in their car seats, irritable children arguing with each other, dishes piling up in the sink, and laundry filling every available basket. When there isn’t enough time to do the basic things that need to be done, something needs to change.

Bringing order to our homes is possible. It means weighing our choices and creating balance in our families. Some outside activities are good. Decide which activities are valuable enough to continue. Let go of the rest *without guilt*.

When you stay home with your children, you give them time to enjoy being children. They’re not under pressure—and neither are you! If your life is too busy, seek the Lord’s direction, and listen for His voice in the quietness of your heart. He will guide you as a loving Father. ☺

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Reservations: Contact Rachel Deddens, museum educator, with your name and the number attending from your family, at rachel.deddens@lynchburgva.gov. The deadline is May 3, 2010.

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Want to know about the latest events? Sign up for the informative and FREE weekly *Virginia Homeschool Update* at www.heav.org/resources/update.html. ☺

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Freedom Watch

NEW GOVERNOR

Bob McDonnell took the oath of office on January 16, becoming Virginia's 71st governor. With a new governor and administration in place, the General Assembly is well underway. HEAV has been at the Capitol vigilantly protecting the rights of homeschooling parents, and we are carefully monitoring potential changes and working with legislators to improve and protect homeschool laws.

HEAV'S LEGISLATIVE TEAM

Veteran homeschool dad and businessman **Bob Shanks** of Richmond is representing our homeschool interests at the General Assembly during the 2010 session. Bob is an articulate speaker with experience in sales and marketing. He has been a licensed instructor at the Real Estate Academy, teaching real-estate law, regulations, and ethics. He has been a speech teacher at Veritas Christian Academy, as well as serving as a TeenPact instructor. He and his wife, Kathryn, homeschooled their four children who are now grown. Bob has found lobbying to be interesting and challenging.

Caroline Barnes is a veteran homeschool mom and political activist. She continues to faithfully serve as HEAV's bill researcher. Caroline is a former HEAV board member who received The Family Foundation's Tidewater Citizen of the Year Award, ran for a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates, and later became Chairwoman of the Portsmouth Republican Party. Caroline is a retired Navy Nurse Corps Commander. In 2000, she was elected to the Portsmouth School Board. Her sharp eye and humorous comments get us through the monotony of reading thousands of bills.

HEAV president **Anne Miller** assists in analyzing proposed legislation. Her valuable experience contributes to good legislative decisions. Anne and **Yvonne Bunn**, our long-time director of government affairs, will continue to discuss strategy and track the progress of bills with our legislative team. ☺

We are here to help you understand the legislative process and answer your questions—we also value your input. Please contact us with questions and comments at legislative@heav.org. Now on the Web! The history of homeschooling in Virginia—and the changes and dangers we face today. Visit www.heav.org/about/history/video.html.

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VIRGINIA KIDS DID IT!



Standing from left to right: Samuel Brooks, Jon Thompson, Becky Thompson, TIME Center Representative, Julia Thompson. Kneeling: James Miller, Joseph Miller, Noah Williams, and Tyler Lolman.

Congratulations to the **Twisted Botz**, a middle school and high school homeschool robotics team, who have won three out of four regional tournaments in the VEX Robotics Competition, playing the VEX Clean Sweep Challenge. Taking multiple awards, including the Tournament Champions Award, Programming and Driver Skills Award, Design Award, Amaze-Create Award, Build Award, Community Award, and the Excellence Award, they are currently qualified multiple times for the International World Competition in Dallas, Texas. The Excellence Award is the highest award any team can win. For more information about the Twisted Botz, the VEX competition, or how to get involved, visit twistedbotz.org.

Kudos to homeschool robotics team, **Nosco Mechanicus** (Latin for “I know or I learn mechanics”), who won first place Overall Champion and second place Robot Performance in Division 2 at the FIRST Lego League Regional Tournament in Lynchburg in November. The Lynchburg tournament is the largest FLL regional tournament in Virginia, with 31 teams competing.

Team members are **David Norton, Andrew Norton, Josiah Sprankle, and James Depret-Guillaume**. Patrick and Cari Norton of Daleville are the team’s coaches. For more information about the team, please visit their website: www.RoboDesigners.com.

FLL teams around the world are working to solve this year’s Smart Move Challenge, which has teams looking at ways to transform transportation. For information about FIRST Lego League, visit www.firstlegoleague.org, or for information about FLL in Virginia and Washington, D.C., visit www.vadcfll.org.

Congratulations to 16-year-old **Michael Christopher Robinson** (West Point), who earned the Boy Scouts of America’s highest honor attainable in the scouting program—that of Eagle Scout.



The site of Michael’s Eagle Scout project.

To achieve this prestigious award, a scout must earn at least 21 merit badges and plan, develop, and provide leadership to others in a service project benefiting his community. Michael’s service project consisted of building two lighted brick columns at his troop’s sponsoring church, Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church in Norge.



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From left to right, Christian Lane (18), Noah Lane (12), and Victoria Landrum (16)

Congratulations to **Victoria Landrum, Christian Lane, and Noah Lane** from the Salt & Light 4-H Club in King William County, who won at the state level in the 4-H June Dairy Poster Contest. In the senior division, Victoria Landrum was awarded first place and received a \$100 check, and Christian Lane received third place and a \$50 check. In the intermediate-age division, Noah Lane placed third in the state and was given a \$50 check. All three students won the exact same placements in the Henrico County competition. Their posters were based on the theme of “Fuel Up with Milk” and were judged on originality, adherence to the theme, ease of understanding, appearance, and accurate information. ☺



playing life's game

brad smith

Are you familiar with the game of Monopoly? When you play, you move around the board and have the option to buy properties on which you land. Once you own that property, anyone else who lands on it has to pay you rent. If you buy a series of similar properties, you have the option to develop the properties with houses and hotels, which makes the rent much more expensive to someone else who lands on it. Some things in the game happen to you by your decision and some by chance. You might have to pay hospital bills, pay double the rent, or you might collect a bank dividend or beauty contest prize. The goal of the game is to accumulate the most property and money, and eventually force your opponents to go bankrupt. I call this goal the first “plane” or perspective of the game.

But while we’re working on the first plane, we are also operating on another plane or perspective. It is not on the board or the roll of the dice; it is what is in our hearts as we play the game. I’m talking about our attitudes during the game. You know what I mean—greed, anger, manipulation, and maybe even meanness or dishonesty. Monopoly can really bring that out. In my wife’s eyes, it is that attitude that really matters as we play. To her it is not the game that is important; it is the attitude with which we play it.

Compare Monopoly to our lives. Consider the board to be one plane if you will—a flat perspective that represents both the visible decisions we make, as well as the things that happen to us that are not of our choosing. We plan our strategies and make our goals; we choose our jobs and our kids’ education; we believe we know where we’re headed, and we make decisions accordingly.

However, sometimes our decisions or events beyond our control—our opponents’ hotels or the Chance cards—cause us to change direction, and that is when we usually become more aware of the second plane. These changes might be job losses, errant behavior or learning issues in our children, sickness, or anything else. And, it is this second plane that really matters. It is that plane that determines whether or not we will have a wall of separation between us and our family members or friends at the end of the game.

Isn’t it interesting that most often we refer to God’s will as it relates to decisions and “happenings”—the first plane. But God’s will for us is actually all about the second plane—our attitudes and heart condition. God’s will is essentially summed up in these two things: His desire for the salvation of all men (2 Peter 3:9), and for the saved to become conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). (For more specifics on that one, check out Galatians 5.)

LANDING ON THE WRONG PROPERTIES

When we were in college, my wife and I were fed the philosophy that says you can pick your future and, with careful planning, expect certain results. So we prayed and planned and designed and anticipated. We focused on the game board.

We played the game the best we could, but when we turned the corner of the game board,

we found properties covered with hotels and unfortunate Chance cards—in other words, obstacles to our game plan. We wondered if we had heard God’s leading correctly.

This question first surfaced when we were living in San Francisco. I needed a job, and I interviewed with an association in southern California. After much prayer, we became convinced it was the right job and certain it was God’s will.

But then after weeks of waiting, I learned someone else had been interviewed, and I had moved down to second choice! What?! We were thrown into confusion. How could God allow the company to make a mistake like that—we were absolutely convinced the job was supposed to be mine!

Two months later I was offered a different position. We moved 3,000 miles east and set up a new home.

Then four months after that, the association in southern California called me. They said they had made a mistake by hiring the other guy; could I come now?

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

So there we were. We had been right in the first place, but now what? At this point, it didn’t seem right to abandon the fledgling organization in Washington, D.C., so we turned down the revised offer. But six months later, the organization I had been faithful to stay with in Washington laid me off for lack of funding.

What *was* this game? From my perspective, I had landed on all the wrong properties. And it was made much worse when the unemployment stretched out.

It’s not easy at a time like that to trust in the Lord with all your heart. We had operated on what information we had, but my question was, had I done the Lord’s will in moving east? Should I have waited for that southern California opportunity? I wrestled with that for a long time...until I discovered that I was not asking the right question.

As I brought this in humility before the Lord, He comforted me with Romans 8:28-9 (NIV): “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

We were focused on the game, but God operates on the higher, second plane. You see, in God’s eyes it wasn’t that important which or how many of the properties on the game board I owned. It likely didn’t matter that I ended up in Virginia versus California—maybe He would have eventually moved me to Virginia anyway and I just got

here a little faster. The game board is only important as it affects the higher plane: the attitude of our hearts and the perspective with which we face life. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV) states: “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

The Lord does everything “according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11 NIV).

And Isaiah 14:27 (NIV): “For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?”


We tend to believe God’s will is evidenced primarily by “blessing”—reliable income, good health, and certain behavioral and educational results with our children—surely not by suffering! We get confused when things don’t go well and wonder where we went wrong on the game board.

But God is leading according to *His* purpose and vision, and He keeps us ultimately on track. The issue is really, “What do our hearts look like in the midst of His purpose?” If we operate within the framework of the Lord’s vision for us, viewing all decisions through the grid of His criteria and standards through prayer, every decision can be within His will. How can I say that? Romans 8:28.

So, how is your game going? Are you expectant? Happy? Disappointed? Struggling? Are you worried that you somehow missed God’s leading? The answer is actually a different question: What is your attitude while you are following? ☺

Brad Smith, homeschool father of three now-grown children, is a management consultant at DESE Research, Inc. He also speaks on men’s issues at international church leadership conferences, and provides business consulting services for Business as a Mission (BAM) endeavors.



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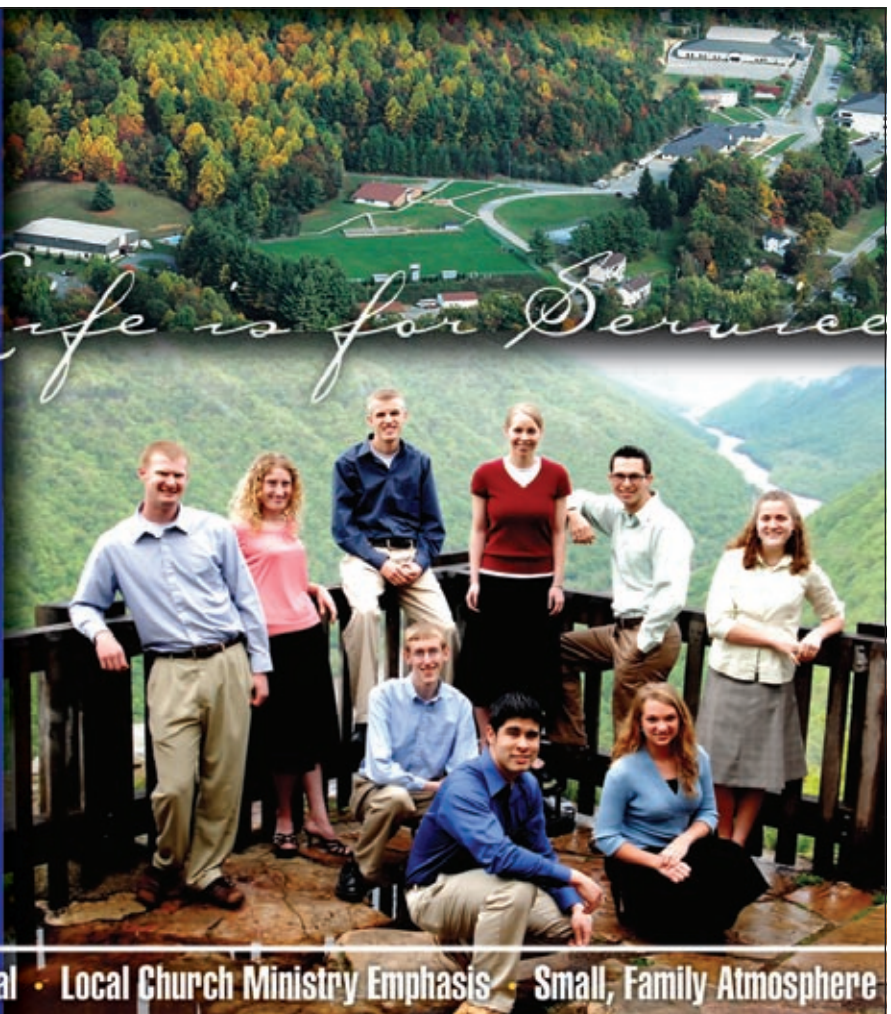
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Beware of Bitterness

Marilyn Boyer

I believe Satan hates families, especially families who are training their children to serve God. And I believe Satan's biggest tool to destroy family harmony is bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 (NASB) says, "See to it...that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it may be defiled."

Bitterness is a subtle thing. Satan knows he can't get the average Christian to forsake the faith and follow him, so he settles for a sneak attack, hoping to hinder our usefulness. 1 Peter 5:8 (KJV) says, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Harboring bitterness is never worth it—bitterness brings death to relationships. As home educators, we need to doubly guard against this. We are investing our time, energies, schedule—in short, our lives—into our children. There is a strong tendency to become bitter when we feel as though our kids don't appreciate us or haven't done what we expected them to do. Sometimes we also have added pressure from others to see that our kids conform to certain expectations, and we are tempted to put pressure on our kids to conform to what others think they should be doing. We must guard against this and let God lead each child as He sees fit, not follow what others pressure us to do.

FEELING HURT MAY BE A SYMPTOM

A clue that you may be harboring bitterness is often feeling hurt. Bitterness masquerades as hurt, which is actually selfishness. Another symptom is hardly ever being able to be pleased. It's almost like having a chip on your shoulder and walking about looking to be offended.

A bitter person gets offended very easily. When offended, he dredges up all the past offenses toward him and dwells on them. He hasn't turned whatever is bothering him over to God, but hangs on to it himself. It colors his eyeglasses, so to speak. A bitter person

doesn't always exhibit actual bitterness—sometimes it is masked—but it springs up to cause trouble when he is irritated. He has a tendency to expect the worst in the person he is harboring bitterness toward and to overlook the person's positive qualities.

If you sense any of these characteristics in your life or your loved ones', examine yourself for bitterness and relinquish it. Don't destroy the very thing you've been working for all these years. Learn not to take things personally, but to give hurts and disappointments to God. We must realize that bitterness seems to be directed at people, but it is ultimately toward God. Confess it to God and give no place to the devil!

BITTER...OR BETTER?

God allows trials to come into our lives to make us *better*. Satan fights to get us to become *bitter*. We as parents must first of all realize our kids probably won't appreciate all we've done for them until they're adults—and maybe not even then. As they experience seasons of life themselves, what we have sacrificed for them will slowly dawn on them.

Expect your kids to need to question your values. Your kids don't just grow up and adopt your beliefs as their own. They need time and freedom to question. Talk things over with them. Allow space for questions without becoming defensive. Resist the temptation to feel threatened. Try to see things from their point of view. Hold strong to your values, but explain why you have the values you do and how you arrived at your conclusions. They'll come around to adopting them for themselves as you help them work through it. It's kind of like getting saved. You can't just grow up in a Christian home and automatically be a Christian. You have to deal with your sin and accept Jesus as your personal Lord. So it is with values. Your kids need room to think and reason and then adopt them and cling

to them for themselves. Some will struggle more than others; be there to help and support and explain.

BUILD YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Be your child's best friend—not by dropping your standards, but by being there when *they* feel a need for you. Some of my best talks with my older kids have been between the hours of 11 p.m. and 1 a.m. When I see one lingering around after the others have headed off to bed, it's my cue that something is on their mind. I may be tired. I may need some quiet time myself, but kids aren't given for my convenience.

Believe the best of your kids. Inspire them to greatness. Tell them how you expect God to use them to accomplish mighty acts. Pray with them. Pray for them. Ask God for vision for their lives and help them to visualize that. Be interested in what interests them. Be positive. Tell them when you're pleased with them. Don't let the negatives blind you to the positives. Remember that every negative characteristic is a positive quality misused. God delights in taking our biggest weaknesses and making them our greatest strengths and areas of ministry to others.

Learn the power of enthusiasm! Your enthusiasm in their accomplishments or your vision for their life can be a powerful motivator. God created enthusiasm to help spur others to greatness. Watch how He uses it in your relationship with your children and with others.

God is the mighty re-builder. If bitterness has sprung up and caused rifts in your relationships, the first step is recognizing and acknowledging it, going back to your kids and confessing your sin. God will lead you in creativity to rebuild that relationship. It will take work and planning and more forgiving as you are tempted to let that bitterness spring back up, but greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

When we stand before our Maker someday, we want to show Him a perpetually godly generation, not a mess of broken lives scarred by bitterness. Let's drop our load of bitterness at the Savior's feet and put our arms around our children, encouraging them to give their all to the Savior! We'll be glad we did—for all eternity! ☺

Excerpted from Parenting from the Heart, available at www.thelearningparent.com. Hear Marilyn at the convention; view workshop titles & articles at www.heav.org/convention.

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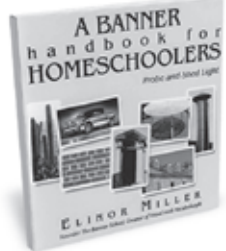
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Keep Us from Falling

Keep Us from Falling

BY MICHAEL GRICE

After high school graduation, our son Matthew got a job as a commercial window washer. One day he was going down the side of a 17-story building that was currently under construction. He had worked there the day before, and he told me at breakfast that he hated the building. That morning, as he had the day before, he climbed over the edge of the building from the roof to begin the descent down the side, cleaning windows as he went. But he did not realize that his seat had come loose from its mooring. As he eased himself into his seat, it gave way and he started to fall.

Instinctively, he grabbed onto the rope. But his momentum was already so great at that point that he was unable to stop himself. After falling three stories, his safety harness kicked in, 160 feet above the ground. He was able to swing himself onto a ledge. One of his supervisors who had been on the roof with him raced down the stairs. He found where Matthew was, and with Matthew's help, ripped the window out of the frame. He then latched another line on Matthew and dragged him inside. Meanwhile, a friend and co-worker rappelled down 17 stories to the ground, and then ran back up 16 flights of stairs to get to Matthew. Other workers also came to his aid, but because the building was under construction, it took some time to get word down to the first floor to send the elevator up to the 16th floor. Fortunately, the building was across the street from Norfolk General Hospital, so they were able to quickly drive him over there.

One of the workers called me and told me what happened. I worked just 10 minutes from where they were, so I was able to quickly meet them. I called my wife along the way, and she and our oldest son immediately rushed to the hospital. Before leaving, she gathered all of the children together to pray. Our youngest child, seven-year-old Samuel, prayed for Matthew and "all of the sick people who are in the emergency room right now."

Matthew was examined by a doctor, a surgeon, and a specialist from the Burn Unit. He had a severe rope burn under his left arm and blister burns on his fingers from the rope he grabbed to stop the fall. They checked him for whiplash and examined his shoulder that crashed into the building when the safety line caught him.

His fellow workers were really shaken up. One man's hands were still trembling when I got there. Several were smoking cigarettes, just outside the ER entrance. The owner of the company rushed to the hospital. He was so upset he could hardly put two words together. His employees are like family to him, and he could not have been more distraught if Matthew were his own son. He sent everyone home and stayed with Matthew until he was discharged later that afternoon.

The name Matthew means "God's gift." The day of the fall was Matthew's 19th birthday. It will probably be the most memorable birthday any of our kids will have. That night, instead of a boisterous birthday celebration, we had a quiet family dinner. It will likely be one of the most meaningful birthday parties I have ever attended. It was just so good to SEE Matthew and be with him. It was great to have God's gift with us at the table.

There are so many life lessons to be drawn from this:

- None of us knows what the future holds. We should look to the future, but cherish the present and past.
- Only God is omnipresent. Parents try to watch over their kids all their lives. But we very quickly learn that we can't be with them all the time. We must cast our cares (children) upon Him, because He cares for us.
- As my son Samuel reminded us in his prayer, we should always be willing to look beyond ourselves. God loves us and cares for us, and He wants to hear what's on our hearts. But He loves the person next to us with the same unending love as He has for us. We should never focus our attention only on me, mine, and ours.
- In life, we sometimes fall. But if we wear our safety gear (Ephesians 6:10-19), it will protect us. It doesn't keep us from falling, but it keeps us from disastrous ends. We may be bruised, burned, and cut up, but we are not destroyed (II Corinthians 4:9).

"Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." Jude 1:24-25 (KJV) ☪



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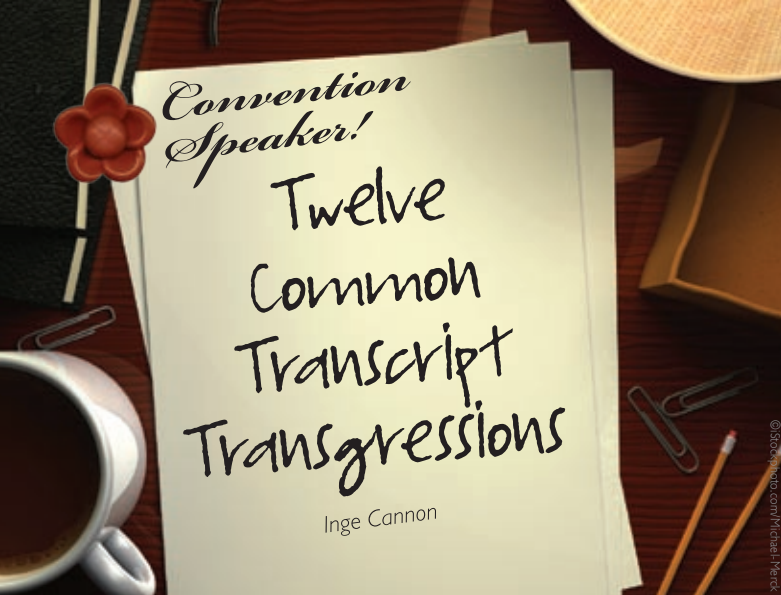
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Parents who homeschool their children during the high school years must provide a written statement that summarizes the academic achievements of those years. While there are no specific requirements for its format, knowledge about the process and essential content will help you avoid the 12 most common impediments to producing a flawless high school transcript.

#12 INATTENTION TO GRADUATION DATE

You may indicate this important date anywhere in your transcript layout. Month and year are not enough; a specific day has to be cited. If your student has not completed all the work by your graduation event, there is nothing wrong with adding a “summer school” session to finish up. However, if a couple of month’s extension is insufficient, then you should edit your graduation date appropriately.

#11 INADEQUATE VALIDATION

Transcripts demand signatures in order to be considered valid. Don’t worry about titles of “principal” or “head teacher” but after your signature, do include any degrees you have earned. Also provide current contact information in case the reader needs clarification. In some cases, homeschool transcripts may need to be accompanied by an affidavit that certifies the accuracy of the document. Since this is not a routine requirement, however, you can wait until requested to produce one.

#10 INCOMPLETE STUDENT IDENTIFICATION

You need to indicate the student’s full legal name, birth date, gender, current address, and the names of both parents or legal guardians if both are living in the home. (Many homeschool mothers make the mistake of listing only their own names because they are doing all the teaching. However, that creates the impression they live in “single-parent” households.) Be sure to provide a Social Security Number (SSN) if you are planning to have your student apply for financial aid.

#9 INACCURATE GPA CALCULATIONS

Most of the academic world today uses a simple 4.0 scale for calculating Grade Point Average (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0). But some schools provide an extra grade point for advanced courses (these are called “weighted” grades), and some states want grades listed numerically instead of by letters. Be sure to label which one you are providing. There is also a continuing debate about whether “plus” or “minus” grades should be treated differently from a solid letter (i.e., giving more point value to an A than to an A-). The best thing to do is know what grade-point scale is most likely to be needed to facilitate your student’s goals, and use it consistently.

Here is the basic GPA formula: for each course, multiply grade points by credit(s) assigned for that course. Add up those grade-point extensions (credit multiplied by the G.P) for all courses, add the credit totals, and finally divide the grade-point total by the credit total. Report your GPA with a number that extends at least two digits beyond the decimal point.

#8 IMPROPER LENGTH

Don’t confuse the concepts “transcript” and “portfolio.” A transcript is an academic résumé and should be limited to two sides of one sheet of paper.

#7 INSUFFICIENT DOCUMENTATION

While homeschooling is a completely viable educational choice, some people will question student records that are completely parent-produced. Gather materials to support your claims in case you are asked. Collect items such as a bibliography of all resources used, letters of recommendation (and evaluations, if possible) from anyone who works with your child, transcripts for college courses taken, research and writing samples, test score reports, etc.

Whenever you claim a “weighted” grade for advanced achievement, you should have some outside corroboration, such as CLEP scores, AP evaluations, college transcripts, or at least a bibliography of college-level text materials.

#6 IMPRECISE COURSE TITLES

Since you want the reader of the transcript to know at a glance what your child has studied, create course titles that are as specific to the student’s achievement as possible. If you want to expand a World History course from one credit to two credits, don’t list “World History I” and “World History II”. Instead, use titles such as “Ancient World History” and “Modern World History.” In English, cite “American Literature,” or “British Literature” or “Journalism,” etc. In work study or apprenticeship areas, provide titles such as “Introduction to Carpentry,” “Finish-Carpentry Skills,” “Small-Engine Repair,” or “Computer Applications for Accounting.” (Hint: Community college catalogs are a great source of ideas for course labels.)

#5 INCONSISTENT EVALUATION

Because there are many learning experiences that require subjective evaluation, the only way to assign accurate grades for your student’s work is to measure achievements against your stated objectives. If you do not take the time to plan your objectives, you cannot discern what is “outstanding” vs. what is “average” or “poor.” There is a time element in grading as well—if deadlines are not met, some measure of penalty should influence your grade. Don’t use “pass/fail” grades, as these can be devastating to your child’s GPA.

#4 INFLEXIBLE RIGIDITY

Conventional schools tie the assignment of credit to spending a designated number of hours in classroom attendance and outside preparation. The formula for this requirement varies anywhere from 120-200 hours of work. Since homeschooling is not classroom-oriented in the traditional sense, it is crucial that parents apply some flexibility to their report of Carnegie Units earned. If your student finishes the “Algebra I” textbook in four months instead of taking a full school year, that “Algebra I” course still receives a full Carnegie Unit of credit. Likewise, if the student takes two years to complete that “Algebra I” course, the course receives one Carnegie Unit of credit.

But, for those subjects that don’t have conventional textbooks, you will need to keep a time log of hours invested. I heartily recommend writing a “contract” with your student to specify what must be

(continued on page 22)

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Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions about our one and two semester online science classes, free 45 minute online seminars, or summer residential Anatomy and Physiology Camps.

GREG LANDRY, M.S.

Director, Human Anatomy Laboratory

Boone, North Carolina

828-265-4101 / 828-964-1662

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Visit our website for camp and online science class details, photos, and letters from parents and students:
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"Greg's teaching style was firm yet inspirational, and, over the course of a week, I saw many lives stirred and motivated through the objectives Greg had designed for this camp."

—JODI QUINT, NASHVILLE, TN

TWELVE COMMON TRANSCRIPT TRANSGRESSIONS

(continued from page 20)

done by what deadline to earn an A, B, or C in the course. This agreement will help you tailor each credit you assign to the task list required for mastery.

#3 IRRATIONAL FEAR

Your success as a home educator should not be measured by how closely you imitate the educational program of public or private schools. The diploma you grant to your child is a certification that he/she has met your own school's requirements for graduation, and the transcript provides the details of that process. Your child does not have to satisfy the entrance requirements of any college in order to graduate from high school—though it may make sense to do so if you know that student is college-bound.

#2 IMPROMPTU DELIVERY

Procrastination will damage your ability to create a high school transcript that presents your student's work in the best possible light. If you wait until the last minute, you will forget important details, forfeit crucial edits, and circumvent the creativity that should earmark the tutorial lifestyle of learning that home education is all about.

#1 IRRESPONSIBLE OMISSION

The number one transcript transgression is not doing a transcript at all. No parent can see the future! Can you say with certainty that your children will never attend college? What about the benefit you could receive even before graduation in the form of a "good-student discount" on auto-insurance premiums? Did you know that high school credentials are also increasingly used for security clearance? Make no mistake about it—producing a high school transcript is not optional! ☺

For more than 20 years, Inge Cannon has helped parents translate everything they are doing in their homeschools into "educationese." Her background includes teacher, principal, college dean and professor, curriculum developer, and lobbyist for parental rights in education. Learn more at www.homeschooltranscripts.com.

Hear Inge give her Transcript Boot Camp seminar at this year's convention in June!

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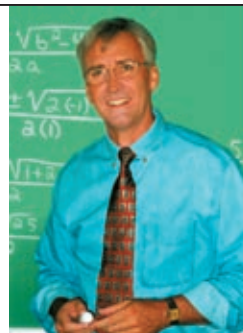
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A portrait of Hannah Rowlands, a young woman with long, dark brown hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a light green, long-sleeved sweater. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green and yellow.

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