

Homeschooling

The Journey is The Reward

*Inspiration & Encouragement From Our Home...
To Yours!*

Pamela S. Berthume

Foreword by:
Mrs. Lorrie Flem,
Publisher, TEACH Magazine
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Dedicated To:

Greg

My hubby since 1984 and the man who fills my days with love and adventure.

There has never EVER been a dull moment!

I love you!

Possible Because Of:

Robby, Brittney, J. Jay, & Elijah

They are the four most talented, unique and interesting people I know.

You each make it all worthwhile.

I feel so privileged that God chose *me* to be your mom!

I love each of you more than words can say.

Inspired By:

Jesus

He is my inspiration for everything!

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An incredibly heartfelt thanks to each of you!

How to Read This Book:

1999 ⇨ See for yourself our homeschool journey as you read. The formatting is unique in that the original book, written in 1999 has been left intact. So when you are reading this font in regular, *cursive*, **bold**, or ALL CAPITAL LETTERS you are reading what I originally wrote in 1999.

2007 ⇨ As you read you will see my comments on what I originally wrote, as well as updates and stories from our journey over the years. All the new "stuff" is in this font! When you are reading this font in regular, *cursive*, **bold**, or ALL CAPITAL LETTERS you are reading what I wrote more recently, mostly in 2007!

Isn't That Cool?!?!

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Foreword

Dear Reader,

You've heard the saying, "You haven't walked in my shoes." In these pages you will see that Pamela is barefoot and she invites you, the reader, to step into her shoes and walk for a little while. Opening this book is like finding tucked up in an old dusty attic, a precious leather journal filled with the thoughts, feelings, and stories of a homeschooling mother's journey through life as she lives for Him.

Here you will share in the lives of Greg, Pamela, and their children. You will read of:

- their health issues, some of the struggles and victories too.
- some of the stories of their lives, what they have done wrong and what they have learned to do right.
- their school decisions, what they faced and how they arrived at them.
- her opinions and why she believes as she does.
- how they raise and train their children and what they have discovered to get here.
- her heart as she openly and sometimes brutally honestly shares her hopes, desires, choices, struggles, and triumphs.

If you know someone who is disabled or deals with health issues – this is a must read! If you are a homeschooling mom who is encouraged just to know there is someone else like you – let me introduce you to my friend, Pamela. Opening this book is the beginning of an adventure you won't want to end.

In Philippians Paul exhorts the believers there to live joyful lives. He said, "*Rejoice in the Lord always.*" And then he adds for emphasis: "*Again I will say, rejoice.*" Paul's words are meant for us today and in a way, that is what Pamela is saying to us. Always remember. The journey *is* the reward.

Under the Shadow of His Wings,

Mrs. Lorrie Flem

Happy rib to Randy, Mama to 8, Author, Speaker, and Publisher of TEACH Magazine

www.TEACHMagazine.com

Introduction

*I just read a book
On homeschooling today*

*It all sounds so easy
"Just do it my way"*

*And then if I do
Their promise is this*

*My days will be joyful
Filled with smiles and bliss*

*I laugh as I look back
and think of **my** day*

*I should write to that author
And see what they'd say ... "*

*'Cause I can assure you
Today was no joy*

*My daughter was a handful
And, so were my boys!*

*I think **I'll** write a book
So that people can see*

*What it's really like
'Cause take it from me*

*Homeschooling is not easy
And sometimes not fun*

*And although I do love it
Never hand me a gun*

*'Cause on days like today
When I tripped over Tigger*

*I'm afraid if I had it
I would pull the trigger!!*

*So for all those like me
This book is for you*

*To help you through those days
When your house is a zoo*

*Now don't get me wrong
I recommend it to all*

*But I want you prepared
So that you do not fall*

*Because Satan gets nervous
When children are raised*

*To know God's commands
And give Him their praise*

*He may try to distress you
with petty little things*

*But if Jesus is on your side
Just mount up your wings*

1999 ⇨ I have read so many homeschool books that talk about how peachy keen life will be if you homeschool. But, on my bad days I am tempted to throw them across the room! In hopes that I am not the only one who feels this way, I originally wrote this book as an attempt to give an honest view of the daily reality of homeschooling. The good, the bad... and yes, even the ugly.

There is no such thing as a utopian world, nor a utopian homeschool. I am convinced that if the path you have chosen seems easy, you probably aren't on the path God would prefer! You cannot grow in wisdom or in love when you are all snuggled up in your comfort zone. It is through our trials and our difficulties that God can most train us, and therefore use us for His glory.

I must admit, I LOVE homeschooling. It isn't just what I do.... it's who I am. It's not just a decision we have made, it's a lifestyle. Yes, you can have a successful homeschool. But not without a lot of work and an abundance of grace! You can NOT have a successful homeschool if you go into it with a pair of "rose colored glasses" propped up on your nose. You will get frustrated very quickly.

Many of the books written on the subject of homeschooling deal with only the positive aspects while straying away from the negative. This approach often leaves the struggling homeschooler with an underlying sense of fear and self-doubt. With this in mind, this book was written by a veteran homeschooling mom to educate, enlighten and encourage homeschoolers by taking a good hard look at ALL the aspects of homeschooling - the good, the bad, and yes, even the ugly! It is entertaining and unique as each chapter begins with an inspirational and sometimes humorous poem. The main purpose of this book is to prepare the reader for the real world of homeschooling and convince them that they can do ALL things through Christ, if He is the one who gives them their strength.

2007 ⇨ Eight years have passed since I originally wrote the words above and I still feel the same way! The format of this book is a bit different, but, hey - I've never been accused of being normal so why start now? I have decided to leave the book's original content completely untouched in the font you see above and insert my revisions in the font you are currently reading throughout the entirety of the book. In doing this you will have the unique perspective to see how our homeschooling has grown and changed and I hope to be able to share how my perspective has changed on some issues, yet remained steadfast on others.

My prayer is that by using this format you can reflect with us on our homeschool journey in a very real way. I want you to see the differences in our children, our circumstance, our marriage, our

perspective on life and homeschooling, and even the differences in me as a homeschooling mom. Most important though is the reality of our never-changing God. We have changed, He has not. It is He who continues to sustain us and He has never let us down. If homeschooling is the path He has chosen for you, He will not leave you. He has carried me many times, but He has **never** left me.

Our homeschool journey began in 1993 at which time we were blessed with two children, a boy and a girl. By the time this book was originally written in 1999, a third blessing, another boy, had come along. Now, it's 2007 and the Lord has further blessed us with another son, who was born in late 2001. We have had four miscarriages along the way, so all in all we've ended up with eight kiddos! Four in heaven and four on earth. How awesome is that?!

I am certainly no expert on homeschooling, but I am an expert on moving! We have homeschooled in more circumstances and scenarios than I care to admit. We have homeschooled in five different states, eight different cities (each more than one hundred miles apart), and ten different homes. During this time of homeschooling and moving our family has continually endured quite a few health issues - some of them major. I personally, have had four miscarriages, a cancer scare which resulted in my having a full hysterectomy, and I have had Fibromyalgia since 1992. I now have Multiple Sclerosis; Osteoarthritis of my spine due to instrumentation from Scoliosis surgery when I was a teenager; two spinal cord injuries - one quite mild (incomplete) and the other quite precarious (supposed to be paralyzed - but I'm not!); Celiac Disease which is an autoimmune disease; as well as some other health issues I won't go into with my vision, hearing, balance, and digestive system.

J.Jay, our eleven year old son, has Scoliosis for which he must wear a back brace; Celiac Disease; and Asperger's Syndrome which is a very high functioning form of Autism.

Elijah, my five year old was the first to be diagnosed with Celiac Disease (after Leukemia was suspected and thankfully ruled out). This has resulted in a weakened immune system for him, especially if he has been contaminated somehow and has ingested gluten. Which I hereafter refer to as being "glutened".

Brittney, who is fifteen years old has struggled with ADHD for years. She's just like her mom - hyperactive! I honestly think I've

struggled more with her ADHD than she has, but we will get into that later!

We strongly STRONGLY suspect that Dad has Asperger's Syndrome also. Although not formally diagnosed, he displays many of the symptoms.

Robby, our oldest, is the only healthy one!

In addition to all the above, we have experienced quite a few other major life changes in recent years. Robby, our oldest, started his own business at age fifteen, graduated our homeschool at sixteen, and began college full-time at Liberty University in Virginia when he was seventeen years old. He is now a Senior at Liberty, and is married to a fellow Liberty student, Kathryn, whom I love. He has turned out to be a very successful business man. They have already bought their first house (and it is absolutely beautiful!) Most important of all though, Robby has grown into a fine man who truly loves the Lord with all of his heart and it is that of which I am the most grateful. That was the goal!

Another major change which has occurred during the past couple of years has to do with our only daughter, Brittney. She (the one who has been drooling over the school bus since she was four years old!) begged to go into public school after one of our many moves. I am not telling you this entire story yet though... you'll have to wait to read about it in the next chapter!

Finally, as a result of 9/11 economy setbacks, layoffs, and us solely financing Greg's business so he could continue to be at home with the family, we have had several financial setbacks these past few years as well. But, we are not complaining. God has always been faithful and always provides just what we need, just when we need it. Although we still long for a little cushion and financial security, deep down we know by experience that our only security is in Him. All else is sinking sand!

Okay, enough said. My point is simply this - God has led us through it all and continues to provide for all of our needs and has allowed us to continue our homeschool journey even through many trials. With Robby embarking on his own journey of life with his wife, Kathryn, and Brittney being a Sophomore at a private Christian school (ok, so that's a hint!) we are now down to only homeschooling our

two youngest boys, J.Jay and Elijah. J.Jay is eleven and Elijah is only five. We pray that it's God's will to continue to allow us the privilege and freedom to continue our homeschool journey for another thirteen years until Elijah graduates!

Hopefully in reading about some of our struggles, setbacks, and successes you will find the hope, encouragement and inspiration to continue on your homeschool journey for as long as the Lord may lead. Giving up is so easy, Satan will make sure of that. Staying on the path that the Lord lays out for you on the other hand, is always hard. It's the narrow road, rough and jagged. But the view from the top leaves nothing to be desired. It's so worth the road you travel.

Let's get started on looking back at our journey while fully recognizing that this book is not about us, but rather about God's amazing grace, His ongoing provision, and His unfailing love. The most important lesson we have learned thus far is that God truly loves us and each one of the children He has given us the privilege of raising. He has never left us, not even for a second. He is so faithful.

1999 ☞ My aim is to prepare you for the real world of homeschooling and convince you that you can do ALL things through Christ, if He is the one who gives you your strength! As you may have already surmised, I wrote this book from a Christian perspective. Being a devout Christian, I have come to the realization that I could not homeschool without Jesus as my Lord and Savior. If you are not a Christian I want to encourage you to read on anyway. I can assure you that the information in this book will benefit you, regardless of your convictions. My true hope is that you will come to want to know more about Christ while reading these pages and a spark will be kindled. If so, simply pray for Jesus to reveal Himself to you, and He will.

Why Homeschool?

Chapter 1

*Here we go
We're on our way*

*We'll never have
Another day*

*To match the one
When we depart*

*To our new life
Built by our hearts*

*And just what did
We leave behind?*

*Stress and money
The "typical grind"*

*And what is waiting
Each step we take?*

*More time with our kids
Lots of memories to make*

*"Is it hard?"
You ask*

*"Oh Yes!"
I say*

*But I wouldn't want it
Any other way!!*

1999 ⇨ The reasons why I homeschool and the reasons why you may or may not homeschool may very well be miles apart. God made us all very interesting and unique individuals. He gave us sharp minds and soft hearts so that we may be wise when making decisions, but understanding when those decisions differ from the ones made by others. He does not expect us all to make the same choices. No, God does not want us all to homeschool. Neither does He want us all to have our children in private schools, or public schools. Also, even though I am adamant that God doesn't want me to send my children to public school, that doesn't mean He has the same plan for you and your children. My opinions may differ greatly from yours and that's okay!

2007 ⇨ Open mouth, insert foot! Let's just say God called me on that statement! I should have learned by now not to put God in a box and make such blanket statements. My daughter Brittney did end up going into public school for a short time. Below, in italics, is the story I originally wrote in September of 2004 in the "God Sightings" section for the women's newsletter of my church at that time.

2004 ⇨

I was (still am!) a die-hard homeschooler of four children. I homeschooled my oldest from the beginning of third grade all the way through high school . He is now a college student at Liberty University. The other three have "always" been homeschooled. For me homeschooling is not just a thing we do, it is who we are. It is our lifestyle. Well, die-hard may have been the best word to use because I did "die hard" when my seventh grade daughter came to me with her plea to go into public school. I was not ready for this. This was not in MY plan!

First of all, here's a little valuable background information that led us and her to this point. We have moved so many times it's not even funny... twenty-five times in twenty years of marriage! I was at my limit. But more importantly, my daughter Brittney was at HER limit! We had already moved eleven times when she was only twelve years old and we informed her that we had to move again (due to my husband's work situation) from Ohio to Illinois. As they say, this was the straw that broke her back. (Didn't exactly roll off my back either!)

Frankly, we were all sick of moving! Within a short five year time span she had left all her homeschooled friends in South Carolina to move to California. She then left all of her homeschooled friends in California to move to Ohio. Then in June of 2003 we told her that she was going to have to leave all of her homeschooled friends in Ohio because we were moving to Illinois! "Sure," she said.... "IF I CAN GO TO PUBLIC SCHOOL!"

*Well, we have a rule in our house and it's called our **30 Day 'Grace'**. Simply put, it means that we will pray for thirty days consistently before we make a major decision of removing any of our children from our homeschool. We've gone through it before, but God always convinced all of us before the thirty days were even halfway over! Not this time. We all prayed about it. She still wanted to go to public school. My husband Greg and my oldest son Robby (both of whom should have been my die-hard homeschool supporters) both thought that allowing her to go to public school was the best thing to do. They felt that she was headed for rebellion if forced (which is what it would have been at that point) to continue to homeschool. I prayed fervently and kept hearing that still, small voice - the one I would try very hard to quiet!*

We finally arrived in Illinois at the end of October of 2003 and Brittney was THRILLED to start public school on November 17, 2003. (Which also 'just so happened' to be our youngest, Elijah's second birthday!) It was an awful time for me. I lived daily with the guilt of feeling like a failure. This wasn't just about public school. She was doing wonderfully, making terrific grades, and loving it. She had lots of friends, and even made the seventh grade girls basketball team. She was in her element! I on the other hand, felt like I had 'given up' my

daughter to the world. From the first day she entered school I prayed FERVENTLY every single day for God to give my daughter back to me, and change her heart about homeschooling. Every single day that she went to school, even the thought of that prayer becoming a reality looked more and more bleak. But, I prayed continually. As I felt her heart closing up tighter and tighter against me and all I stood for... I kept praying.

Don't get me wrong. She was in a great school, doing terrific, had lots of friends, and truly loved it. Unfortunately, I could see little changes occurring in her, and each one was like an arrow into my heart. She went from "I would never want to listen to secular music, Mom!", to "Mom, I don't see the big deal about what music I listen to. There's nothing wrong with that song!" From dressing like a twelve year old innocent girl to pushing my limits on every item of clothing she put on. Nothing big. Just little things. But to me, I'd lost her.

Finally, I gave her up. I gave her over... to God! "She's in your hands now, Lord. I've raised her and homeschooled her for the first twelve years of her life. That's got to count for something, Lord! Please look after her and make sure she makes good choices in life. Please make sure she follows You!"

I was not looking forward to this summer. She had become so negative, not very happy at home. And only happy when she was with her friends. She was simply not very fun to be around during the school year. I feared the summer would be miserable. As it turned out, we had a great summer. All the pressures were off and she seemed to enjoy sleeping in for a change! We all got along good for the most part, and it seemed "just like old times". I was still praying daily for her to want to homeschool

again, but I didn't see any chance of that happening. We told her we weren't happy with some of the choices she was making and we were considering putting her in private school. She about went through the roof! "That would be like another move!", she said. "You are going to make me start over making new friends again?!"

*I had made it clear that I would NEVER homeschool her again until she came to me and wanted to be homeschooled. I simply could not and would not homeschool someone who didn't want to be homeschooled! She knew that. Summer was drawing to an end and we all wanted to go to the zoo for a family outing. She was in a 'mood' and didn't want to be with us that day. She didn't want to go. Period. We told her "no computer" after seeing instant messages from friends with cussing and inappropriate material in them, and had grounded her from using instant messenger anymore. (You can't control what others say to you!) So, we left her home as the rest of the family headed for the zoo. Fifteen minutes later, I got a call on my cell phone from my oldest, who was away at college. "Mom, is Brittney home alone? She's on the computer!" She was caught red-handed! She broke the rules... **big time!***

I called her, and well, reamed her out! Frankly, I yelled at her so much my throat hurt! I told her that mistakes you make at this point in your life could literally mess up your entire life! Not only was she on instant messenger, she had posted the message "I'm home alone, call me.", along with her phone number! What was she thinking?!?!? Her father and I discussed what we should do, and we decided to proceed to the zoo so as not to punish the other kids and to give her some time to think about all of this.

I got a call from her about an hour later.

She sounded like she'd been crying and she said she had rededicated her life. Well, I was not convinced, and said something like "I sure hope you are being sincere. I won't be convinced until I see a difference in your behavior and attitude!" We've heard from her before, "I'm sorry. I'll do better." Frankly, I didn't buy it.

Well... I started see fruit right away. Nothing major, just a softness that simply wasn't there before. Less than one week later was our homeschool "Back to School" picnic. She wanted to go, but at first I said no. "You aren't a homeschooler, it's for homeschoolers!", I said. Something twinged in me and I finally said, "Ok, clean your room, get all your chores done, and you can go." Well, she went and there were quite a few junior and senior high homeschoolers there. She hung out with them the entire night. I didn't think a thing about it.

To make a long story short, (which I am obviously not capable of doing or this would have been a much shorter story!), on the way home that night she hit me with a bombshell. She wanted to homeschool again! I couldn't figure out if this was for real or some cruel joke. As it turned out it was definitely "for real". She said she did love public school, but realized that our relationship was suffering and that she wanted us to be close. She missed being a homeschooler. After signing a contract of commitment, we purchased our curriculum and began our journey back to homeschooling. Through it all she remained steadfast. She started the eighth grade back in our homeschool and has since been very happy. She seems much more content with who she is and who we are as a family.

Yes, she's still struggling with some issues about how to dress and what music she wants to listen to, but I've got her heart. No, actually God

has her heart. And THAT is exactly where I want her. In His hands. God is real. He loves me more than I can comprehend and He loves my daughter even more than I do. Yes, I did 'die hard' to my wants, my desires, and my plan for my daughter. But that death resulted in true life... her life.

I, on the other hand, am in total awe. I SAW GOD AT WORK! You could not have paid me a million dollars to believe that she would come to me wanting to homeschool again. Much less that weeks into the school year she would still be happy and content doing eighth grade at home. Actually, I see this as a miracle. A special and precious gift from an amazing and all-powerful God who literally reached down from heaven and picked her up from the path she was on and gently put her back down on a totally different path. His path. Not mine, but His. Wow!

-September 24, 2004

2007 ☞ As you may have suspected by now, this story did not end here. Due to my health greatly declining along with some other factors, we ended up putting her back in public school for the second semester of eighth grade. She really wanted to do a great deal more than I was physically able to at that point. It was actually my idea, she never asked. She was also saying at that point that she wanted to go to the local public high school. Greg and I knew that was not an option in our minds, but we kept it in prayer and didn't push it with her. We never said she could go to public high school, neither did we say she couldn't. I was praying for the Lord to change her mind Himself. Just a few weeks into the second semester of eighth grade, she surprised us yet again! She had decided she did NOT want to go to public high school after all, but neither did she want to homeschool. It's a long story which I will write more about later in the book. But suffice it to say for now that God was very much in control of the entire ordeal. In the end, everything, including her going to public school, turned out to be a huge blessing. As a result of her eighth grade public school experience (second semester only) she changed her desire from wanting to attend a public high school,

and instead wanted to attend a Christian school for her high school years. (That was what I had been praying for so fervently, for God to change her heart and desire!) Through this experience God impressed on us that He does NOT intend for every child to be homeschooled and that Brittney would thrive the best in a good private Christian school. This transition turned out to be a wonderful experience and she is very thankful and appreciative of being able to attend a private Christian high school. She is now a sophomore and we have seen her continuing to develop her own personal relationship with God in her own way and she has stood strong on her beliefs. We have learned that God always knows best!

Now, back to what I had originally written on the subject of public school. Most, if not all of which I still completely and totally agree with!

1999 ⇒ The first question we are going to delve into is "Why not public school?" To address this question, let me set up an imaginary scenario between a Christian parent and myself on this issue.

Why Not Public School?

Christian Parent:

I want my child to be the salt and light in the public school system.

My Perspective:

The Bible does not give us details of Jesus' life on earth during His childhood years. We are told of his birth, and then only that he grew in wisdom and in stature. We are then given an insight of when he was twelve years old and he was in his "Father's House" sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. After that, there is no further mention of Him until he is in his thirties. Why is that? I believe it is because he was still in his formative years. It is stated about Jesus in Luke 2:40 - "*And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.*" He was not yet ready for His ministry. He was still in the growth process! Proverbs 22:6 reads: "*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*" It seems plausible to me that the reason Jesus did not begin His

ministry earlier is because he was still in training. He was still acquiring the knowledge and the wisdom he needed to be the true "salt and light" of the world. Let me ask you a question. If Jesus, the only sinless man ever to walk the face of the earth, wasn't yet prepared for the ministry of His Father as a child, or even as a teenager or young adult, can you truly expect your children to fulfill this heavy burden? Should you? I don't think that was God's intention at all when He gave us children. I think His intention was for us, as parents, to be the salt and light to the world. His word says, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*" - Deuteronomy 6:5-7. Then having been taught by our words, as well as our daily living example, our children, once they become adults, can put on their full armor and go out to be the salt and the light, just as He has indicated in His Word. "*...be strong in the Lord, and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*" - Ephesians 6:10-11

Christian Parent:

My child is in a good school. His teacher is a Christian and so is the Principal! I am very pleased with the education he is obtaining, as well as the environment he is in.

My Perspective:

To that I must answer... What Would Jesus Do? If he was living as a parent in America today would He put His children in the public school system? Or to be more specific, would He place His children (which He gave us so many instructions on how we are to raise and influence) in a governmental system that teaches that His Father in heaven is NOT the creator of the universe, but rather all men evolved from apes? How about a system that will not allow a child to pray to His Father, as the one and only true God? They may be allowed a "meditation" time, or a silent prayer to a "generic god", but not a specific prayer to the one true God, His Father. Do you think He would send His children to a school that is breaking and encouraging them to break the first of the ten commandments His Father gave to Moses, "*Thou shalt have no other Gods before Me.*"? What about a school where Kwanza is to be studied, and celebrated, with equal fervor as Christmas, the day to celebrate His own birthday? And finally, would He send His children to a school system that is not God honoring? How can I back up these

seemingly radical claims? Jesus himself said in Matthew 12:30 - *"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."* The public school system is obviously not honoring Jesus, therefore we can only come to the conclusion that it is a system is not God honoring. And back to the original question, "What Would Jesus Do?", which, by the way, is not just some fancy marketing scheme that was thought up to sell bracelets and other paraphernalia. This question comes straight from the Bible, as is written in 1 John 2:6 - *"Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."* In this case, the answer to the question "What Would Jesus Do?" is as simple as asking, "What Would Jesus Not Do?" I may very well be wrong, but I don't believe He would place His children in the public school system.

2007 ⇨ I still feel the same way as I did, but Jesus is a great deal more in tune to each of our hearts than what I realized when I wrote the above. My heart and my intent is **STILL** not to have any of my children in public school. But for my daughter, that is exactly what it took to open her eyes and get her back on the plan God had laid out for her. As the Bible says in Proverbs 16:9 - "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps." My plan is no public school. But in our house, the prayer is that God's plan will always rule!

Another "con" to any formal school is **socialization**. Yes, you heard me right. That was not a typo. Formal schooling is the worst environment for your children if you are at all concerned about socialization. This topic is addressed in great detail in Chapter 2 entitled: What About Socialization.

What About Private Christian School?

1999 ⇨ This is certainly a more feasible option over public school. I think that a private Christian school is often the best solution for a Christian parent. If you are not ready or willing to commit to homeschooling, this may be the answer for you. Homeschooling is **NOT** easy! It is a full time job and then some. You will better know your level of commitment to homeschool and for how long you wish to homeschool after reading this book and much fervent prayer. If at some point you decide homeschooling is not for you, please consider finding a good Christian private school. Some of the wonderful things they have to offer your children are:

1. **Biblical worldview:** An education from a true Biblical perspective.
2. **Resources:** An array of academic resources, (ie. computers, science labs, etc.)
3. **Positive peer influence:** Ideally, friendships with like-minded Christian children to positively influence your child, and be there to "hold them accountable" when needed. We all know how influential peers can be. They can be very damaging, or they can be very beneficial.
4. **Sports teams:** Often, a private school can offer more opportunities to be involved in sports, especially when your child reaches junior and senior high school. 2007 ⇨ This was very much one of the issues with Brittney. She loves sports! Last year she played junior varsity basketball and softball. She also participated in varsity track. This year, as a Sophomore, she played on the varsity basketball team and the varsity softball team. It is a great way for her to get her excess energy out, which helps her a great deal with her ADHD.

1999 ⇨ Of course, all these benefits may not apply to all private Christian schools. They assume that you, as a parent, have done your homework and have chosen a school that best meets these and/or other needs that you feel are important.

Some of the cons of private school are as follows:

1.Less Parental Influence: Simply put, I find it hard to fulfill God's command in Deuteronomy when my kids are away at school every day. He tells us to *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."* - Deuteronomy 6:5-7. That passage expresses an ongoing influence the parent is to have on the child. Quality time is the key. The whole idea of "quality time" that has been so sought after by working parents is simply a farce. It is difficult to be a Godly influence to your children unless you spend large amounts of time with them... preferably every day. Your children are ALWAYS being influenced, trained, and thus taught, by the words and the examples of those they are

with. If you are not the one in their presence that doesn't mean they are not being influenced. That only means that you are not the one doing the influencing.

2007 ⇨

This is true, and I strongly believe that the better you have done your job in the early years, from birth to about age twelve or so, the less of a critical issue this becomes as they grow up. The point is to encourage them to have their own relationship with God, not to force it on them.

1999 ⇨

2. **Negative peer influence:** I have found that many of the children being placed in private Christian schools today are not being raised in true Christian homes. They are placed there by parents who have chosen to send their children to a private Christian school for various reasons, but are not giving them examples of Godly living at home. This often will result in confusion for a Christian child who may be led astray by one of their "Christian" friends, whose value system is different from theirs.

2007 ⇨

About this, I say from experience, Amen & Amen!!! There is much hypocrisy in Christian schools. In all honesty though - that is valuable life training as this world is chock full of hypocrites.

Although the world is full of hypocrisy, please don't think this is something that I take lightly. My own daddy had a very hard life. He was born during the Great Depression and as a very young man fought in World War II. His first marriage ended in a divorce the circumstances of which resulted in a total loss of connection with his two children, a son and a daughter, from that marriage. They were both very young at the time of the divorce, and he never fully recovered from the loss of his son, especially since he never had another. (He remarried my mom and they went on to have four girls. I, the baby, was actually given away at birth because they wanted a girl! But, they came to their senses... That is yet another story!) He was addicted to alcohol for many years.

He was raised by an extremely Godly woman. My

grandmother is the one who introduced me to Jesus and the reason why I made the decision to follow Christ. When I was seven years old, she passed away. (That's what everybody called it back then, but I prefer to say that she went home!) When she died I knew exactly where she was, with her "Sweet Jesus" that she daily talked about and talked to. I was saved two weeks after she died, and when the pastor asked me if I understood what I was doing, I was absolutely positive. I knew for a fact that she was in heaven and that I wanted to go there when I died as well!

What does my dad and my grandma have to do with hypocrisy? From the time I was seven years old and throughout the remainder of my childhood, I fervently prayed for him to become a Christian. He always said, "I know exactly who Jesus is and I believe in Him. But I am not going to be just another hypocritical Christian. When I am ready to be a Christian, I am going to be serious about it and I am just not ready for that yet." He is the one who suffered for this decision. He finally broke down on his death bed, literally two weeks before he died, repented, and became a Christian.

Hypocrisy is not good. I heard at the beginning of a popular Christian song something that has always stuck with me as the words are so true. It went something like this, "The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians. Who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, and walk out the door, and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable."

1999 ⇨

3. **Play time, or lack thereof:** A great deal of time is spent in school every day. Add to that the time spent doing homework and there is very little time left over for a kid to just be "a kid". Little time for running and playing outdoors when they are young, and as they get older, little time for recreational reading. When I say "recreational" I am referring to any reading they do on their own, apart from those books or stories that have been assigned to them as part of their homework. Also, there is very little time left to spend with their families and their own siblings. Throw in the fact that many families these days are involved in various extracurricular activities, such as sports teams, music lessons, gymnastics, dance lessons, etc., and their days are often spent trying to beat the clock. All this and I haven't even factored in the

church activities which most Christian families regularly attend. Add just a few of these activities together with private or public school, plus the daily homework, and the result is... STRESS! That is why so many families are running around like "chickens with their heads cut off" with mom playing the carpool queen. That's not to say that there isn't a fair share of activities and carpooling when you are homeschooling. Typically there is! Most homeschoolers are involved in many of the activities listed above. We, for instance, are involved in church activities, sports activities (right now it's basketball!), volunteering, and field trips. This year each of my children has an extracurricular class that they are taking. For one it's science, and for another it's drama. The point is, when you homeschool you alleviate hours of time typically spent doing schoolwork and homework. Without all the interruptions and administration that must take place in a private or public school setting, we are able to get down to business and finish our "formal" schoolwork much earlier, usually by lunchtime. (The reason I say "formal" is because all of life is learning. It doesn't stop when we put away our textbooks for the day.) We then have the afternoons and evenings for our other activities, as well as for free play time and free reading time. I strongly believe that free play time and free reading time are necessary for all children up through their teen years. How can a child develop a love for learning and reading if they have no time to explore fun activities on their own or to read the books of their own choosing? (Parent approved books, of course.) I believe that one of the causes of the major academic deficit shown in America's school children today is lack of free time to use and enjoy the academic skills that they are learning, especially the skill of reading.

2007 ☞

I nailed it! My younger boys spend so much time playing and pretending and reading, it's absolutely wonderful! To this day, it's the part about homeschooling I love the most. My daughter, on the other hand, since she is now in private school, is so busy she barely has time to read a good book! Although she will often stay up to the wee hours to do just that! Her life is so busy with school, sports practices and games, homework, and more, it feels like she is rarely at home anymore. I miss her!

1999 ⇨ 4.

Financial burdens: Private school costs more than homeschooling. Although homeschooling does cost more than going the public school route (which is funded by the government, which means we all pay for a public school education, whether we attend or not), you cannot even compare those costs (speaking solely in the matter of dollars and cents) with that of private school tuition. In addition to the tuition itself, there are book fees, activities fees, registration fees, and other fees that may be incurred upon enrollment in a private school. I know one mom who had to go to work when her kids reached school age so that she could afford to put her kids into a private Christian school. Her income was used solely to support her children's education with very little left over. None of it was left over, if you took into consideration the cost involved in her returning to work (work clothes, transportation costs, etc.) Her words at the time were, "I have no choice. I could never homeschool." So that was her solution. This may be very admirable and necessary in some circumstances, such as hers. (If she feels unable to homeschool, regardless of whether those feelings are justified or unjustified, chances are she would spend much of her time questioning herself and her decision.) But before making such a decision, I would highly recommend some serious time spent down on your knees in fervent prayer. Don't underestimate yourself, or even worse the power of God. Remember, *"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."* - Philippians 4:13. Yes, everything even includes homeschooling!

2006 ⇨ I read that and am amazed that I still agree with everything I said above. I am also amazed because my daughter Brittney, that I referred to in the previous section is now thriving in an excellent private Christian school. There's a great deal more that happened after I wrote about her first public school experience and ultimate return to our homeschool for the eighth grade.

As I wrote above, our first semester with eighth grade went wonderfully. My health, my health which had been deteriorating slowly and gradually up to this point, began to deteriorate rapidly as the school year progressed. I had surgery for scoliosis when I was sixteen years old to straighten my "S"curve. They inserted rods and wires along my spine and fused them with bone grafts from my hip. Over the years since, my rods have shifted and the bottom of one of them has been protruding outward for quite some time.

In 1992, I went to a neurologist for several problems with my extremities, vision, and my hearing. He suspected Multiple Sclerosis and proceeded to order an MRI which came back with no lesions. He then said the only way to truly diagnose M.S. with a negative MRI was to do a spinal tap and remove some spinal fluid. Well after multiple attempts to get into my spinal cord but hitting rods and wires instead, I went berserk! Let's just say - I had had ENOUGH! Screaming and crying for them to stop I left the room, got dressed, and ran out of there vowing never to see him or any other neurologist, ever again! Not long after that a rheumatologist diagnosed me with osteoarthritis in that my lower back, as well as Fibromyalgia. I have since chalked up all my ongoing health issues to one of the two and didn't worry too much more about it. After that ordeal I stayed away from doctors. Furthermore, I am very hyperactive and stubborn - so it really takes a LOT to slow me down!

Not far into Brittney's eighth grade year after she had returned to homeschooling, things got worse. My health had been steadily declining and I began losing a great deal of my mobility. After years of denial I finally broke down and went to a neurologist. I found out in November of 2004 that the osteoarthritis had spread up my spine and I now had full blown spondylosis. This neurologist was wonderful and very thorough. After I explained to him my previous bad experience, he promised never to attempt a spinal tap on me! He diagnosed a spinal cord injury in my cervical area as well as another in my thoracic area. The one in my cervical area is "incomplete" and pretty stable. This most likely occurred when I was thrown from my seventeen hand Thoroughbred horse Chloe, when we lived in Ohio a couple of year prior. (Did I mention that I am not supposed to ride horses after my surgery?!?! Especially not a seventeen hand horse when I am only 5'1"!) That's yet another story for another book...) My hubby Greg, and I knew when I was thrown that I did some damage, but we did not realize until this point just how much!

The spinal cord injury in my thoracic area (just between my shoulder blades) was quite a bit more serious. According to my neurologist it was quite precarious and by the looks of it, I really should be paralyzed already. I was told not to lift any more then two pounds (or a dinner plate) and that my back probably wouldn't hold up very much longer. He said that I am very likely to become paralyzed "at any time". I will never forget the slip of paper he gave me to take to the Department of Motor Vehicles for a handicapped

tag. When I got to the car and looked at it, I totally lost it. I tried to call my hubby, but was so overcome with emotion that I couldn't even talk. The diagnosis read "spinal cord injury" and there were two check boxes for length of disability. One said "Disability is permanent" and the other said "Disability is temporary – must state duration _____". He had already told me as much, but seeing it in writing was more than I could take at that moment. He had put a big black **X** in the "Disability is permanent" box.

By this point I was losing mobility quickly, every step was so painful it was not only like walking on needles, but as though the needles were penetrating my feet and traveling up my legs! Combine that with my balance issues and walking was almost more trouble than it was worth. For the most part, I was using a rolling walker with a seat, so I could sit every few steps as needed.

Now back to Brittney. The homeschool youth support group in Illinois required that parents stay for pretty much all of the homeschool activities. She has always been my "social butterfly" and I was committed to making sure she was involved in some ongoing homeschool activities, especially knowing that staying active and having friends is something that is very important to her general well-being. We had weekly bowling, roller skating, and park days, in addition to other sporadic activities. As my mobility decreased it became very difficult for me to get her to these activities, much less stay. My oldest son had already graduated from homeschool and was off to college in another state, so he couldn't help out at this point. My younger boys were eight and two at the time so staying also meant trying to keep up with them in an activity or place that was often not designed for their age levels. Both of which were, and still are 'all boy'.

During this time Brittney never once asked to go back to public school, but we could tell that she was very frustrated with not being able to get out and do more. By the time Christmas rolled around, God, who had been working on both Greg and I separately on this same issue, convinced me that the best thing for Brittney was to allow her to return to public school for the second semester of eighth grade. The same school where all of her friends were. Greg felt that continuing to homeschool her was too draining on me physically and the he feared that stress might be adding to my rapid health decline as well. He also felt that it would do Brittney good not to be there day in and day out witnessing every moment of the continual downfall

of my health. My health deterioration was very difficult for all of us, but she was the one who seemed the most upset about it.

I had such a peace about putting Brittney back into public school that I knew it MUST BE from God. It went against everything I believed so it obviously wasn't coming from me! Greg's response and encouragement confirmed that this was the right thing to do. After Greg and I had made the decision we finally talked to Brittney and asked her if she'd like to return to public school for the rest of the school year. Let's just say she was ecstatic!!

I had not even kept track of the public school schedule (never do!) but apparently Brittney had as she immediately informed me that the second semester started on the following Monday. The day we asked her if she wanted to return was the preceding Wednesday, so we only had three days to get her enrolled. I called the school and it "just so happened" that her previous English teacher (who by the way is a Christian) was now the eighth grade guidance counselor! He knew Brittney well, and still had a record of the classes she had originally picked out to take for her first semester. Remember, it was only two weeks prior to the start of eighth grade that she declared she wanted to go back to homeschooling. She had already signed up, picked her classes and was ready to go by that time. I brought in her homeschool report card and a small portfolio of her work, but her guidance counselor barely even looked at them. He gave them to the school secretary to put in her file and said something like, "I know what a good student Brittney is. I'm not worried about her at all." He took care of everything and we were able to go back in the next day, Thursday, to pick up her schedule! God was definitely at work - little did we know what a mighty work He would do!

I bet you are starting to wonder what private school has to do with all this, huh? Well, from the time Brittney had started public school in the second semester of seventh grade she was adamant that she wanted to go to the public high school as well. Not a private Christian high school, but a public high school! She knew we didn't want that for her, but we didn't want to veto yet, we just kept praying about it knowing that the Lord would lead us when the time came.

After our move to Illinois in 2003, Greg and I had promised Brittney that we would not move again until she graduated from high school and was established in college. We recognized by now that

she had a real desire for stability and we wanted to honor that, Lord willing. As my health was not improving, and I had begun to have difficulty managing the stairs in our house, Greg and I were talking about moving back to South Carolina at some point after she graduated and was off to college. That way we could get a one story home with no stairs, and be close to my extended family. My mom and two of my three sisters live in South Carolina. If it got to the point where I began to need more help on a daily basis that would be important, as we had no family in Illinois. We would also be closer to Robby if he ended up staying in Virginia long term. We were just 'thinking out loud' of the future and of me very likely ending up in a wheelchair and doing some long-term speculating. The house we owned in Illinois was 3,600 square feet on the first and second floor, and had a 2,000 square foot basement! Our master bedroom was on the 2nd floor as well. So it was not a handicap friendly type house, to say the least.

After less than a month back in public school Brittney came to me with yet another major surprise. She declared that she did not want to go to a public high school after all. She said she had already seen and heard about some of the things that go on in the local public high school and she knew she did not want to be a part of that. Furthermore, she wanted us to move back to SC sooner rather than later so she could go to a private Christian school there for all her high school years. She went on to express that she missed living close to family and would love to be closer to her cousins especially. Finally, she felt it would be best for me to be able to get around easier in a smaller one story home. Talk about being blown away! I was in downright shock!

First of all, although she knew we were against it, we had never once told her that she could NOT attend a public high school. So the fact that the Lord used her experiences in public school to turn her heart around and make going to a private Christian high school her heart's desire was the best thing I could have prayed for. We didn't have to force the issue - God settled the issue in her heart. The maturity I saw in Brittney during that time period was amazing. The biggest lesson I learned that year was to never EVER underestimate the power of God, much less question His plan. It may differ greatly from our plan, but He knows what He is doing!

In March of 2004 which was just a few short weeks after that conversation with Brittney, I took our two youngest boys with me on

a made a trip down to South Carolina. My intent was to visit my family and to check out the real estate prices and availability of ranch style homes. All I can say is that God took over from there. Out of an abundance of what I call "God Things" within one week we had signed a contract (contingent upon the sale of our Illinois home) to have a one story house built that would serve our needs perfectly and be wheelchair friendly if it came to that in the future. God continued to work as we sold our house in Illinois (to a former missionary family!) just in perfect time to move into our new house when it was completed in late July of 2005. We closed and moved in only two weeks before Brittney's freshman year at her new private Christian school was to begin. Did I say already that God's timing is perfect?

As of this writing, she has just completed her freshman year there and she loves it so much she was actually sad to see summer come! She played on the junior varsity basketball team, the junior varsity softball team, and she was on the varsity track team. The school is truly a wonderful school filled with teacher's who really care about her and about our entire family. They have prayer requests and pray before each and every class. Yes, there are plenty of students in her school that are not true Christians. There are also plenty of students who are true Christians. She is now better able to discern between the two and has been making very good choices when it comes to her friendships. She also is quick to admit when she has made a mistake about a particular friend.

I will sum it up to say that each child God has given us is uniquely designed by God for a certain purpose. Brittney is not only surviving but thriving, and is obviously right where God wants her. Being self-employed and always tight on finances, we simply and honestly cannot afford her private school tuition. (So urge all your friends to run out and BUY MY BOOK!) Seriously though, God has always provided for our needs. It is amazing to look back and realize that God has led us here, back to South Carolina. We never even wanted to move back, but God knew what we needed! We have come full-circle. We are back with our family, in an absolutely beautiful one story home that I just love, backed up to God's beautiful creation (a nature preserve) and somehow all of this, with the smallest mortgage payment we have ever had! Additionally, God has provided for us to somehow be able to 'pull it off' and make Brittney's private school tuition payments each month. We know that we are exactly where He wants us to be and we are more content right now, both me personally, and us as a family, then we have ever been.

Last year God planted into my hubby's head the game HOMESCHOOLPOLY™. Once again, He has taken us on yet another major journey. Now we have a warehouse full of these wonderful games that we pray will be a ministry to homeschooling families for years to come. He's taken us a long way to get here but the journey has been and continues to be well worth the reward.

It feels like God has finally led us back home where He knew we'd be the happiest. Even though we are back where we started in a sense, we now have so much more appreciation for all of the things we used to take for granted. He has also taught us more clearly to truly recognize and appreciate our many blessings, and to be content and enjoy each day as a gift. The funny thing is - we aren't even really HOME yet! We are but aliens on this earth.

Why Homeschool?

1999 ⇨ I think that if you've read my objections above, you already have a pretty good understanding of why I choose to homeschool. Some of the other reasons why I think homeschooling is an excellent choice are:

1. **Spiritual Training:** Homeschooling provides us the maximum amount of time each and every day to properly fulfill God's command, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."* Deuteronomy 6:5-7. There is also the matter of Biblical training. We spend the first half hour to hour of each day (weekday, that is) concentrating on their Biblical training. First we have Bible reading, then a "character building" story which is based upon Biblical principles (we love the Don and Joyce series!), then we all get down on our knees and pray together. Finally, the children disburse to do their own written Bible studies. (We use "Studying God's Word" by Christian Liberty Press, as our Bible study curriculum, but there are many others to choose from as well.) This serves as the planned, "academic" portion of our spiritual training. The remainder of our spiritual training takes place "as we walk along the road" or in other words,

as we go about our day. Opportunities for spiritual training arise often and we try to make it a point to take advantage of them when they do.

2007 ⇨ Over the years we have noticed that every time we let this portion of our day get overlooked, we all suffer for it. Since 1999 we have been involved in AWANA and that has since become an integral part of our homeschool as well. Robby did AWANA in middle school and then went on to be an AWANA L.I.T. (Leader in Training) while in high school. Brittney did the same and is now helps as an AWANA leader herself. J.Jay is currently in the AWANA T&T program and Elijah is a second year Cubby. In addition to the kiddos, I have been an AWANA leader throughout all of our moves. First thing we always did whenever we arrived at our new destination was find an AWANA church. For those of you unfamiliar with AWANA; it is a scripture memory program similar to boy scouts or girl scouts in the sense that you earn badges, stickers, and/or other awards as you progress through the program and memorize scripture. AWANA stands for Approved Workman Are Not Ashamed. I think it's a terrific ministry for children and I also use it as part of our homeschool Bible time.

We still use Studying God's Word Bible curriculum by Christian Liberty Press. I have liked it so much over the years and have yet to come across a Bible curriculum that better suits our needs. So, why mess with a good thing? We start with kindergarten and progress through the books until they are all completed. We also do lots of character building reading, using everything from Aesop's Fables, to the classics, to special family devotional books. We change our character building books often, as I try to keep their interest by keeping it fresh.

1999 ⇨ 2. **Play Time:** Another reason to homeschool is because of all the time it frees up for your family to be together and for each child to have more unstructured time to just be a kid. As I mentioned in the previous section we are typically able to complete our formal studies by lunch time. That gives us the rest of the afternoon and the entire evening to devote to our extracurricular activities and for unstructured time. Again, my kids are "into" basketball, which means they both play on the local YMCA teams during the winter and summer leagues. My daughter goes to a homeschool science class (a hands-on lab class) every Wednesday afternoon for one and one-half hours. My oldest son is currently taking a drama class every Monday afternoon for an hour and

fifteen minutes. We try to participate in most of our church activities, and my oldest is in the church youth group as well as a homeschool youth group. We also have various other activities we participate in regularly such as homeschool roller skating twice a month, homeschool ice skating once or twice a month, and weekly park days. Finally, between all three kids, we typically do at least two field trips per month, sometimes as many as four. Whew... sounds like a lot, huh? And of course you have to throw in errands, shopping, etc. Even taking all of these things into consideration, we usually have at least two full afternoons and evenings with no commitments. And on those days in which we have plans during the afternoon and/or evening we still usually have at least an hour, if not more, that are set aside for "free time". This is the time the kids can do some recreational reading (ie. reading for fun), riding bikes, climbing trees, exploring the woods, fishing, shooting hoops in the driveway, playing board games with each other, and whatever else excites them at the moment. The possibilities are almost endless. Again, I will reiterate what I pointed out earlier. I strongly believe that free play time and free reading time is necessary for all children up through and including their teen years. (And even into adulthood!!) How can a child develop a love for learning and reading if they have no time to explore fun activities on their own or read the books of their own choosing? I believe that the lack of this type of free time in the typical family today is one of the reasons why so many of America's students are not "making the grade" academically in comparison with other civilized countries. Kids are being told day in and day out what to do, where to go, and how to think. They need to have more time and freedom to develop their own thinking skills and to become their own person. They need to slowly discover the person that God meant for them to be and the plan He has for their lives. They do not need to be molded into the perfect sized round peg just so they can fit into society's round hole. God may have a perfectly rectangular impression that He is molding them to fit into. Kids, just like us adults, need time and space to hear His still small voice.

2007 ⇨ Wow, I sure did a lot of activities back then! Free play time is still a major big issue with me, probably even more so. I absolutely love the fact that my boys play together every day and love it. My five year old, Elijah, has an incredible imagination and he and eleven year old J.Jay are always "making movies" (which means acting out stories) and just pretending in general. They especially love the

outdoors and literally spend an average of at least one and usually two or more hours playing outside in our backyard, if weather allows. We have a trampoline (with net enclosure otherwise they'd be sure to kill themselves on it!), a wooden clubhouse type play set, two dogs, and a cat. Our house also backs up to a nature preserve which helps to foster their imaginations even more. They love to shoot the bears in the forest, and all the other wild animals they can think up! They also love catching and watching bugs, and just generally enjoy playing together.

In late 2006, God blessed us with a warehouse to run our HOMESCHOOLPOLY® Division. It's on two acres, the back of which is wooded. The boys love playing there and spending time with Dad. J.Jay does some "work" at the warehouse and is quickly learning the true value of a dollar! Greg put up a basketball hoop inside the warehouse, (since we have the space and the ceiling is very high) so they could play all during the winter as well!

We still do other activities, but not nearly as many as I used to! During the school year we usually go to homeschool roller skating two times per month. J.Jay's has weekly piano lessons as God has given him a musical gift to play by ear. He is very talented and playing and composing and he also takes piano lessons once a week. (And plays as much as he can every day!) AWANA on Wednesday evenings, and whatever sports Brittney is doing (since she seems to always be involved in a sport!) Elijah has also played in Little League Tee-ball, which was a lot of fun. For the summer I usually try to plan as few major events as possible so we have lots of fun time and pool time (since our neighborhood has a community pool.) As of this year, we are traveling to homeschool conventions with HOMESCHOOLPOLY™. Although fun, this is very tiring for me so we are trying to pray our way through and keep them manageable.

This past school year both my younger boys were involved in a homeschool co-op one day per week. This is the first academic type co-op we have tried and although they both enjoyed it, it took too much time away from our own homeschool studies. It was four hours long every Tuesday afternoon, once a week. That meant that on co-op day we didn't do our own homeschool studies (that would just be too much school time and not enough play time!) After praying about it and leaning towards not returning next year, I asked J.Jay for his opinion on returning next year. He said he liked it this year, but would rather not go back next year. Elijah is happy either way, he's

my easy going, happy little guy.

With our family business and everything else we have going on, we are not doing co-op this year. Furthermore, we have decided not to do any more co-ops unless the Lord leads us clearly in that direction. This decision came about for various reasons, but for the most part it was more counterproductive to our homeschool rather than being beneficial. Couple this with the fact that the classroom setting produced some of the same issues I have discussed previously that will come about in any school type setting, and it was quite an easy decision for us. We have decided to keep our academics at home and leave our free time for more non-academic type activities.

- 1999 ⇨ 3. **Academics:** I have long since come to the conclusion that the worst job I could do as a home educator would still far exceed the education that my child would receive in either a public or a private school setting. Do you know why? Because I, unlike any other teacher on earth, have an eternal and vested interest in the child I am educating. I love that child more than any other teacher ever could, because that child was loaned to me as a gift from God. I have the strongest motivation to make sure that I teach my child all the subjects he/she will need to know, not only just to be able to function well as adults, but also to reach their highest potential. I don't have this child just for a year, and then move on to the next as most educators do. I have this child for a lifetime. This gives me the undeniable realization that the entire educational future of this child rests squarely on my shoulders. It is because of this awesome responsibility (which serves as continual motivation) that I, as a homeschooler, put it upon myself to do gobs of research, reading, studying, prayer, Bible study, and anything and everything else that I think may be helpful in order to make sure that I am covering all the bases and teaching my child in an excellent manner. I have been homeschooling for only five years, but have read countless books on homeschooling; have poured over history texts; have re-taught myself Algebra; delved into lots of literature trying to discern the good from the bad; and have attended numerous seminars/workshops for home educators on such topics as:

TEACHING CREATION SCIENCE
 HOW TO MAKE HISTORY COME ALIVE
 HOW TO CREATE A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN YOUR HOME
 HOW CHILDREN LEARN BEST (learning styles)

HOW TO ENCOURAGE A LOVE FOR WRITING
PREPARING A HIGH SCHOOL PORTFOLIO/RECORD KEEPING
LANGUAGE ARTS WORKSHOP
DOING SCIENCE PROJECTS FOR ALL AGES
STUDY SKILLS CLINIC

2007 ⇒ **And even more over the years. Too many more to list!**

1999 ⇒ Are all of these workshops necessary to homeschool? Absolutely not! My point is simply this: When you homeschool, you have such a vested interest, that you will make it a point to learn whatever and do whatever needs to be done in order to assure yourself that you are doing the best job you can possibly do. It is a continual growth process. Being a parent, you may never be fully satisfied. Most likely, you will always be changing things and searching for a "better way", as well you should. All of life is a growth process, if you aren't growing... you must be dead! This is one of the aspects of homeschooling that make it so fun and challenging. So, even though I do not have a college degree as a certified teacher may, I can assure you that I, as a parent, am highly qualified to teach my children. The same goes for you.

2007 ⇒ **Amen to that! If you can, make an effort to go to every state and/or regional homeschool conference you can attend. I highly recommend at least one every year. They will go so far in building your confidence, encouraging your spirit, and motivating you to stay the course. And of course, they provide you with both the tools and the training (if you attend well-chosen sessions) to not just stay the course, but to sail it with style and grace. In my humble opinion, they are invaluable to all home educators - new, veterans, and everyone in between!**

We now go to conferences as exhibitors/vendors, so come look for us when you see our HOMESCHOOLPOLY® booth! I do workshops at some as well, as my ministry has always been to encourage homeschooling parents, especially moms. I also attend as many workshops as I can because for me, the learning never ends!

Back to Academics... I remember the exact words I was told when I pulled Robby out of public school only two weeks into his third grade year. The principal looked me straight in the eye and said with strong conviction and an air of disdain, "Are you a certified teacher? You have absolutely no idea what you are doing. You are going to ruin him. You can't possibly educate him!" blah blah blah... She

rattled on for a bit more before I calmly explained that the worst job I could do would far exceed what they had provided up to that point. Then Robby and I stood up and walked out, both elated and steadfast in our decision. I know this is a bit on the vengeful side, but oh how I do wish that principal could see Robby now! I'd be tempted to chant "Nanny Nanny Boo Boo!", or at least a big fat "I told you so". But honestly, I would never do that.... Would I?!?!?

1999 ⇒ 4. **Family and Sibling Relationships:** Another important reason why I advocate homeschooling is because it creates such an atmosphere that family relationships have to grow and become stronger in order to survive. Not only do you have more time and influence on your children, but also they have more time and influence on each other. My twelve year old son is best buds with his two year old brother. I wonder if this would be so if my oldest was away at school every day. Rob, my eldest, as well as Brittney, my seven year old daughter, were both there every single day throughout my rough pregnancy, praying that I would not miscarry as I had in the past. They both were there when J. Jay, their new little brother, was born. They were there through the early days of his babyhood and they both personally witnessed and took great pleasure in encouraging their baby brother to gradually become the cool, smart, toddler that he is. Also, Robby and Brittney have had to learn how to compromise with each other, play games together, and generally learn the "give and take" that is required to maintain an ongoing daily friendship with each other. Even though they are five years apart and of the opposite sex, they still play together pretty much every day. Now, don't get me wrong. They argue and get on each other's nerves.... a lot! But, they have no choice but to work out their differences because when they wake up tomorrow, guess who will be right there beside them at the breakfast table, during Bible time, during school time, during lunch time, during play time, during dinner time... well, you get the picture.

2007 ⇒ What do you want first; the good news or the bad news? With Brittney being in public school for a short time in Illinois, and now in a private Christian high school, I can speak on this topic with a great deal more experience now. Unfortunately, what I said above was more accurate than I currently care to admit. For the good news... Robby left for college while Brittney was still homeschooling. They have remained close to this day. Robby has also remained close to his brothers, or as close as living five hundred miles away allows.

Now to the bad news... Brittney's attitude towards J.Jay began to change gradually as soon as she went off to school the first time. Their relationship has suffered and continues to suffer as a result. After being gone all day at school, once she arrived home she would quickly lose her patience for him and he went from being a "cool" little brother to being an "annoyance" to currently what I can only described as a "thorn in her side". At this point in their lives, they never play games together just the two of as they used to do so often. Furthermore, Brittney is pushing J.Jay farther and farther away from her as she rejects him so often. That's very difficult for me to handle. He is now perpetuating the behavior as well with reciprocating when she treats him like an annoying little brother, by treating her badly right back. He does get frustrated though. He has asked me many times "Why doesn't Brittney like me?" This is one sin we have been trying to get a handle on and work on since the day it reared it's ugly head. But so far, the sin only seems to have grown. I fear that this is one of the "side affects" of NOT homeschooling that we have and continue to suffer from.

Another important things to point out, is that J.Jay has Asperger's Syndrome, which is a high functioning form of Autism. He is very high functioning, and is very gifted in music and in science, and has an almost photographic visual memory. This makes it a bit more difficult for Brittney to relate to or be very compassionate about him, especially since he was not diagnosed until after she had left our homeschool. She simply does not understand or seem to want to face the fact that many of his odd "habits", his ongoing talking and explaining facts and subjects down to the smallest detail, his anger outbursts, nor his brilliant mind and musical talents are a result of his Asperger's and are beyond his control. The things that make him so very special to me, Greg, and everyone else who knows him, are the same things that annoy her and sometimes even make her jealous.

Okay, enough of that - how about some more good news? J.Jay is eleven now and Elijah is five. That is quite an age difference, yet they not only get along wonderfully, but they play together every day! While we have suffered from some side with having one now not being homeschooled, we are still enjoying the major benefits of homeschooling with their terrific relationship. Do they get upset at each other and fight and argue - YES (they are boys!!) But again, they always make up quickly and are soon back to playing as if nothing ever happened. I can honestly say that they both enjoy having the other around (Elijah especially gets upset when J.Jay is

gone saying he misses him!) J.Jay watches out for and plays with his little brother. Elijah on the other hand, very much looks up to J.Jay and wants to be just like his big brother. (He wants to take piano lessons, and is starting to talk about science since that's what J.Jay is always talking about!) When it comes right down to it, they both seem to be keenly aware of the fact that they are and always will be brothers and friends.

1999 ⇨ 5.

Socialization: (Heard that term before?) Another reason why I like homeschooling is because your children learn how to relate well to people of all ages. They aren't contained in a room all day with only peers of the same age. During the mornings (or whenever your "formal" schooling takes place) they are with their different aged siblings. During the afternoons, the people they relate to vary in age every day. There are different aged friends on field trips (since most homeschool field trips are planned to include students of several grades, not just one). In addition to field trips we also have activities such as roller skating, ice skating, physical education, (p.e.), park days and more through our homeschool support group. During all these activities they are around children of all ages, from babies to teenagers. Since they "tag" along with you at times when most children are in school they also encounter others during grocery shopping, helping out neighbors, homeschool meetings, volunteer and/or missions work you do together as a family (such as meals on wheels, working in a soup kitchen, etc.) and so on. This provides them with a great deal of practice and they soon become very comfortable communicating with people of all ages. Also, they are more free to "be themselves" at all times, whereas children in private and public schools are generally limited to the amount of time they can spend during the day "just talking" to their classmates. I have more than once been pleasantly surprised when one of my children jump right into a conversation adults are having about politics, the weather, religion, or whatever else the topic may be, with lots to say on the matter. They don't even think for a moment that their opinion is of any less value than an adult's opinion is. Therefore, they feel comfortable in sharing their thoughts and opinions without reserve. Now, hopefully they don't interrupt the adults when they jump right into this conversation. Unfortunately though, my overly eager children too often do. (In case you haven't figured this out by now - MY children are not the perfectly behaved, quite, well-mannered, calm children you so often read about in other homeschooling

books. No, my children are very much like me. Loud, sometimes even obnoxious, quick to speak and slow to listen (although it's supposed to be the other way around) and quick to forget their manners unless reminded continually. But, I never said homeschooling was easy!) The point is, my kids are very comfortable and competent socially in most any circumstance. I think that is a distinct advantage that only homeschooling affords.

2007 ⇨ Wow! I read that and realize that the socialization aspect of homeschooling is what enabled my oldest to be able to start his own business at fifteen years old and thrive at it. I remember when he first started doing websites for homes that were being sold by owner; we would drive around and he would write down the phone numbers anytime we saw a "For Sale By Owner" sign. He would then come home and call them up and schedule an appointment to speak with them about doing a website. He was never the least bit intimidated about meeting with and selling his services to adults, even though he was only fifteen at the time! At sixteen he began to branch out into doing websites for small businesses as well. I will never forget when he went to a huge car dealership and after much persistence finally got an appointment with the owner. He ended up getting the sale and doing a top-notch website for them. Even at a young age he has always had confidence in his abilities and excellent communication skills. He has never had any reason to feel the least bit threatened or intimidated when speaking with business men or women. I credit much of this to his being extremely social - that is my definition of social as written in "What About Socialization", not to mention downright charming! These are not traits one can learn very easily nor keep in a non-homeschool setting, as confidence and lack of intimidation are so easily squelched in the classroom.

Why Not Homeschool?

1999 ⇨ Yes, there are some very important reasons why one should not homeschool. They are as follows:

1. If you haven't prayed about it or you are not sure if homeschooling is what God wants you to do. If this is the case, do not even think about homeschooling until or unless you have received direction from the Lord! I am the first to say that I

could not homeschool without God's blessing. The only thing that keeps me going during my most difficult times (and there are many) is the knowledge that this is what God wants me to do. Otherwise, I would have thrown in the towel on countless occasions. My daily survival verse is "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" Philippians 4:13 (NKJV). Although my Bible is a New International Version, I memorized this verse in the New King James Version. If He isn't the one doling out the strength, I would think long and hard before deciding to homeschool. That's doesn't mean that only a Christian can successfully homeschool. But, at least be aware of the pitfalls and go into it with your eyes wide open.

2007 ⇨ Homeschooling is considerably more well-known now and in many circles it is more often than not looked upon quite highly, which was not the case just a few short years ago. In all honesty, I can't remember the time I heard a negative comment about us being homeschoolers. I have had numerous moms say to me something like, "I wish I could homeschool, but I just don't have the patience." And quite a few even say, "I admire you for homeschooling your kids!" But even though it's now more acceptable to the point of being downright common in some areas, it is still just as time consuming! It actually may be even more so since we so often have even more activities to choose from. Not only does it require a huge sacrifice of time, but also of energy, money, and for me... sanity! That said, I wholeheartedly agree with what I wrote above! Looking back, with all the moves and health issues we have been through I know for a fact that God has been my strength. I would NOT have continued homeschooling if He hadn't carried me so much of the way. Simply put, He is the reason for everything I do, especially educating my kids at home!

1999 ⇨ 2. If your husband does not support homeschooling, Homeschooling WILL put a strain on your marriage. It will probably strain your marriage even if your husband **does** support homeschooling. It has mine. My husband has complained more than once that it seems that the kids and homeschooling come first and he comes last. Now, it should never be that way. When he feels that way it is solely because I am failing as a wife. Whether you homeschool or not, God should always come first in your life and your spouse should come second. That knocks the kiddos down to third place. Unfortunately, I have a sinful nature. One of my weaknesses is throwing myself head strong

into whatever it is that I am doing. And considering that when you homeschool, it is your lifestyle... I seem to take it one step further. It seems that at times, homeschooling is my life. It is when I lose my proper perspective that my husband, Greg, sometimes feels like he is standing in the back of the line behind all of the kids waiting for *his* turn. It is very difficult, at least for me, to raise the kids, keep the house livable, teach all the children academically and Biblically, have them at home with me all day every day, plan all the meals, do the grocery shopping, cook three meals a day, taxi the kids to their various extracurricular activities and field trips, watch my two year old like a hawk, and handle whatever else may come up in any given day, AND have time left over for my husband. But even that isn't good enough. I need to give my husband his time first, and then use my time left over for the kids!!! Arghh..... You can see where difficulties may arise. It is only because my husband is so supportive of homeschooling that we have been able to recognize the strain that homeschooling has put on our marriage and have somehow still managed to keep our marriage strong in spite of it. But, because we both are so adamant about the importance of homeschooling our children, we sometimes allow our marriage to take a back seat when it seems inevitable. When we do this, we both realize that we really should be making even more of an effort to put each other first. It is an ongoing struggle, but one that you must be aware of when you endeavor to homeschool. As you can see, it must be a joint effort. Marriage in this day and age is difficult enough without throwing a monkey wrench like homeschooling into it. Be sure that before making the decision to homeschool, you have discussed it together at length and that both of you are willing to support each other during the process. That is crucial.

2007 ⇨ I feel even more strongly on this topic now than I did then! The farther I walk on this path towards "home" the more I realize just how totally off base and unbiblical our culture is. Many women may not like to hear this, but the plain fact is God made the husband the head of the household, period. If your husband does not support homeschooling, then it is not God's plan. The hardest thing for a mom and wife to remember is that God is in control. He's even bigger than our husbands! If He wants us to homeschool he is perfectly capable of changing our husbands' hearts and minds so that they desire the same, or at least are open to the idea.

My hubby was strongly against homeschooling initially. As a matter of fact his first response to me about it was "Over my dead body!" God totally changed his heart and mind in spite of the fact when we began our homeschool journey Greg was not even a Christian yet! (He became a Christian shortly after we began homeschooling in 1993. YIPPEE!!!) I can say from experience that God is not only faithful, but he is also very capable. If this is an issue you struggle with I encourage you to pray fervently, and then step back and watch God work.

With my health issues, our homeschooling requires a great deal more of Greg now than it used to. He is a lot more involved in all aspects of our family and helping with the kids, taking them to lessons, doing the grocery shopping, and more. Although I still do all the teaching, it is he and the kiddos who do the cleaning, and even some of the cooking.

- 1999 ⇨ 3. If your heart isn't in it. If God has called you, and your husband said, "Go for it", but you are still thinking, "I just don't want to homeschool." Then don't. Your heart has got to be in it or it simply will not work. Your children will not see a mom who loves them so much that she will homeschool them even though it isn't her heart's desire. No, they are much more perceptive than that. They will see the resentment, the negativity, and the stress. That will not be a good atmosphere for anyone to be in. And as I have already said so many times before, homeschooling is hard, even when your heart IS in it. It is almost impossible when your heart is somewhere else. If God has truly called you to homeschool, but your heart isn't in it, I would encourage you to pray continually about it until either you realize that God did not call you at all; or until the time in which you find your excitement and eagerness to homeschool overwhelming you. I can assure you that with much prayer one of those two scenarios will occur. How do I know that? Because, God is good. He doesn't want us floundering about trying to figure out what to do. He wants us doing it! Therefore, He will make it clear.
4. If you have already lost the respect of your children. There may come a time when it is too late to get it back. You cannot homeschool a child that does not respect you. Also, If you have children that are in their teen years and you are suffering in your relationship with them, this may not be the time to pull them out and begin homeschooling them. Granted, it may be an excellent

time to do just that. But, first get a reality check. Do they respect you? If they have lost all respect for you and you fear that you may not be able to gain that respect back, homeschooling may not be the answer. It may even make matters more difficult. Also, do they *want* to homeschool? If not, don't force it. If so, let them talk YOU into it. Let them convince you that they have prayed about it and have them explain why they feel this is the best course for them. Once a child reaches a certain age and maturity, they really need to have a say in their method of being educated. You may have a child that you have home educated since kindergarten that is now going into high school and wants very much to go into public or a private school. This request warrants much discussion and prayer with you, your husband, and the child involved. But, be sure to weigh that child's wishes very heavily. Even if that is not the path you would choose for your child, make sure you give it to God and let Him direct you. He may want that child in public school for a specific reason. Far be it for you to close a door in God's face. Worst case scenario and it turns out to be a bad decision, let it be a learning experience. Sometimes our children have to make bad decisions in order to learn how to make wiser decisions the next time.

2007 ⇨ Here's yet another one I had to live out! My Brittney respects me, but she honestly does NOT want to homeschool. She is the one who has literally been drooling over the school bus since the age of four. I wrote about her public and private school experiences previously. God did want her in public school for a time and He used that experience for her to decide that she wanted to go into a private Christian school for high school.

One of the pitfalls I have seen in some homeschooling families is what I blatantly call "forced homeschooling". This is often coupled with a legalistic approach to parenting, but not always. This is a topic I feel strongly about as we have personally had an experience where a young man was forced to homeschool against his desires throughout his schooling years. This young man was quite obedient and not confrontational at all on this subject. Inside though there was resentment building towards his parents. Unfortunately, shortly after he turned eighteen years old, he decided that he had had enough and he left his family a note, got in his vehicle and left home. He drove all the way across the country and ended up on our doorstep in California.

He had Godly parents who loved him very much and sincerely only wanted what was best for him. Unfortunately, they lost his heart somewhere along the way. He had learned all the rules and even obeyed them quite well, but he was having trouble with identifying his own relationship with Jesus. I don't know where he is today, but a couple of years ago his lifestyle was such that he could best be described as a prodigal son, yet to return.

Please be careful not to fall into this trap. I will talk more about this later in the book, but for now I will say that homeschooling and raising children in general should be very focused on the heart issues. Rules are necessary, and boundaries are imperative - but always focus on their hearts as their hearts are breakable. We need to remember it is not our job to carry our kids to Jesus in our arms, but rather to continually and lovingly introduce them to Him through our training, our words and our actions. So that they will desire to know Him and grow to love Him for themselves because it is their heart's desire. Not because their parents said so.

Jesus came so we can establish a relationship with Him and not be forced to live under the law but rather by His grace. Homeschoolers can sometimes tend to be extremists and this is one reality we must face head-on and recognize it for what it is - a potential downfall to the ones we love the most. Simply put, we do not own our children. They are each a precious gift from God. They are only on loan for us to train as God instructed us in Proverbs 22:6.

Finally, as our children grow into young men and women, we must recognize this and admit to ourselves that our culture is very different then it was in Jesus' day. When Jesus walked the earth, the term teenagers did not even exist. After twelve years old children were basically considered adults, they married and started their families (young women) and trades (young men) as young as thirteen years of age. Mary was thought to be around fourteen when she was betrothed to Joseph and blessed with Jesus in her womb. Food for thought...

- 1999 ⇨ 5. Both parents must work a full time job. If you absolutely must work full time in order to financially survive, you probably should not homeschool. As I said before, homeschooling does cost money. There are many economical ways to homeschool and not spend a great deal of money on curriculum if you use all the

resources available, especially the library. But you still have to take into consideration the loss of one income. I know quite a few homeschoolers that work part-time, and although it does make the everyday life even more difficult, it can be done. Trying to work full time and homeschool though, is quite another story. Rarely can it be done and done well. It is certainly not something I would recommend. There are simply too many issues to be addressed. And even if all these issues can be resolved, there usually isn't very much time left over after working a full time job to be spent actually educating your children. Remember though, you may not necessarily have to work a full time job. I was working fifty to sixty hours a week when the Lord convicted me (through my infant daughter's falling down a flight of stairs) that I needed to be at home raising my kids. The very idea of leaving my career (which, I loved!) seemed impossible at the time. I was making half of our household income and we were living right up to every penny. There were no corners to be cut! But, all things are possible with God. After much prayer and nine months of my husband searching for a better paying job, he got a nice offer in South Florida (the last place on earth I wanted to live). So, we headed South and moved into a small apartment and made many sacrifices, especially during our first year, so that I could stay at home with our kids. Now, five years later, we have never looked back. God has blessed our family greatly over the years and I am forever grateful to Him for providing a way for me to leave my job. But, He wouldn't have done it if I hadn't first looked to Him for the answers. So, if you are wanting to homeschool, but are struggling with a full-time job, just give it to God. He will show you the way.

2007 ⇨ One of the issues that I don't think I addressed clearly enough above is the time involved in homeschooling. Not only does it require time on the part of the homeschooling parent, but a great deal of time and sacrifice on the part of both parents, if possible. Whether you are homeschooling one child or ten, it is not just about quality time, but rather quantity time. It is time to be enjoyed and appreciated as I have experienced already how quickly they grow up. So the amount of time you must commit is great, but I personally, would not want to spend my time any other way!

What About Socialization?!?!

Chapter 2

*My life as a Mom
Is hard, but it's fun*

** With my hubby and kids
I am kept on the run*

*My kids do not go
"Off to school" every day*

*We school them at home
And at home they play*

*It is here that they're learning
To share and to grow*

*To get along with each other
All they need to know*

*To trust in the Lord
In all that they do*

*Oh yea, reading and writing,
And algebra too!!*

*What about socialization?
The critics all say*

*Are my kids going to "blend in"
With this world some day?*

*Dear God, I hope not
This world is a mess!*

*I'm not raising my kids
To act just like the rest*

*I'm raising my kids
So that one day they'll be*

*Like a lighthouse to guide those
Who are still drifting at sea*

2007 ⇨ *I didn't want to change my poem, but I just had to. It was originally written "with three kids and a dog, I am kept on the run." But that simply is no longer the case. I wrote this a long time ago and since then I have had another child, but my oldest moved out, went to college, and is now married! This means I am now back where I started with three kids... Of the three, my daughter who is fifteen is in a private Christian school, so I am actually now down to homeschooling only two kiddos! Oh and it's no longer "a dog". We currently have two beautiful Golden Retrievers, and we have two cats too! One lives at our home and the other lives at our warehouse! So... now you can understand why I just HAD to change it.

1999 ⇨ This is, without a doubt, the most talked about aspect of homeschooling, *socialization*. Believe it or not, this was my biggest concern when I began homeschooling. I have a "Type A" personality, and am very outgoing (to the extreme!). So, I fretted over the "socialization" issue for the first couple of months of homeschooling. "Only the first couple of months?", You ask. Yep! That was all it took for me to realize what a non-issue it was! I now realize that homeschooling provides the ideal environment for children to learn true socialization skills. But let's address this entire issue. The good and the bad. Because there are some concerns that many homeschoolers do run into, that fall under the general heading of "socialization".

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, homeschooled children are typically around a wider variety of people during each day than those children who are in a private or a public school. Allow me to reiterate... During the mornings (or whenever your "formal" schooling takes place) they are with their different aged siblings. Then, during the afternoons, the people they relate to vary in age from day to day. Children of all different ages, from babies to teenagers, on homeschool field trips and activities (since most homeschool field trips are planned to include students of several grades, not just one, and most activities are open to all the children in a homeschooling family). Add to that the various adults that they come into contact with during what's left of your day. They are the people you encounter when you run errands, grocery shop, help out a neighbor, attend homeschool meetings, do any volunteer work as a family (ie. meals on wheels), and so on. All of this provides them with a great deal of practice "socializing" and they soon become very comfortable communicating with people of all ages. Also, they are more free to be themselves most of the time, whereas children in private and public schools are generally limited to the amount of time they can spend during the day "just talking" to their classmates.

Another point I would like to make is that learning how to interact well only with others in their own age group serves very little purpose in the real world.

During adult life, when are we placed with only same aged peers? In reality, there are very few jobs, if any, in which an adult is working solely with other adults who are their same age. What is important is that a child learns how to interact well with people of all ages. As I mentioned previously, I have more than once been pleasantly surprised when a child of mine has jumped right into a conversation that adults were having about world events, politics, or some other "adult" topic with their own interesting viewpoints. They hadn't even stopped to consider the possibility that their opinion may be of less value than the opinion's of an adult. They felt comfortable in sharing their thoughts without reserve. My kids are very confident socially and I have found that to be prevalent among the homeschoolers I know.

Granted, you must take each child's personality into account. Go into any classroom and you will find some outgoing bubbly personalities among the students and you will also find a few shy, quiet types. Even though they are in a public or private school setting, a shy child pretty much remains a shy child. Likewise, the same is true for homeschoolers. Though the majority are more social and talkative than most children, you will inevitably find some that are shy. Most likely, that is not because they are homeschooled and thus *unsocialized*. It is simply because God made them that way.

I think the most important question to ask yourself when you are contemplating this issue is, "What does socialization mean to you?" If you haven't already, take a moment to read my poem at the beginning of this chapter. I firmly believe that my definition of socialization and society's definition of socialization differ greatly. But what is important for you, as a parent, is to sit down and decide precisely what socialization means to *you*.

Since I define socialization quite differently than society does, let me first share with you what my definition would be. My dictionary would read something like this:

Pamela's Definition of Socialization

socialization: The ability of the child/person in question to be able to communicate (ie. socialize) with others in a comfortable and articulate way; without undue feelings of intimidation or inferiority.

I think homeschoolers as a whole, actually have the advantage when it comes to socialization skills, at least according to my definition! Why? Because they have more freedom, more opportunities, and thus more practice expressing

themselves with lots of different people of different ages in differing circumstances. Whereas, students in public and private schools are limited as to when and how they can express themselves during the major portion of their weekdays. Also, their social contacts are primarily geared towards their same-aged peers.

There is also the issue of each student's "social status" that must be addressed. This greatly alters their conversations and their ability to learn how to express their true selves. This issue only applies with students in public or private school. It is rarely an issue in the homeschool. What I mean when I say "social status" is this: In every classroom of say twenty or so kids each child will have their own place on the social status chain. Some may be popular, some unpopular, some are bullies, some are timid, and so on. To help me illustrate my point - visualize, if you will, all the kids in a classroom piled up high, each one on top of another. There are those on top, those on bottom and a great many being squashed in the middle. This is what I mean by the "social status". There is no getting around it. It exists in every classroom, to one extent or another. The children must modify their conversations (ie. socialization) to 'fit in' according to their place on the social status chain. In other words, a great deal of the time the individual child may not feel entirely free to be themselves without reservations. Often, they are being either who they are expected to be, or who they want to be. Confusing concept, I know, but one that is important to recognize.

Now, on to society's definition of socialization. I was quite surprised when I looked up the word socialization in the dictionary. Here is the what I found in the Second College Edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary*.

The American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition's Definition of Socialization

socialize *v*, **-ization** *n*: 1. To place under government or group ownership or control. 2. To fit for companionship with others; make sociable. 3. To convert or adapt to the needs of society.

I absolutely promise, that's what it says. Word for word. Grab your own dictionary and look it up! I don't know about you, but to me.... THAT IS SCARY! I personally, do not want my child to either be placed under governmental control, or to have to convert or adapt from the person that God made them, into the person that society "needs" them to be. Nope, huh-uh, no way! I want my child to be able to grow up and discover the person that he truly is. The person that God created him to be. Not the person that society wants him

to be. Take a good look around you. We have lots of people who blend in well with society. What we don't have are very many people who really stand out as God's light in the darkness. One of the reasons I decided to homeschool is so that my children will not be "socialized", at least not according to that definition! I am raising them to fulfill the plan that God has for their lives. Not the plan that society would place them in. In other words, to become one of those few, the true salt and light. Adding season and brightness to the bland realities of this dark world.

There is another point I would like to make that would probably fall somewhere in society's view of socialization. My twelve year old son, Rob, does not look like the typical twelve year boy that you will see roaming the mall on a Friday night. No funky hairdo, no pants so large that you can see his boxer shorts (he doesn't even wear boxer shorts!), no chains hanging off his pockets.... you get the picture. Why not? Only because he thinks that the typical dress of teens today looks sloppy. He says, he just doesn't 'get it'. He's said more than once, "How can they do anything when they are pulling up their pants all the time?" I say, "Thank you, Lord!" I am thrilled that he doesn't 'get it'. I don't want him to 'get it'! He views many of the issues that his peers are currently going through, not only the clothes issue, but also such issues as having girlfriend/boyfriend relationships (ie. going steady), going to school dances, getting their body parts pierced, smoking cigarettes, doing drugs, arguing with their parents, disliking church, and so on, as if he is on the outside looking in. He sees it more from my perspective than from the typical perspective of a child being in the midst of all this peer pressure.

Do you remember when you were in junior or senior high school and your parents used to say things like, "You will understand when you are older." "You're too young to date." Or in my case I was told, "You shouldn't get married yet, you just graduated from high school!" Do you remember what your response was to such advice? Mine was, "What do you know? I know what I am doing! I am much more mature than you realize." In other words, I didn't listen to them. Not only did I pooh-pooh their advice, but the more they said, the more I set out to prove them wrong. That is the typical response when you are smack dab in the thick of things. But most homeschoolers are not smack dab in the thick of things. They have the proper perspective to see these issues from a more neutral position. In light of this, they are much more capable of seeing things for what they truly are. Thankfully, Rob has yet to personally struggle with any of the issues I raised above. Because for him, they simply are not issues. If and when the time comes that he does need to make some tough decisions about one of these issues (say dating or courting for example), he will be able to make the decision from the right frame of mind. Without undue pressure from his peers.

This makes me think of another criticism homeschoolers hear all too often. "You can't just shelter them from everything! How will they ever learn how to function in the real world?" Let's look at the last question first. Function in the real world? My kids ARE learning to function in the real world! That's precisely what homeschooling provides. A school does not provide real world experience, it only provides classroom experience. There is a huge difference between what goes on everyday in the real world and what takes place daily in a classroom. In order to address this properly, one must look at their goals as a parent and as an educator. What is your goal, in other words, what are you trying to accomplish in raising and homeschooling your children? How do you desire for them to function in the real world when they become adults? I have three main goals for each of my children. They are as follows:

1. **Wisdom.** For them to have developed a real and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and to allow Him to have total authority over their lives. And for them to live their lives in such a manner that His wisdom is evident to all the lives that they touch.
2. **Knowledge.** For their intellect to have developed to its fullest potential. And for them to possess excellent reading, writing, and verbal skills that they use to articulate their thoughts and ideas in an intelligent and professional manner.
- 3.. **Socialization.** For them to be able to communicate with others in a comfortable and articulate way; without undue feelings of intimidation or inferiority. Recognizing their value in this world as a child of God.

Those are my main goals. In other words, that is how I want them to function in the real world once they reach adulthood. I feel that homeschooling is an avenue that allows me the greatest potential to be able to meet those goals.

Now, back to the first part of the original criticism. "You can't just shelter them from everything!" Let's take a closer look at this remark. What is it that we are "sheltering" them from? And are we really sheltering them, or are we just allowing them the chance to view things from a better perspective? Although, I am sure there are some homeschoolers who may very well be guilty of truly sheltering their children, I think that is the exception rather than the rule. Allow me to refer back to my previous example of my oldest son, Rob. I do not see him as being "sheltered" as much as I see him as being "aware". He knows full well what "issues" his peers are dealing with in America today. But, the difference is, he is

not in the midst of these issues. Therefore, he sees them from a completely different perspective than he would if he were in the midst of them, in a public or a private school. On the other hand, If he were oblivious to these issues entirely and if he viewed his life as the "norm" of society, than that is what I would call being sheltered. In my opinion, that would give him a somewhat warped and unrealistic view of society. My purpose is not to deceive him about these issues, but rather to arm him with the knowledge of these issues from the proper perspective. In hopes that he will use this knowledge to make wiser choices than those that are being made by his peers. I feel that one cannot make a truly wise choice, if they aren't aware of all the options. So, since he is not oblivious, I don't really see him as being sheltered at all. If you feel that you may be one of those homeschoolers who are truly sheltering your child or children, I would advise you to put some further thought into this issue. And, if you are willing, pray for wisdom to better arm them to be aware of the normal ways of society, without becoming enticed by these ways.

Please don't overlook the fact that I used my twelve year as the example, not my seven year old. I think our society as a whole is bent on robbing our young children of their innocence, by exposing them to way too much when they are still very young. So when it comes to my younger children, yes, I am sheltering them, or at least I am trying to! I want my children to enjoy as much of a carefree and happy childhood as I can give them. Therefore, I choose not to expose them to all the ugliness in this ungodly world that we live in. Gradually, as they mature both physically and spiritually, I will arm them with the knowledge that I spoke of above so that they too can make wise choices when the time comes.

2007 ⇨ Okay, first of all let me take just a second right here to say something... I FEEL SO OLD! My "twelve year old" son I wrote about above is now twenty years old, a senior in college and married! My "seven year old" daughter is now fifteen and a high school sophomore! YIKES! Plus I still have an eleven year old son, J.Jay, as well as my baby, Elijah, who is five years old. This means that God willing, I will be homeschooling for another thirteen years. We had a major realization when Elijah turned five. It was the first time in TWENTY YEARS that I did NOT have a child under the age of five! No wonder I'm so tired all of the time! Okay, back to my current take on socialization, I just had to digress for a moment as I simply could not refrain from blurting that out. I still don't understand how I got so old.

Well, unfortunately, I still agree with all of the above, now even more so as Brittney, now in private school, is right smack dab in the thick of the trees. She literally cannot see the forest at this point.

Not being in a neutral position she is left to view and try to decipher everything from a limited vantage point. We are very thankful though that she is still under our roof so we can be there to help her make the right decisions, and to catch her if and when she may fall.

This brings me to another matter that I have come to feel very strongly about. That being giving teenagers a chance to practice what they have learned while they are still living at home. If they are on too tight of a leash (pardon the pun) and are not given any opportunities to be independent, responsible, and to make their own decisions, they will have no practice using, much less honing these skills. You may feel good that they are not able to make any mistakes, but they will not be able to learn anything from their own experiences either. We all know that the lessons we learned the best are those we had to learn the hard way. This doesn't have to be taken to the extreme by any means. I am certainly not saying let your teens run wild or make all their own decisions. My point is that I would rather give them ongoing opportunities to make some of their own decisions, even if that means they make some mistakes along the way. This real life experience will train them to make better decisions the next time. It's better that they make mistakes now while they are still at home. Once they are out on their own they have to make their own decisions. If they have no practice or experience doing this, they will most likely make more mistakes. Unfortunately, these mistakes may very well be life altering.

Amazingly enough, I still wholeheartedly agree with every single thing I said when I first wrote this chapter. What's more, my oldest, Robby, has been a living testament to the fact that homeschooling provides the best opportunity for socialization (my definition, of course). Robby started his own business at fifteen years old. Greg had designed a website for our house in California which we were selling by owner. The website worked so well that we sold our home with no realtor in an extremely slow market in a remote mountain town far from any decent sized city in only six weeks. Not only that, but we sold it to a couple that lived in Pebble Beach, CA which was three hundred forty miles away because they found our website from an ad I placed in the bay area paper. The website presented the house so wonderfully they literally fell in love with the home from all the information and pictures! Everyone in town started asking how we sold our house that quickly and we told them about the website.

Greg, being a major entrepreneur, encouraged Robby to recognize this as a market which needed to be filled. He encouraged him to seize the opportunity. He showed him how easy it would be to do the same type of websites for others by using ours as a template. At this point, Robby did not even know how to design a website! Greg showed him enough to get him started. Using our digital camera and computer equipment, Robby did his first couple of websites for people there in California just using ours as a template. They were impressed and the websites produced results.

That was all it took. Robby realized for himself the potential and he ran with it. He proceeded to make some flyers advertising his services targeted to homes for sale by owner and asked me to drive him around. Every home we could find that was for sale by owner, we would stop and he would walk up to their door and convince them of their need for a website to help them sell their home! If they were not home, he would leave a flyer about his services. He ended up doing several other websites in California before we moved to Ohio.

When we arrived in Ohio he wanted to saturate that area as well. We drove around our new town and he convinced (or should I say, charmed) practically everyone he spoke with into paying him to design a website for their home. As his web skills improved, his confidence grew as well. He put much of his profits back into his business. He bought himself an expensive digital camera to improve the quality of the pictures he was providing. He printed up business cards and made a portfolio of his work. With his charming personality and his impressive portfolio, he decided to market his web design services to small businesses as well. He would literally go cold-calling door to door to local businesses and was never the least bit intimidated talking to business owners and convincing them of their need for a website. He continued to grow his business and gain clients while still homeschooling all the way through his high school years.

Homeschooling provided him the time to be able to focus on his school and get his school work completed by lunch time so he could devote every afternoon to his business. He often worked ahead on his studies to give himself larger blocks of time to focus on his business. He ended up graduating homeschool at age sixteen and beginning college at Liberty University in Virginia at seventeen all while continuing to grow and invest in his business. He is very mature and focused and has grown into an excellent business owner.

Today, his company more than just a web design company as he has expanded to cover all aspects of marketing.

What most notable though are the testimonials he has received from his clients. It shows that he is doing business with high integrity, in a trustworthy and Godly manner. I will leave out the names as I didn't get permission from them to print their names, but here are a few of the testimonials he received.

"We were impressed by the work that Epsilon did with our website. Epsilon was able to integrate the concepts and graphics we had into a first class internet presence. Our site is professional yet dynamic, and represents the kind of impact we wanted on the web. Our biggest need was a quick turnaround for website creation and Epsilon worked in a timely fashion until the project was complete; the overall customer service was also of the highest order." (The Manager of a Sports Company)

"Epsilon is very responsive and accommodating and their prices are very reasonable. I enjoyed the full service; the ability to take us all the way through marketing our product. The website packages are very well put together to make the process work and go smoothly. We made many mistakes with our layout and their service fixed them and made us aware of many pitfalls. The new website is really well put together and quite user-friendly. We are getting many hits now and lots of compliments on the website's quality! The corrections and changes, despite the amount, were done in a timely, sometimes surprisingly, quick manner. They are very patient with computer illiterates like myself. They are always willing to go the extra step, I highly recommend their service and welcome any skeptical prospective clients to call me directly for my opinion and any questions! We look forward to working with them on other projects!" (The Vice Present & Co-Founder of a large company)

"Epsilon provided me with the quality they promised, at the time promised and were exceptionally easy to communicate with to achieve the web presence I

wanted. I highly recommend them as a great value at a fair price.” (A Service Oriented Company)

“Epsilon and Mr. Berthume went above and beyond the call for my web presence. From logo design to custom enhancements they always got the job done in less than 24 hours. I would highly recommend your services to any business I come in contact with. Thanks for a job well done.” (A Lawyer)

“We are new customers and couldn't be more satisfied with Epsilon. They were responsive to our requests and patient with our lack of computer knowledge! Our re-designed web site is professional and attractive. Their pricing structure for both the re-design and the web hosting was extremely competitive. We are happy with the results and look forward to a long relationship with Epsilon.” (A Security Company)

"Epsilon has done a tremendous job for us by increasing the consumer awareness of two of our products. Within days of their work we started to see results both in traffic and amount of downloads. Working with Robby Berthume is especially refreshing as he does what he says he is going to do and by the date promised. I would highly recommend them.” (One of his favorite and most loyal customers who owns more than one business.)

Okay, I know I am past the point of making my point and have entered Mommy bragging territory. Sorry! Seriously, as we all know, God is the one to be given credit for Robby's accomplishments and opportunities. Honestly, I am more proud of his character than I am of his business successes. He chose an excellent wife to share his life with, and he has shown himself true by walking the walk. THAT is why I homeschool. My prayer for each of my kids and their spouses nightly is that each of their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. I know by his fruit that his name is in there. That fact alone is worth every sacrifice and then some. But frankly, homeschooling has been so much more of a joy than a sacrifice that I don't like to even

use the term sacrifice. It's a privilege granted by God, and I am so grateful for that privilege!

I also want to add that the most important thing we can do for our children is to pray for them and their future (or present!) spouses from birth. That is more important than how you choose to educate them. More important than your views on socialization, More important than anything other than your own personal walk with the Lord. When it comes right down to it, prayer is the only power we have when it comes to our children's futures. Giving our children over to the Lord in prayer is the best way to allow God to use them for His glory. We want to claim them as our children, but my true heart's desire is for God to claim them as His. If this is your heart's desire as well - give them to God and watch Him work. He is such a Mighty God!

1999 ☞ Now there is a negative issue that really must be addressed. This issue is more prevalent among homeschoolers than others. I put this issue under the heading of socialization because it involves the opportunities for your child to develop and foster ongoing friendships, rather than solely having many acquaintances. This is not an issue for all homeschoolers, but it has been somewhat of an issue for us. From various conversations with fellow homeschoolers, I know it has been an issue for some of them as well. We have really had to put forth additional efforts to provide the opportunities for our children to foster friendships with one or two kids that they really enjoy being around. After we moved from Florida to South Carolina, these opportunities were not a given in homeschooling. Therefore, we have had to take it upon ourselves, as parents, to provide such opportunities. Granted, this is something that most parents come across at one time or another. But for some, the nature of homeschooling may create this as a need to be addressed on a regular basis.

Homeschooled kids are typically not around the exact same kids every single day, day in and day out, other than their siblings. Depending upon what activities they are involved in, the kids they are around will vary from day to day and from week to week. When you homeschool, the best friends your children will ever have will most likely be their siblings. But I firmly believe that they also need at least one additional good friend that they can consistently spend time with. If you live in a family oriented neighborhood, this may not be a very big issue for you. If not, or if the families you live around do not share the same belief system as you, you may be struggling with this issue as well. We live out in the country, therefore, we do not have any close neighbors that my kids can just go down the street to play with. But, having moved from a nice little subdivision in South Florida, I must admit that I tend to see this as a blessing in disguise. I had

a great deal less control over my kids' peers when we lived in an active neighborhood as I do now. Unfortunately, very few of our neighbors shared our beliefs. My kids ended up making friends with kids they wouldn't have otherwise, simply because they were there.

Back to the issue at hand, though. In our current situation, although my kids are around lots of different kids, they aren't always around the same ones long enough and/or often enough to form lasting, solid friendships. That is where the parent must come in. If forming these friendships is important to you or to your child, as it is to me, you may have to take additional steps to assure that more than just acquaintances are being formed between your children and their friends. The steps we have taken are to make an ongoing concentrated effort to invite one or two friends in particular over to our house for some 'play time' on a regular basis. We have found that this is generally all it takes. What may occur is that your child discovers that the more they get to know a particular child, the less they have in common with them. But that is okay. It is all a part of the learning process. Ideally though, closer friendships are fostered. Another difficulty you may run into is when the other child's family is so busy that they don't reciprocate and invite your child over to their house very often. Unfortunately, this occurs quite often due to the busy lifestyles of so many families today. When that happens, the best course to take is to simply speak to the other child's mother (or father) and explain your purpose. Hopefully, this will remedy the situation. If not, pray about it and God will lead you.

Let me make it clear that I don't think that these friends need to be the same age as your child. One of my twelve year old son's best friends is another homeschooling young man who is fifteen years old. He has another good friend who is ten years old. My seven year old daughter's best friend just recently turned six years old. Since homeschoolers are not age regulated in most of the things they do, they tend to gravitate towards friends based on their similarities and common interests, not just their age.

Let's talk some more about something I said earlier. I said, "If forming these friendships is important to you or to your child..." I was not being sarcastic when I said "if", I meant that seriously. This may not be a big issue for you at all. I am a very outgoing, Type-A, people person. I could move to Timbuktu and have a new friend within hours, if not minutes, of my arrival. I couldn't survive without friendships. Although my friends tend to change a bit from year to year and from location to location, I always have a few 'good' friends that I can count on. I usually have lots of 'casual' friends, or what I refer to as acquaintances as well. So the reason this issue is important to me has a great deal to do with the nature of my personality.

2007 ⇨ I think I am going to cry after reading the above paragraph! Since that time we have moved seven more times, six of which were major moves (completely different cities each well over one hundred miles apart) and four of which were to another state! Am I bragging? No, I am mourning... Big time! I am now "back home" or so it seems to SC which is not where I am initially from, but where I have always felt the most at home. The odd thing is, I will have been back almost one full year, and I've met quite a few new people, I have yet to establish many close friends that I really click with. I have had some unusual circumstances of late, and I have been so focused on so many different things, not the least of which are health issues (mine and those of my children) that I haven't taken much time to foster any potential friendships either. I am lately feeling like an island in many ways, and that's very unlike me. I have had an intense yet unmet longing lately for one good "local" friend that I could just pick up the phone and call anytime (and vice-versa) for no particular reason. One that knows me well and loves me anyway. Those types of friendships are hard to come by and take time to establish. Problem is, I have never been known as a very patient person.

1999 ⇨ My husband, Greg, on the other hand, is a bit more on the introverted side. He would be perfectly contented to live in a cabin up in the mountains (preferably out west, near a big lake) in the middle of nowhere. That would be the ideal lifestyle for him to live happily ever after with just the kids and I. He would be thrilled to not have to hear the phone ringing off the hook, or to have to bother with attending "social" type gatherings very often, if ever! He is a little bit of a loner, and gets the majority of his relationship satisfaction from his family. Therefore, as you may have already guessed, this is a not a very important issue to him.

2007 ⇨ Now that's a real hoot to read! Let's just say that Greg is no longer introverted! He's turned his "intro" inside-out to become an "extro" over the past few years. I don't know exactly how or when it happened as it was a very gradual thing, but it happened! God is always working on us... God has used our past few moves and my health issues to make me a bit more introspective and less needy of other friendships (outside my family) in general. This very same God has used these same circumstances to make Greg more outgoing and more open to establishing and fostering friendships outside of our family. There have been several times lately when I feel Greg has been more outgoing and talkative than me! Go figure! Regardless of our changes over these past years, God has not changed.

1999 ☞ God made us each uniquely different. *"...I am fearfully and wonderfully made..."* - Psalms 139:14b So it is up to you to decide how important this issue is to you. It may be very important, if you are like me, or not important at all, if you can relate better to Greg. Most likely though, you will fall somewhere in the middle of Greg and I. If so, it is an issue to be aware of, but hopefully one that can be managed easily with minimal effort.

The final issue I want to address is the homeschooler who only has one child in the family. First of all, let me make it clear that I DO think that families with an only child can still flourish in a homeschool. I know quite a few homeschoolers who have one child and are doing a fine job. Having an only child though, places these families in a special situation that they must take into consideration to make sure that they are covering all the bases. If you only have one child that you are homeschooling, or are contemplating homeschooling, the issue I raised above about providing opportunities for establishing ongoing friendships, becomes more of a necessity than an option. The more siblings you have, the less of an issue it becomes. As a one child family, you owe it to your child to provide opportunities for your child to establish and foster friendships, regardless of your personality or your child's personality. Chances are, you are already doing just that. Another thing you may want to consider is getting your child involved in one or two ongoing homeschooling, or other activities such as a weekly p.e. program, a weekly co-op, boy scouts, girl scouts, or something else along those lines. This will help to insure that they are around the same kids on at least a weekly basis, providing an ongoing means to foster friendships.

I will wrap this chapter on socialization up by saying, once again, that I would greatly prefer it if my children did not 'blend in' to society. According to my definition of socialization, homeschoolers have the greatest advantage. I have even listed this as one of the reasons why I advocate homeschooling.

Siblings Gotta Love 'em!

Chapter 3

*They're fighting again
Oh when will it end?
The yelling and the tears*

*Just one more day
Of this madness
Will confirm my deepest fears*

*My children just
Can't seem to learn
To love with ALL their hearts*

*They want to keep
Some ugliness
Tucked in their inner parts*

*Character building,
Devotionals
We do it EVERY day*

*They smile and nod
And try so hard
But their sin gets in the way*

*There are a few
Sweet moments when
They love each other so*

*And the moments
Come more often
As their hearts begin to grow*

*Though some todays
Seem very tough
"They'll never get along!"*

*I know that tomorrow
For each other they'll hold
A love forever strong*

1999 ⇨ I often get comments and compliments from strangers remarking how well my children seem to get along. Also, I get the question, "Do they always get along that well?" My response to that is usually something like, "Oh, Thank you. Yes, they are just darling little angels, aren't they?" NOT! Just kidding. My response usually goes more like this, "No, they can argue with the best of them! They do really love each other though. And whenever they argue, they usually make up pretty quickly. All in all, they have pretty much learned how to get along well most of the time." How do they learn it? Simply put, they have to. They have no other choice!

2007 ⇨ I still get these comments, especially when I am out with my two young boys. Now though, I say, "Thanks! I homeschool them." ☺ I want to make sure homeschooling gets some credit!

1999 ⇨ They have to learn (usually the hard way) that they can either be friends or be enemies. It's much more fun to live in the same house with a friend than it is to live with an enemy. But even so, Jesus commands us to "love your enemies". Of course, a great deal of training, encouragement, and prodding is necessary from the parents to guide them in the right direction. The true issue that they are dealing with, in sibling rivalry as well as any rivalry, is the heart. They should love each other because Jesus commands them to. But try telling that to an angry child. That sinful nature just keeps kicking in!

In homeschooling, this is where the rubber meets the road. It's the most difficult aspect of homeschooling, and yet probably one of the most important and valuable aspects of homeschooling. How better to *train a child in the way they should go* then to train them how to get along with their own siblings? If a child cannot learn how to love their own brothers and sisters, regardless of their warts and blemishes, how are they possibly going to ever learn to love their enemies?

My situation is a little unique in that each of my kids are five years apart and of the opposite sex. But then again, God made each of our families unique, so I am sure you could say the same. I currently lay claim to a twelve year old son, Robby; a seven year old daughter, Brittney; and a two year old son, J. Jay. What could a twelve year old boy have in common with a seven year old girl? Or worse yet, with a two year old boy? And how can a seven year old girl play with a twelve year old boy, or have the patience for yet another boy who's only two?

2007 ⇨ Update just in case you've picked up right here - Robby is now twenty, married and owns his own house! Brittney is fifteen and attending a private Christian high school. J.Jay my then two year old is now eleven and loves homeschooling. We have also added another son, Elijah (Brittney never did get that sister she has always

been praying for!). Elijah is five, just three months shy of being six years younger than J.Jay. Okay... Back to the olden days...

1999 ⇨ In all honesty, my daughter really is sick of being outnumbered and is praying for a little sister... fervently! But, that's another chapter entitled, "Why Do Homeschoolers Have So Many Children?" (The answer would be, "Because their kids pray too much!" ha ha ha) Just kidding. Back on track here. My twelve year old, Rob, has had to learn, and continually re-learn how to communicate with a seven year old. He has learned that the nicer and more loving he is to her, the nicer and more loving she will be in return. What an awesome lesson! Isn't that how life works? Treat others as you wish to be treated. He doesn't always do it of course, but has learned that it always works! When he is nice and loving towards her and makes a concentrated effort to do the things she wants, and speaks "her" language, she is a wonderful sister to be around! Do you know why? Because she then is nice and loving to her brother and naturally wants to do the things that HE wants to do. Amazing! They play games together all the time. Rob has taught Brittney how to play Checkers, Chess, PayDay, Junior Monopoly, regular Monopoly, 2007 ⇨ The word Monopoly has been entirely and permanently replaced in the Berthume household with the word HOMESCHOOLOPOLY, so it just wouldn't be right if I didn't point that out right now! 1999 ⇨ Scrabble, and recently, Strategy. She was only six years old when Rob taught her how to play chess. It took him several weeks to fully teach her. Imagine how much patience it must have taken for a then eleven year old to teach a six year to play chess!

Brittney, in turn, has had to learn how not to be intimidated by a twelve year old! She has learned to assert herself (much too often) and has even learned how to play basketball so she can be more like Robby. 2007 ⇨ **You can see why she is a great basketball player now and made her school's Varsity basketball team as a Sophomore!** 1999 ⇨ Her latest attempt to understand her brother better is a real hoot. Robby is a real World War II buff, and has recently been "getting into" all the major wars that have occurred throughout the world and in America. One evening a few weeks ago, as I was headed out the door for some "me" time, the kids got wind of the fact that I was going to the library. Brittney said, "Mom, get me all the books you can find on wars, especially World War II!" I looked at her a bit surprised. "Why?" I questioned. "Because!" she said, rather impatiently, as if I should already know the answer to THAT question. "I want to read them!" Needless to say, I guess she has decided to become a war expert, like her big brother. A few days later, she sat right there alongside Robby and Daddy, watching a two hour long documentary about the Desert Storm War. And if that doesn't beat all, a few days later they all watched yet another war documentary. This one was a FOUR HOUR special having something to do with great escapes made by prisoners of war. (World War II prisoners, I think... I didn't

watch it though. It was too boring for me!) Amazingly enough, Brittney, a child who does not sit still with ease, watched the entire thing! 2007 ☞ Okay, so that interest didn't stick, one outta two ain't bad!

1999 ☞ As far as their little brother, both Robby and Brittney think J. Jay is the absolute coolest, cutest, and smartest two year old on the planet. Are they jealous of him? Rarely, if ever. Does he get more attention than they do? Absolutely! A two year old requires a great deal more attention than a seven and a twelve year old combined. But, not only does he get more attention from his parents, he also gets more attention from them! From his perspective, he probably feels like the most loved little guy around.

But, you must remember... there is a history there. Let me share some of that history with you. The kids had been praying fervently for a baby sister or brother for at least a year before their prayers were answered. Excitedly, I showed them the little "+" sign on the home test I bought. "Do you know what that means?" I quizzed. "It means.... We're going to have a baby!" To say they were excited would have been an enormous understatement. The excitement soon turned to sorrow though when only a week or two later, I started spotting. The kids waited on me hand and foot while they continued to pray that God would take care of our baby. A few days later, on Valentine's Day of 1995, the blood tests confirmed what we were all afraid of... I had miscarried.

My kids learned a very hard lesson. God is in control. He doesn't always answer your prayers quite the way you want Him to. But He does always answer them, according to His good and perfect will. Before too much time had passed the kids were back to praying for another baby. They were there right by my side when we found out that we were pregnant again. I am sure that it was their childlike faith that kept this baby in my womb. Their prayers helped get our family through a rough pregnancy and four hospital stays stopping early labor. After being on bed rest since the beginning of December of 1995, guess when J. Jay was born? You guessed it, *Valentine's Day* of 1996! God's hand, and perfect timing, was clearly shown to our entire family through J. Jay's birth.

Robby and Brittney have both been there every day since J. Jay was born. They have seen him gradually blossom into the cool, cute, smart toddler he is today. How could they have any reaction other than thanksgiving and love? After all, they are the two biggest reasons why he is here today!

2007 ☞ I have decided to make Brittney read this entire chapter! We are in a tough 'sibling' time right now and in all honesty she finds J. Jay quite "annoying". I addressed this a bit earlier, and it doesn't help that J. Jay has Asperger's Syndrome, which seems to make it

especially tough for Brittney to get along with him. This is an issue we deal with continually, but I believe one of the biggest reasons we are having such struggles in this area now is that our circumstances have changed. She is no longer being homeschooled. Robby was homeschooled all the way through high school, so he had to figure out how to get along well with his siblings, or he would have been miserable!

Brittney though has not been homeschooled the past couple of years. Though we are fully convinced that it is God's will for her to be right where she is, we are now facing head-on one of the major cons of not homeschooling. She simply views her younger brothers (especially J.Jay) "differently" than she used to. She's not here with them every day. She is so busy with her school, sports, and homework that during the school year we don't see much of her at all it seems! Couple this lack of quantity time spent with her brothers with the fact that in school (private or public) it is completely normal and acceptable for your little brother to be considered "a pest" or to "drive you crazy" that it not only sets the stage for sibling rivalry, it actually seems to encourage it. The other problem is that relationships always require two people nurturing it and not tearing it down. J.Jay has now caught on to this "sisters don't like brothers" mentality and he's jumped in with both feet to fill that annoying brother role. And he does quite a good job at it, I might add! This is the BAD! (Actually, it's quite UGLY!)

When it comes right down to it I know Brittney loves J.Jay and Elijah like crazy, it just no longer comes natural for her to show it to J.Jay. Although much of their teasing seems to be in jest, that still doesn't make it okay. Unfortunately, this is a continual point of contention in our family. Brittney recently went to Virginia to stay with her older brother and his wife for a week. She loves him to death and listens to and respects everything he says to her. Yes, they were homeschooled together her entire life and she was still homeschooling when he graduated our homeschool and left for college. I am sure that is the biggest reason they are so close today. But it also makes me remember the times they didn't get along and helps me to see the future with high hopes for her relationships with her younger brothers as well.

1999 ☞ Since his birth, we have lost two more babies. Each miscarriage has been a difficult time for our family. But the Lord has not only gotten us through all these times, but He has used them to bring us closer as a family. As for Robby and

Brittney, with each miscarriage their love for each other and J. Jay seems to grow stronger as they begin to grasp how fragile life really is.

My point is this: Siblings, regardless of their ages, gender, or how many there are, must learn how to love each other. Regardless of their differences, in spite of their differences, maybe even because of their differences, the home is the best training ground on earth for all of their future relationships. The more time they spend away from the home, the less time there is leftover to practice and thus learn these invaluable relationship skills. Homeschooling is the best way to assure that they spend the maximum amount of time with their own siblings, honing these invaluable skills.

2007 ⇨ We finally gave up on having any more children and God surprised us with another pregnancy when J. Jay was five years old. After bed rest from twenty weeks on, medications, and other complications, Elijah was born. A miracle birth in which neither he nor I should have lived. Elijah was born only three months before J. Jay turned six years old. My uterus had ruptured just prior to my caesarean, which is yet another of several miracles in the Berthume home. My uterus was in such bad shape that even after they tried to repair it we were told not to have any more as my uterus would not withstand another pregnancy. God gave us such a peace and he just closed that desire in my heart completely. I am so content and thankful for the precious ones I have the privilege of raising here on this earth. I am also excited to someday meet my other four kids in heaven and I can't wait to enjoy them when I get there

Spouses What Came First?

Chapter 4

"Over my dead body!"
Is what he said
When I said,
"Let's homeschool!"

He didn't think
My great idea
Was even the slightest bit
"Cool".

That's not how we did it
When I grew up
I think it's
Pretty weird

Do people
Really do that?
My answer
Was what he feared

Yes!
Lots of people do it
Let's just give it
A second look

I know what I
Am talking about
I read it
In a book!!

I prayed a lot
(That always helps)
And next thing
That I knew

He said,
"I trust you fully"
"I'll support
Homeschooling too!"

That was
Several years ago
Yes,
*Five to be exact

And though at times
It's difficult
We never do
Look back

Now we both
Are very grateful
That the Lord
Made it so clear

To start our
Homeschool journey
And continue,
Year by year

But let us not
Glaze over
The fact that
It is hard

Our marriage sometimes
Takes back seat
To the kids, the house,
The yard...

But we know
That this is NOT
What Jesus
Had in mind

He wants us
To love each other
And leave "us"
Some special time

God has spoken
To our hearts
This is what
We should do

I thank Him for
A wonderful husband
Who loves homeschooling
Too

2007 ⇒ *Poem clarification time! I said "five to be exact" then, but now it's thirteen to be exact! We began our journey in 1993 and now our oldest is grown, graduated homeschool and is about to graduate college! He's not only independent and out of the house, but he has been for some time. He's also married and he and his wife just bought a beautiful home of their own! My point is this... don't take today for granted, enjoy it, even more than that - **savor** it. Moment by moment - for all too soon, their childhoods will be gone. But your hubby will, God willing, still be there right by your side. Live today in light of that knowledge. You will reap double benefits as your kids will love you even more for it, and learn what love, friendship, marriage and devotion means by seeing it lived out before them. Prioritize your heart: God first, spouse second, kiddos third, grandkiddos (if any) fourth, and all else as your heart leads.

Sooner than you can even imagine it will be just the two of you. When that day comes, it is the foundation that you lay each day while it is still 'today', the foundation upon which you "built your house" that determines just how rock solid it truly is. If you haven't already begun, start building today. Brick by brick one day at a time and mortar it all together with love and memories. You'll be so glad you did!

1999 ⇒ In the typical homeschooling family (if there even is such a thing), the husband goes off to work during the days and the wife stays at home and does the home teaching. Of course, there are many exceptions to this scenario. In some families, the wife and the husband share the teaching responsibilities. One of them (typically, the wife) handles the bulk of the teaching, while the other teaches or tutors only certain subjects or areas. In others, both may work either full or part time and share the teaching responsibilities evenly. I have recently been made aware of one homeschooling family in which the wife is a doctor and the stay at home husband is the homeschooling teacher.

Let me not leave out the single parent homeschooling family. They are few and far between, but they are out there. I personally know of a couple of single moms that homeschool. And, I recently read an article about a widowed homeschooling dad, who decided to keep up the homeschooling after the death of his wife. This type of homeschooling family is truly the exception though, rather than the rule. In all practicality, it normally takes at least one parent working to support a homeschooling family. If you are a single parent homeschooler, you may want to skip ahead to the next chapter, as this one focuses on the two-parent homeschooling family.

For ease of writing, I am going to refer to the homeschooling parent as the wife or the mom. If you are the husband (or dad) and you do are the primary homeschooling parent, than please forgive me. This all applies to you as well. In this chapter, I am addressing whomever does the majority of the teaching in your family, be it the husband or the wife.

First, let's address the good. Homeschooling has brought my husband and myself much closer together than any other single issue has thus far in our marriage, even our children themselves. It forced us to discuss certain issues that came up with a great deal more understanding for each other, our children, and our circumstances, than we ever did prior to homeschooling. We had to figure out how to communicate better because the issues at hand were many (academics, daily discipline, outside negativity, and more) and the children's education was at stake. It has taken our relationship to an entirely new level. It also gave us both immeasurably more appreciation for each child and thus for children in general. It is only a speculation, but I think that may have something to do with why so many homeschooling families are considerably larger than your average American family. Either way, it has strengthened our marriage considerably. Even those items that I am about to uncover and address are items that can be used to bring you closer together as a couple. So, do not dismay when you read on. Simply be still and know that He is God. If he called you to homeschool and if you will give it over completely to Him, He promises to never leave you, but to sustain you and your marriage, through whatever difficulties may arise. *"...surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* - Matthew 28:20b

With all that said, marriage is hard. The statistics speak for themselves. Well over fifty percent of all marriages end up in divorce. Even if you are a committed Christian and determined to keep God's commands by staying married, "until death do you part" that doesn't mean it's going to be an easy road. There are some things that can put a strain even on the best of marriages. The death of a child has been known to pull apart even the most committed of marriages. Sometimes the strain of having a child or a spouse or even a non-immediate family member with a handicap or disability can affect a marriage negatively. But there are other things, not quite so tragic, that can prove to put additional stress on a marriage. Such as: a major move, a job change for either spouse, each additional child, when one spouse has to (or chooses to) travel regularly on business, and so on. Homeschooling falls under this "other things" category.

2007 ⇨ After I wrote that we moved seven more times; had another child; I was diagnosed with a spinal cord injury (two actually - although one quite minor) and osteoarthritis of my spine, and thus diagnosed as permanently handicapped; our oldest went away to

college in another state; a couple years later our oldest got married; and just recently two of my kids as well as myself were diagnosed with a life-changing autoimmune disease called Celiac Disease. Frankly there's even more I could list (my husband was laid off from a job, we went without income for months, he became self-employed) blah blah blah. Am I still sane? THAT is a question that is yet to be answered! Ha ha ha (Ask my kids - I'd be curious to see their reply. Don't ask Greg as I already know his reply!) Back to the topic at hand...

1999 ⇨ Even though these stresses may not result in a "legal" divorce, they may at times result in what I call an "emotional" divorce. An emotional divorce occurs when you and your spouse move away from each other emotionally. Typically, it is such a subconscious thing, you don't even realize it is happening until at some point you realize that you are no longer in tune with each other. And although you may never dream of leaving your spouse, you may separate yourself from him or her emotionally, not even aware that you have done so. Most often this occurs when the strain on your marriage is high.

I am not saying that this should be a reason for you not to homeschool. Or maybe I am. You must be the judge to be sure that your marriage is strong enough to withstand the strain. The point I am trying to get across to all homeschoolers and anyone who is contemplating homeschooling is this: You must be completely and totally aware of the additional strain that homeschooling can put on your marriage. You can't avoid a pothole that you don't know about. By the time you see it... it's too late.

What aspects of homeschooling can affect a marriage? The answer? Quite a few. Here are some of the givens of homeschooling. Only some of these may apply to your homeschool. Any one of these can be the "straw that broke the camel's back" in a marriage. If all of them apply to you there is only one thing that can get you through... GOD'S GRACE.

1. **Financial Strain:** Most homeschoolers are single income families. They are sacrificing one income to allow for one parent to stay at home. I left a well paying job five years ago when I decided to join the ranks of the stay at home moms. If you didn't leave a job, as I did, most likely you are still having to survive with a single income in a dual income society. In addition to this, you must consider the cost of homeschooling itself. These costs can vary greatly depending upon your methods and convictions, but it would be very difficult to homeschool without any financial outlay. The average homeschooler spends somewhere between two hundred and seven hundred dollars year on each child that is being

home educated. There are ways to homeschool with little or no costs, but it requires a great deal of time and effort. The more free resources you can use or have access to, such as the library, the internet, community resources, and others, the easier this would be to accomplish. I have found that in order for me to successfully homeschool, I need lots of quality books and curricula. We have a budget of five hundred dollars per student for each homeschooling year. That includes all of the supplies as well as all books and curricula. I begin researching and praying over my curriculum and "to buy" list in January and I do most if not all of my actual purchasing in June for the upcoming school year. This method has worked very well for me and has enabled me to stay within our budget. Another tip I will pass on to you is to NEVER purchase anything at a curriculum or book fair. It's easy to get caught up in the glossy covers and colorful books which promise to teach the world to your child. This almost always results in impulse purchases that you may very well regret. The best thing to do is to take a pad and paper and write down every item you would like in detail, as well as how much it costs. Then pray over it for at least thirty days. You will be surprised how many items won't seem as important after going through that process. If you cannot resist making purchases at a book fair, set yourself a small budget (ie. twenty dollars), and vow only to spend up to that amount. Limited funds always helps one to make better choices.

2007 ⇨ Never say never. I still do not think it is a good idea to purchase any curriculum type book(s) you are not familiar with or already planning on getting at a curriculum fair. And I do think you should go with a set and strict budget. That said, curriculum fairs are often the best places to get super deals on terrific homeschool resources such as educational games (like HOMESCHOOLPOLY and HOMESCHOOLPOLY™ Junior!), educational toys, encouraging books, and more. Also, if you know what curriculum you are planning on using for the next school year you can often get it discounted at a curriculum fair. Just be wary of making on the spot curriculum choices before you've prayed about it and thoroughly researched it. I have made lots of such mistakes especially during my first years of homeschooling. Now that I've taught all grades at least once and I know each of my kids learning styles and differences a bit better, it is a little easier for me. I am no longer tempted by the glossy covers (well, sometimes I am, but not as often!) and since money (or lack thereof) is always an issue for me, it's finally fairly easy for me to avoid impulse 'feel good' curriculum purchases that I may later regret.

1999 ⇨

2.

24 Hour Job: Mom tends to get little if any break from her charges. This problem is one that can be avoided, but often isn't. It is imperative that the mom get as much outside help with her children as possible. For moms with responsible teenagers, they can have them babysit on a regular basis to allow mom some regular time to spend however she wishes. (By "regular basis" I mean at least once a week for a couple of hours, preferably more!) If possible, take advantage of grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other family members. Also, this is a huge role that the husbands can play in your homeschool. He can be there to provide an evening out for mom every week. Preferably, the same night every week, so that it becomes something she can count on and look forward to. If none of these options are possible in your situation, find a reliable babysitter and pay them! If you cannot afford to pay them, maybe you can come up with some type of a barter with another mother. For example: You will babysit all of her children every Tuesday afternoon from 2:00pm - 4:00pm, and she will babysit all of your children every Thursday afternoon from 2:00pm - 4:00pm. Be creative, do whatever it takes to incorporate this into your life. I must admit, this is a major weakness for me. I do have a very reliable husband who is always encouraging me to "get out and go somewhere" and he always adds, "Just stay gone for a while, take as long as you want." I am sure I drive him crazy when I come back with, "But, I've got so many things to do!" Often, when I do get out, I spend most of "my" time worrying that someone needs me at home. If you think about it, that's really quite a boastful attitude. My husband is a great father and is perfectly capable of holding down the fort while I am gone. As a matter of fact, my family usually functions beautifully when I am not around. I am continually working on that weakness of mine. As I am learning, this is one of the things about homeschooling that may require extra effort on your part to incorporate. But it is essential that you schedule some "me" time, whatever it takes. Not only will you suffer greatly if you do not, but ultimately so will your marriage.

2007 ⇨

ME time is greatly overrated!! As you can see, that is still my weakness. Now having two young boys (who are quite on the noisy side, just like their parents!) and the simple fact that my body is no longer what it used to be, I would rather use my ME time lying in my quiet bedroom than going anywhere! My situation today is much different now than when I first wrote this. Yours, I am sure will be very unique as well.

Now that my oldest has left the nest and is married, and my fifteen year old is in private school which means she's not

around to help me out during the week much at all, I get far less ME time than I have in years! That said, now that I have experienced for myself just how fast they grow up and how short and precious their childhoods really are, the more I favor THEM time over ME time most times, anyway! (Are you confused now by all this passing time?) We each need to be in tune with ourselves on this issue though. Regardless of all I just said, when Mamma needs a break - MAMMA NEEDS A BREAK!! I usually feel it coming on, but all too often ignore it until I almost break! Try to recognize your need before it smacks you in the face. Otherwise, a little break simply may not even begin to cut it! (That's when I need a long weekend to myself!)

I very recently heard a conference speaker who said a Mom did not need any time for herself. He referred to that as a selfishness that is a result of the feminist movement. He may be right - but I don't think so! I'd love for him to come over to my house with I am in need of some ME time so he can see the necessity of this for all moms, some more than others. He wasn't a work from home dad, so either his wife is a much more together person than I'll ever be, or he just doesn't realize the reality of the day to day of being a homeschool mom! Actually, there is another huge possibility as to why he would have thought this, as he is a conference speaker.

Now that we have our HOMESCHOOLPOLY™ booth at conferences, and I speak at some of these conferences as well, I am beginning to understand what perspective he may be basing his viewpoint on. As we progress through our first major conference season, I am beginning to get a glimpse of how a homeschool mom who spends a decent amount of time each year traveling to homeschool conferences to speak and/or promote their homeschool business can certainly have less of a need for regular ME time. Let's face it, you get to talk to lots of adults, and homeschoolers at that, on a regular basis and get regular breaks from the daily routine of the home and homeschool itself.

This subject brings me to a very recent and downright amazing happening in the Berthume home. Just two weeks ago, God sent us a blessing in having our grown nephew and

his family come to live with us from Michigan. Greg's only brother, Gavin, was killed in a car accident when he was only eighteen years old. At that time, his fiancé, was expecting their child. Baby Gavin was born just one month after his father's death in 1982. So, this is Greg's only blood nephew. Although we have always kept in touch with Gavin, unfortunately we have always lives several states away. God stepped in and somehow here we are today with him, his fiancé Katie, and their beautiful twenty month old daughter, Skylar, sharing our home. Wow! Not only did God lead them here, but their being here is more perfect timing then anything man could have planned for all of us! Both Gavin and Katy have come with open minds and open hearts - seeking a future, a family, and a purpose. They are ready and strongly desire a fresh start. So God is giving us the privilege to be an encouragement to them, to live out our faith in front of them, and to answer the questions He's been implanting in both of their minds and hearts for a long time before they even arrived. Again I say, Wow!

The blessings don't end there... God just never ceases to amaze me and this new path in our journey is proving to be no exception. Since we have a family business, Greg is able to mentor Gavin, who is very bright and eager to learn, about running a business and developing software. They both seemed to be very thrilled with the arrangement and are getting in lots of bonding time in the process. Katie is a wonderful help to me personally with my health issues and with the kiddos as well. She has a very loving heart and is quickly becoming a true friend. Last, but not least, I LOVE BABIES! The fact that we now have an adorable baby girl Skylar, toddling around our house is just the icing on the cake! For however long it lasts, it just doesn't get much better then this.

Oh wait... it gets better! For this year, 2007, we have fifteen different homeschool conferences scheduled for HOMESCHOOLPOLY™. Most are every other weekend, but some are back to back weekends! The first was in February and they will continue until the beginning of August! Whew... When scheduling these conferences we literally had no idea how we were going to pull this off with the kids, especially with their dietary/food issues from Celiac Disease which makes

traveling even harder and more expensive. At the same time, we knew we had to go to as many conferences as we could in order to have enough sales to support our family and business. We also clearly knew that God gave us HOMESCHOOLPOLY™ and furthermore that He knows more than we do. Knowing all that and having seen His hand so clearly in so many ways in our lives up to that point, we knew we just had to trust Him. We were hoping to be able to rely on some family and friends because taking the kiddos with us to all of the conferences would be impossible and would force us to have to get a trailer and we can't afford it yet! You see, with just Greg and I in our station wagon we can fold all the seats down and load it up to the gills and we have a canvas cargo bag for the roof that we can shove even more stuff into! It's not so easy with the kids and all their stuff (yes, you know all the stuff that goes along with kids when taking a trip, not to mention they need seats to sit in too!!) So, if we bring the kiddos, there's no room left for our games and other inventory, much less clothes!

The Lord is so cool how He works everything out! At this moment, Here we are... in our station wagon with me having some much needed time to write on my notebook computer as Greg drives the twelve plus hours (yes, that is each way!) to a homeschool conference in Chicago, Illinois. Our kiddos are not with us! Gavin and Katie are terrific with the kids and even though they've only been with us for two weeks as of yesterday, the Lord has given both Greg and I a complete and total peace that they are being left in excellent hands.

Back to the ME time. Although this is going to be a grueling schedule for Greg and I, it will also serve as a forced "break" from our kids for many of these conferences. And some forced one on one time with each other as well! Greg's love language is quality time, so he should be a very VERY happy man by the time August comes around! Now that I'm in a different place in my life, I can better see where the previous speaker I spoke of (how's that for clarity?!?!) may not fully understand or agree with the need of ME time for homeschool moms. But I still disagree. Everyone, especially homeschool moms need some ME time, so give yourself a break!

1999 ⇨

3. **Mom's Time:** Or I should say the lack thereof. This really is a continuing aspect of the item above entitled "24 Hour Job" It requires a great deal of time just to raise kids who are in school everyday. Throw in homeschooling and you have just taken the word "Supermom" to a whole new level! (Or shall I say, planet!) You must take into consideration the additional time constraints that homeschooling will require of you. Depending upon your homeschool style and convictions, only some of these may apply to you. I must admit that they all apply to me. Yes, I am a computer junkie, so I do everything on my computer. But.... that's another story! Some of the jobs that are added to the already longlist that comes with being a mom are: planning, grading papers, keeping records/portfolio (which may even include making report cards for your kids, if you so desire) , whatever paperwork is involved to fulfill your state's legal homeschooling requirements, preparing for upcoming projects, purchasing supplies and materials as needed, participation in your support group, possibly planning as well as attending field trips, and more! Not to mention the actual daily job of TEACHING! Whew.... After all that, it's very hard for mom to have some set time aside for dad. But she absolutely must do just that! Your marriage must come **before** everything else. The only thing that should come before you marriage and your spouse, is Jesus Christ Himself and your relationship with Him.

2007 ⇨ In addition to the above, I am now the CFO as well as the Chief Operating Officer for our family business, and I try to write every day (now this book, but even when I am not working on a book, I am still writing - workshops, stories, poems, my journal, you name it.) Once I finish updating this book I plan on writing a novel of which I already have the outline done for. We have added to that traveling to homeschool conferences as well. Honestly, you may do a number of additional things that I do not. With my health issues, I am not supposed to lift more than two lbs. thus I don't do any of the housework or laundry in my home. I have met many homeschool moms and I don't believe that I am very unusual when it comes to having a full plate. The more I research the more I find that many home educators have family businesses, or full-time ministries that the teaching parent is heavily involved in and quite a few others have part-time jobs based at home, or away from home, especially as their kids get a little older. That said, don't give your hubby your left-over time at two o'clock in the morning when you are both dead tired. Give him your first fruits and make an effort

to make sure that he comes before the kids and the job(s) and make sure he knows it!

1999 ⇨

4. **Continual Change:** Every year you have new grades to teach, plus new ages and phases to deal with. For many of us, a total rescheduling of our school day will be required from year to year. As you and your family grows there are often curriculum changes that you wish to make, teaching styles that you want to try out, and other aspects of your homeschooling that you continue to refine. It is inevitable in our homeschool that just when we seem to get things figured out, everything changes! This continual change can be a very good thing for some. Some people, like myself, tend to bore easily. If that is the case for you, then this aspect of homeschooling is a positive one. But, if you are one of those that do not respond as favorably to change, then this can induce lots of stress! So be aware, and plan for change. The better prepared you are for these changes the less likely they are to catch you off guard. Stress spreads like wildfires in any family and is almost always sure to put a strain on your marriage.

2007 ⇨ We have moved nine more times in the eight years since I wrote the above chapter. That brings our grand total of moves up to twenty-six moves in twenty-two years of marriage. Need I say more?

1999 ⇨

5. **Awesome Responsibility:** Homeschooling carries with it the most awesome responsibility of being solely responsible for the education of your children. In all honesty, this responsibility is true of every parent, regardless of their educational choice. But, when you choose to homeschool you are making yourself solely accountable for fulfilling every aspect of this responsibility. You can't "lay the blame" elsewhere. It's all up to you. Just being aware of this responsibility can be a bit intimidating. This intimidation usually fades somewhat once you have completed your first year of homeschooling and realize how beneficial it has been for your children. Be wary though, sometimes it can return, especially when a child you are homeschooling enters into higher phases of their education, such as the junior or senior high grades. Don't let this intimidation overcome you. Just take it one step, or shall I say one "year" at a time. If I thought two or three years ago that I would be teaching my oldest algebra and chemistry, as I am this year, intimidation is an understatement for how I would have reacted. But, since it happened gradually and prayerfully, it has been much easier than I would have allowed myself to imagine. As I mentioned in a previous chapter though, it is this awesome responsibility that tends to keep the homeschooler "on their toes". They

have to be sure they are covering all the bases, otherwise they can't sleep! So again, this can be turned around and looked upon as a positive aspect of homeschooling.

2007 ⇨ What did I know back then? God must have given me a wee bit of foresight because I still agree with what I said above although now my opinions come from hindsight rather than foresight. I have taught all grades, graduated my oldest from our homeschool, and helped with all the preparation and responsibility of SAT's and enrolling in college, etc. I must admit though he did most of the work involved in applying for and getting into a great college. I provided him the transportation for the SAT's, but he's even the one who scheduled it. Furthermore, he chose the college he wanted to attend and took it totally upon himself to do all the applications and paperwork, (even applying for some scholarships - which he received) completely on his own. I gave him his printed high school transcript and his diploma, but he took it upon himself to do the rest. As always, hindsight is so much better than foresight, so in light of that I will tell you what it DOES take. It takes record-keeping and organization (especially from sixth grade on), dedication, motivation, love, and much fervent prayer. That's all! It does NOT take brilliance, perfection, zillions of hours spent researching, or any of the other seemingly impossible and incredibly intimidating things that pop into your brain when you consider homeschooling for the long haul. Oh yea, and it doesn't take a village either- just at least one loving parent.

1999 ⇨

6.

Child Centered Family: Even though a true child centered family is a sin, the tendency is there. Homeschooling isn't just something you do... it's who you are! It is not just an educational choice, it is a lifestyle. Everything you do tends to revolve around your homeschooling, and thus can often revolve around your children. Sometimes your husband-wife relationship takes a back seat to your parent-child relationships. This is by far, the greatest threat to your marriage. Don't let this happen! First of all, both you and your husband must openly talk about the undeniable fact that you are in a "season" that requires a great deal of time being focused towards your children. Your husband should not feel that you love your children more than him, but rather he should know that your children just require a great deal more from you during this "season". You must make sure though that you, as a wife, make a concentrated effort to put your husband and his needs, before the children, and before the

homeschooling. Granted, this is easier said than done. (Yet another thing that I struggle with daily.) But it is not an option. It is a Biblical mandate.

2007 ⇨ Let me tell you - this is an incredibly long "season" for us! Some of you can relate; whether you have a big family with lots of children or as in our case, your children are spread apart in ages. I think I already said this above somewhere, but if God allows us to continue homeschooling until my baby, Elijah, graduates I have another fourteen years to go. That means this "season" will have lasted a total of twenty-seven years by the time all of our children have graduated. In light of this, I must make an even more concentrated effort to not allow our family to become too child centered. This is still a major weakness for me. Even more so now that my "baby" is the last one I will ever have. I tend to want to just enjoy him and focus on the kids even more so since I know how quickly this "season" will have passed once all is said and done. I need to enjoy my hubby even more as he is the one who will be there smiling with me when the last kiddo flies the nest. I need to put him first now so that I am excited when the day our last kiddo flies off, rather than being mournful of an empty nest!

1999 ⇨

7.

External Disapproval: Many of us have family or friends that are not supportive of our homeschooling efforts. There are some that even have family members (I am speaking of non-immediate family members, of course) that are against homeschooling. Whether you have a mother who is convinced that you are ruining her grandchildren by not sending them to a "real" school, or a neighbor who is convinced that your kids are little truants, these people can create a real rift in your homeschooling efforts. It is difficult to have to defend your homeschooling decision on an ongoing basis, especially on those bad days! My best advice to conquer this issue comes from the Bible. When we are on a different path than most have chosen, take it as a good sign! For it says in Matthew 7:13-14 *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."* This may apply to many areas of your life, not just homeschooling. There should be many things in this worldly society that a Christian will disagree with. Rather than letting this discourage you, let it encourage you. When this is the case, you are more likely to be on the right path! The most obvious strain this can put on marriage is when the disapproving family member is an in-law. If this is the case, it is incredibly important that your spouse

is very supportive of homeschooling. It should be well-known to all family members that you are both "sold" on the advantages of homeschooling. Don't let them be under the impression that he or she is just going along with you. That would be a set-up for trouble. I have an entire chapter dedicated just to this topic. But as it relates to your marriage, stand firm together and don't let this issue be "the straw".

Now don't get me wrong! You can certainly homeschool and still have a happy marriage. I have what I consider to be one of the best marriages on the face of the earth... and we homeschool! I am just trying to give you a reality check. Marriage requires hard work, even in the best of circumstances. If you want to be a winner in the game of marriage, it is exceedingly important to know all of the nuances of the game.

2007 ⇨ I still have one of the best marriages on the face of the earth! Are you still wondering what's up with the title of this chapter? Spouses - What came first? Your husband came before the children and he should always come before the children! Of course, this works both ways, husband or wife - your marriage comes first!

External Family Members

P3P Oh!

Chapter 5

*We are different
You and I
We don't always see
Eye to eye*

*Each has chosen
A different path
Which comes between us
Stirring up wrath*

*You add a brick
I slap on the mortar
This wall between us
Is a growing border*

*I am not "right"
You are not "wrong"
The battles may be short
But the war has been long*

*What's worse is what
Our children see
I don't "get" you
You don't "get" me*

*They just see two sisters
Who don't get along
They see one aunt
They see one mom*

*They wonder if
That's how they'll be
"When I grow up
Will you understand me?"*

*What if I don't think
Just like you?"
Will we understand?
I pray we do*

*There's only one step
We can take
To turn the relationship
From being fake*

*To be ourselves
The good and bad
No more eggshells
Remove the pad*

*The only way
To tear down the wall
Is destroy the foundation
Padding and all*

*We should be more than
Just fair weather friends
But there for each other
Through thick and thin*

*The one to be honest
The one to be true
And not just "save face"
As we so often do*

*The one who will give us
The answer we need
Even when that answer
Is painful indeed*

*The way I've described
Is not very easy
If thought on too long
It will make you queasy*

*But narrow the gate
That leads to life
The wide gate only leads
To destruction and strife*

1999 ⇒ This is the toughest chapter to write. There is such a broad range of what the 'norm' is among external family members that we could devote pages to this subject and still leave out many of the common scenarios. And even so, the 'norm' is not always the desired. But I will try to address as many of these scenarios as I can, as well as offer advice to help with those who are dealing with family members who, for whatever reason, oppose homeschooling.

First of all, let me clarify who I am referring to when I say external family members. I am referring to grandparents, great grandparents, siblings of the parents (aunt and uncles of the kiddos), cousins of parents as well as cousins of your children, and any other family members who may affect your family.

The ideal would be to have a loving and supportive external family who not only agrees with your choice of homeschooling, but supports you in your efforts as well. Unfortunately, the ideal is rarely the reality. I do know some homeschooling families in which the grandparents play a significant role in the homeschooling process. But more often than not, that is not the case. If you do have an ideal situation in your external family, you should count your blessings. Otherwise.... read on.

One of the most significant things about homeschooling is the very thing that can make it difficult to maintain close family relationships with external family members. It is the fact that homeschooling isn't just something you do.... rather it is something you are. It's not just a choice, but a lifestyle. Based on that fact alone, you can come across as being very radical in your ways simply because they may be so different from the ways of others in your family. You have stepped away from what they consider to be the norm. That often leaves family members with the mind set that since you are the one who "stepped out of line", then YOU must be off track!! After all, they are the "normal" ones, aren't they? Unfortunately, this mind set takes for granted some very serious assumptions. The assumption that one must be "right" and the other must be "wrong". As well as the assumption that the Lord has the same plan for every one of His children. Neither one of those are true or even remotely fair assumptions. If you or any one of your family members subscribe to this mind set, difficulties will arise.

Now, let's be clear that this is a two way street. Inasmuch as it is unfair of your family members to think you are the abnormal ones who must be crazy or just plain weird because you have strayed so far from the norm. It is just as unfair of you and your immediate family members to think that you are the ones who are 'right' and on the right track, while "they" just don't get it. This is especially true if you have family members who have chosen to place their children into a public or a private school. You must remember that regardless of your own personal convictions or even objections to putting your own children in the same circumstances they have chosen, God may very well have a different plan for their family and children. God may convict you strongly towards homeschooling, and turn around and convict them strongly towards a private school, or even a public school. Yes, God often has a different plan for each of us. The important thing is that you truly and earnestly seek the Lord's will in your decisions and follow His

lead. Hopefully your external family members are doing the same. If not, take it to the Lord in prayer. Either way, their decision is between them and God. Regardless, your role as a Christian is not to judge anyone else and their decisions, but to be prudent about seeking and obeying the Lord's will for your own life and family.

Granted, when all is said and done, living the scenario described above every day, day in and day out, can be very difficult. Let's assume you have prayerfully chosen to homeschool your children and you have siblings that have prayerfully chosen to place their own children in a public school. You may have strong opinions about the material your nieces and nephews are learning, about their social habits, about their choice of friends, or something else. How do you offer up those opinions to your siblings without being judgmental? Go to the Lord in fervent prayer, and for the most part... don't offer up your opinions at all. At least not unless you are specifically asked for them. Why? Because your opinions are just that... your opinions. I am sure that your siblings have opinions of their own and most likely they will differ greatly from yours. The best way to get anyone's attention about any particular issue is by living it.

For example: Let's say your brother has a son who has just begun high school and is more worldly than your own son who is the same age. Too worldly, in your opinion. He is dating already and is continuously speaking about girls. Your son has made the decision not to date, but rather to practice courting. But not even that until he is older and is actually ready to settle down and get married. In your opinion, your nephew is putting himself in a dangerous position. He is clearly leading himself into temptation and you are concerned about the implications of his having such serious boy-girl relationships and yet still keeping himself "pure". Do you offer your opinion? As serious as the ramifications of this may be, I would have to say, No. Not unless you are asked for it. How do you get your nephew's and your brother's attention about this weighty issue? By your own choices and the choices made by your son, as well as the type of life your son is living. In other words, by "living it".

When your brother says to your son, "Hey, kiddo. How's life? Seems like all Tim ever talks about is his girlfriend, but I haven't heard a peep out of you. What's your girlfriend's name?"

And your son honestly (and respectfully) answers him. "Life's pretty good, Uncle Joe. But no girlfriend here. I have decided to really focus on my studies and school until I figure out where God is leading me for my future. I think dating would just confuse me and tempt me into things that aren't in God's plan for me yet. When I am ready to settle down and get married, then I am sure God will send me the right woman. But I am only sixteen, so it's just too early for that right now."

"What?" retorts Uncle Joe. "No girlfriend? Maybe your being too serious about the whole thing. After all, there's no harm in dating. Where's the fun in life? Maybe you just don't get out enough. Don't you know any girls your age?"

"Sure I do." Your son laughs, "As a matter of fact, my best friend is a girl. Her name is Courtney. I have just as many friends that are girls as I do that are boys, but we don't "date" like just the two of us. We have teen socials through our homeschool support group and our church youth group. Sometimes we do some outreach stuff, like helping out at the old folk's home or at the women's shelter. But most of our time is spent all together, usually with adults around. We are very good friends, but we aren't going to put ourselves in a situation where we might be tempted to be more than that. It's just not worth it. You know?"

"You sure you're only sixteen and not twenty-five?" Jokes your brother, "I have to say, Sounds like you've got a good head on your shoulders. More power to you!"

Now, what do you think your brother, Uncle Joe, is thinking after that conversation? Put it this way, I am sure you got your "opinion" as well as your son's opinion across better than you could have imagined. You've given Uncle Joe much food for thought. But what is really important, is that you have raised your son with good values, morals, and a good head on his shoulders. The real reward here is the attitudes and opinions that your son has, not the fact that you got your opinion across.

Put it this way, if God has a point to get across to your external family members. He may use you to help get it across. But it must be His point. If it's just your opinion, and not something that God has in His plan for their family, it is of no value anyway. "Tis better to err on the side of keeping quiet, than to hurt others with your words and opinions. *"... Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."* - James 1:19b

2007 ⇨ That sounds wonderful, doesn't it? When I wrote all of the above my oldest was only twelve years old. Well, don't you want to know how it worked out in real life since he is now married? What's more, what about my daughter Brittney, who is now fifteen years old?!? First of all, we still believe that courting is the best way to go. But I am sorry to say that it's not as easy, nor as straightforward as I presented it above before I had lived through it and continue to live through it myself. That said, I now see things in a different perspective than I did back then. The fact is unless you are legalistic with your children as they get older, they have to take it on as their own viewpoint for it to work. Our oldest Robby was pretty wise about this issue for the most part. He did have a couple of different girlfriends before he left for college at the ripe old age of seventeen years old. He had basically determined fairly quickly that girlfriends cost a lot of money and took up a lot of his time. He was working hard with his homeschool studies to finish high school and building his business at this time (which he started at fifteen) so both time and money were not things he wanted to waste. That said when he graduated homeschool one of the main reasons he wanted to go the college he chose, was to find a "good Christian wife" - which he did!!

Brittney, our fifteen year old, is completely different. Of course, God made each of us unique. She at fifteen has already had more than one boyfriend. Of course, she has never gone out on a date - one on one, nor will she for some time! She has gone out with groups and with the family. She is learning herself, too often by having her feelings hurt, that boys at that age for the most part are not boyfriend material anyway! She is the type that has come with her own mind set and ideas, and only truly learns the importance or these issues by her own experiences and sometimes mistakes. I would much rather have her learning those things now, while she is still living at home and the issues are not life altering, then to not allow her the chance to make any mistakes and her to have to learn these hard lessons after she is out on her own, and with mistakes that may have huge ramifications! Plus there is always the rebellion factor. No, teenagers most certainly do not always or automatically rebel. But, beware of raising them with lots of rules and regulations that they MUST obey regardless of their feelings on the matter. This breeds resentment which will almost always result in rebellion, either while they are a teen, or worse yet, after they leave home. We have seen this occur more than once with friends. Just remember, each of us are unique and come with our own set of circumstances, values, and beliefs. Our job is train them in the way "they" should go, not the way "we" are going. Think on that...

1999 ⇨ An important thing that each of us must realize and remember is that each family has its own culture. Even families that have derived from the same parents. In other words, your family's culture is different from that of your sister or brother's family. Even though you were both raised by the same parents with the same culture. Still, you don't repeat or relive the exact culture in which you were raised. The culture of your own family is always unique. Each has its own set of nuances, ideas, and perceptions of reality. Once you really understand this, life becomes much easier.

If you travel to Japan and are invited to eat at someone's home, for instance, your experience will be quite different from eating dinner in your own home. You aren't going to pull up a chair and sit down at a typical dining room table. In their culture it is "normal" to eat on a low table and sit on cushions on the floor. In our American culture though, the "normal" way to eat dinner is at a higher dining room table than theirs, and seated in regular chairs. That doesn't mean that we look down on their culture, or that they should look down on ours. But we don't expect them to do things "our" way when we visit their country. Nor do they expect us to do things "their" way when they are in our country. The same should be true for the variances from family to family. Even though the cultural differences may not be as black and white, they are there nonetheless. They should be respected and understood as much as possible. *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged."* - Matthew 7:1

2007 ⇨ What do you do when you have a family member that is completely against homeschooling? There are no easy answers, but there is hope and encouragement. You as the homeschooling family should follow your heart and do not let their decisions sway or discourage you. They will most likely only be convinced or “won over” by the results. The proof is in the pudding, and with homeschooling that’s an understatement! This is probably not the person you want to call when you are having a rough homeschool day, or are in need of encouragement though. Not that you must paint a perfect rosy picture of how your days go, but nor do you want to give them further ammunition, or negative feelings about your decision to homeschool. Hey, you can always have them over to play a game of HOMESCHOOLOPOLY™ with your family. They will then realize just how many homeschoolers there really are out there, what a great way this is to raise a family, and they will get to see first hand just how smart your kiddos really are as they play!

When you are dealing with family members who do not support your homeschooling, remember “Pamela’s 3 P’s”. (Ha ha ha, I just made that up!) They are: Prayer, practice, and patience. Keep them in your daily **prayers** that they will come to not just accept, but support your decision to homeschool. **Practice** what you believe in your daily lives and homeschool. And be **patient**! Time is on your side and is the best way for them to see for themselves just how valuable a home education can be. In my own personal experience, I have family members who originally were not supportive of our homeschooling that now admire us for homeschooling. This only happened through prayer, practice, and patience. Call it “P3P Oh!” Get it? (Think Star Wars... C3PO the little robot. Get it now?)

All Things Academic

Subjects That Matter To Train Up Your Child

Chapter 6

*Do you have any teacher's
credentials?
Do you have a college degree?*

*How can you possibly teach them?
That doesn't make much sense to me!*

*But if you will just give me a minute
And let me explain my background*

*I am sure that you too will soon
realize
Why I'm the best one to be found*

*I care oh so much
for my children
My heart has been so blessed*

*I want to make sure that their
learning
Is not only good, but the best*

*Okay, you say. I get your point
But all the "love" aside*

*What about the academic stuff
Don't you think they will slide?*

*No, I don't think that they will slide
But I think that they will grow*

*It's important to me to impress upon
them
All that they should know*

*I want them to know God's creation
So the importance of science is clear*

*And I want to be sure they can think
for themselves
So logic and math come in here*

*To read God's Word and love it
So the love of reading is key*

*And of course to share it with others
So there's language arts, don't you
see?*

*Who better to teach than their
mother?*

Who else has so much at stake?

*There is nothing a mom
cannot do or learn
I will do whatever it takes*

*But what about Biology?
Or Algebra, you say?*

*I can tackle any subject
'Cause when there's a will, there's a
way*

*God gave me a brain
And he gave me a heart*

*He expects me to use them
To accomplish my part*

*His gifts are better
Than a college degree*

*Who better to teach my children
Than me?*

1999 ⇨ This is an important topic to me. I think there are so many people out there, educators especially, who are not convinced that a child can be educated well by their own parent. Especially if the parent does not possess a college education themselves. I strongly disagree. My poem above should give you some insight to my feelings on this subject. With that in mind, I want to express how important I think academics are in a child's life and why I am so passionate about the academic portion of homeschooling.

2007 ⇨ Before you read any farther I want to address a topic that I didn't even talk about in my first book and that is: unschooling. First of all, this term is a hard one to even get a handle on as it is so widely used and means different things to different people! On one end of unschoolers are those who use curriculum, text books, and "real" books, but use them as they wish with no lesson plans or set schedule, learning at the pace that works best for them. On the other end of unschoolers are those who do not use any curriculum or textbooks, nor do they even require real books to be read by their children. Their view is that their children will learn everything they need in the process of living life and all that it entails. If you consider yourself to be an unschooler, most likely you are somewhere in the middle of the two opposites I described above. Please do read on, I am by no means opposed to unschooling so do NOT get that impression! Just don't skip over this chapter thinking it doesn't apply to you, it does! It applies to all parents who are responsible for the education of their kiddos.

1999 ⇨ We all have our strengths and our weaknesses and I am certainly no exception. I feel that my passion for academics can be both a strength and a weakness. Let me explain first how a strong passion for academics can be a weakness. We will then devote the remainder of the chapter on how to light your own passion for academics and how to make it one of your strengths.

Being a Christian mom, my primary goal and focus is to shepherd each of my children toward a real and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, their ultimate Shepherd. I find I have to keep myself in check because I tend to focus so much on their academics, that I can sometimes not give enough time and learning to the even more important things I must teach them such as Bible study, memorizing scripture, the importance and relevance of family devotions, family prayer, emphasizing how faithful God is in answering prayer, and so on. In all honesty, in the early years of homeschooling we briefly read from the Bible each morning for about ten to fifteen minutes and then proceeded to spend two to four hours on what we then thought of as 'real' school, the academics.

When we began having trouble with such character issues as kindness, gentleness, and honesty, I decided to step back and take a hard look at what was missing from our homeschool. I realized that we were concentrating ninety-nine percent of our academic efforts towards math, history, language, reading, spelling, penmanship, and science and only about one percent of those efforts towards Bible study or character development. There are many other hours in the day in which we talk about and live out what's important in life, and I mistakenly thought that would be enough. But, what I finally realized is that I must "teach" my children to be students of God and to seek him diligently, in very much the same way as I was 'teaching' them to seek book knowledge. I have since come to what I believe is a more accurate view of what the academics should include. I should then back up that knowledge by living my life as an example in front of them. Memorizing Bible scripture should be no less important than memorizing their multiplication tables.

2007 ⇨ I still emphatically agree with everything I said above, and I want to point something out that has really helped our family in this area. Soon after I finished this book, we moved and our new church had an AWANA program. It is a scripture memory type children's program offered in many churches throughout the US and other countries as well. We love it and have continued it ever since to the point of always seeking out and finding an AWANA church as soon as we moved to a new area (which was way too often!). Currently, my husband, myself and our fifteen year old daughter are all AWANA leaders in our church and our two younger boys are in the program. We study our AWANA verses as part of our homeschool and I love it!! I find it really helps me personally to keep on track with my kiddos when it comes to scripture memorization.

1999 ⇨ Before I get into each individual subject in detail, I would like to address the significance of each subject. Bible studies are vital, but the basics of reading, writing, and math are absolutely necessary as well. The remaining subjects of history and science are secondary. They are very important subjects, but the basics must not take a back seat to them. Rather, if anything must "slide" for the day, it should be science or history. The extracurricular subjects such as art, music and the like, are as important as *you* feel they are. Foreign language should be included in language arts to the degree you desire. If your kiddo is college bound, you should do at least two years of the same foreign language during their high school years. Unless you are absolutely 100% positive that your kiddo is NOT college bound, then it is completely up to you. If you are not completely and totally 100% positive that your kiddo is not college bound, then assume that they are! It can't hurt, but it will most definitely make a difference if they or you do end up wanting to attend college and it will open up their options in that respect a great

deal. Preparation is everything! I highly recommend teaching Latin as well, or at least Latin roots during the early years as it gives them an excellent advantage in understanding the true meaning of words and in reading comprehension. It also helps them when it comes to their SAT and ACT tests which hold a great deal of weight for homeschoolers when entering college. Homeschoolers tend to score well on these tests anyway, and studying Latin to any extent can give them even more of an advantage. There is more discussion about foreign languages and their importance in the section to follow on Language Arts. Still, all these extracurricular subjects should be secondary to all other subjects listed above, including science and history.

You may think that I am stating the obvious when I say these academic subjects are important, but I once spoke with a homeschooler who thought that any "formal" schooling whatsoever was unnecessary. Their view was that children will learn what they need to know throughout the course of everyday life.

2007 ⇨ **This is the extreme view of unschooling as I touched on above.**

1999 ⇨ I have also spoken to a few homeschoolers who think that although some subjects are necessary like math, reading, and writing; others, like science and history serve little or no purpose at all. I tend to disagree with both schools of thought. In light of this, I am first going to address the importance of each subject. How you teach it, of course, will vary greatly depending upon your own personality, preferences, and learning styles, as well as how you can best meet the individual needs of each child you are homeschooling. 2007 ⇨ **I really want to reiterate this point. You can't fit a square peg into a round hole and why would you want to anyway? It is not the method of instruction that I am referring to in this chapter, but rather the importance of each subject regardless of your child's future aspirations.** 1999 ⇨ I do believe that these subjects must be "taught" though, again the word "train" as commanded to us in Deuteronomy requires action.

Bible

For the past few years, Bible is a subject that is not only included in our day, but is considered a true academic subject as well. My children even get "graded" on their efforts. The first subject of each day is Bible. We have a family devotion first, which usually includes a character building story along with a discussion and sometimes a "what would you do if..." scenario. Next, we read from scripture and typically cover about ½ chapter each day until we finish the book we are in. We typically continue in the same book until we have completed it. Then we get down on our knees for a family prayer in which each family member prays, starting with the youngest (our two year old J. Jay) and ending with the oldest (me!). 2007 ⇨ **Now it starts with our five year old, Elijah as J.Jay is**

eleven! Wow, how time flies! 1999 ⇨ From time to time we keep and discuss a prayer journal so we can record prayers being answered. Keeping a journal can make the prayer time a little tedious for us, which I don't want. So, we keep it for a time to help them see the results, and then we take a break from the prayer journal for a while.

2007 ⇨ **We haven't done our prayer journal in a while, reading the above has motivated me to start up another one. They are great visual aids for the kids to see the power of God in our day to day lives!**

1999 ⇨ A great way to keep a prayer journal is to make it on a poster board and post it on the wall. Record the date of the request (which is typically the day you started praying for or about this item) and the prayer request itself, along with who made the request, all in one color, like black or blue. Line each request up one after another. When God answers with a "yes" then you write a big fat **YES** across the entire request with a green marker (green for go!). When God answers with a "no" then you write a big fat **NO** across the entire request with a red marker (red for stop!). Or you can write "yes" or "no" several times if you like that better. When His answer is a "maybe" or a "wait" you can just keep it open for a while to see what He is going to do. This is a great way for the kids to see visually how God works.

After we finish our devotions and prayer time we have some memory work. So far my children have memorized the following verses and in some cases passages, in addition to others. Psalm 23; The Lord's Prayer; The fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23); The definition of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a); The definition of faith (Hebrews 11:1), The ten commandments; Philippians 4:13; Colossians 3:23; John 3:16; Ephesians 6:1; and more. We are now memorizing the books of the Bible. This is not an exhaustive list, but as you can see there are quite a few. Because of this every Tuesday is our "Memory Review Day" and the kids take turns reciting whatever passages I ask of them, from memory. This helps them to not forget the scripture once they have committed it to memory. It's been a true blessing to see the rewards of my kids having memorized scripture. The other night while at a Bible Study my son, Robby, was spitting out verses left and right in answers to the questions that arose. I have to admit, I was very proud of him. It really made me realize how much it helps them to have God's word in their hearts. It alleviates some of the stresses and woes as they grow older because so many of the answers to life's most difficult questions have already been given to us in God's word.

2007 ⇨ **Our memory work now derives mostly from our AWANA verses. When not focusing on AWANA (during the summer) we pick up on**

other important passages I want them to memorize while they are young such as those I listed above.

1999 ⇨ After we complete our devotions, our prayer, and our memory work, the kids each do their own written Bible study. We have used Studying God's Word by Christian Liberty Press for quite a while and have found it wonderful. There are many Bible curricula available. The important thing is to find one that will work well for you. The one we use is laid out in a weekly format, which I like. Each child has their own age appropriate book. On Monday, they read the Bible text that the week's lesson is drawn from. On Tuesday, they read a written "lesson" which is an explanation of the text. On Wednesday, they typically answer comprehension type questions. On Thursday, they have lesson review type questions and as they get older, "thought" questions to help them better apply what they are learning to their lives. And finally, on Friday, there are supplemental exercises which are typically a fun exercise of some sort. Either a crossword puzzle, word search, maze, acrostic, or something to that effect. It is designed to re-emphasize what they have learned during the week. My point is, I want my kids to grow up viewing the Bible as not only something to be read, but also as something to be diligently studied. I highly recommend a good written Bible study program for all children, homeschooled or not!

2007 ⇨ Believe it or not, we STILL use Studying God's Word for our Bible Curriculum. I have found it to be perfect for our needs with every child so far. Not too much that it's overwhelming, but very thorough and consistent especially as they get older. I really like the thought questions at the end of each week's lessons, which continues through all the levels. It's one thing for them to read and learn about the Bible, but the real value is when they learn to ponder, reflect, and then write down how to apply it in their own lives.

1999 ⇨ To sum it up, academic subject number one, which is of most importance, should be "Bible". 2007 ⇨ Amen! ☺

Math

1999 ⇨ Math is of extreme importance. If asked to choose what I thought was more important, math, reading, or writing, I would have a hard time making that choice. In my opinion, none of the three are expendable. Why is math so important? One reason is that it enables you to function in life. One simply cannot live a prudent life without proper math skills. You need these skills to do many everyday things such as balance a checkbook, maintain a budget, cook, tithe, and more. Another reason why math is incredibly important is so that a child can learn to think things through and make logical decisions. One of the most

important reasons to learn math though, is because it helps them to realize that in most cases there is a clear cut right and wrong answer. It makes it much easier for them to understand absolute values and morals when they have fully grasped basic math concepts. How high one should endeavor to go in math may depend upon whether or not the child, once he or she has reached high school, wants to pursue a college education. Either way, I think higher math such as Algebra and Geometry is best. But for some students with no aspirations of going to college and for whom math is already a difficult subject, general math may suffice.

2007 ⇨ Again, I have seen the downfall of the overall morals and ethics of modern society go down significantly even since I originally wrote the above. It is so vital that we use math, logic, the Bible, consequences, and as many other methods that we can to really drive home the reality of absolutes. That is not the norm in this culture. Math and higher math is an excellent way to ingrain into them the fact that there is a clear and distinct line between right and wrong.

1999 ⇨ In teaching math, children must first be taught and shown the proper way to calculate things, whether it's done in writing, hands-on (with manipulatives), or both... the instruction is necessary. The general progression with math is obvious, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals, and so on. I highly recommend that all children have their multiplication tables memorized (like the back of their hand!) before entering the sixth grade. Preferably long before! The easiest way is to memorize them is gradually, one number at a time. My seven year old daughter, Brittney, who is doing mostly third grade work this year, already has her math facts memorized COLD up through the sixes. (zero times six, all the way through twelve times six). So we just work on one number at a time (sequentially, of course) until it is mastered and she knows it backwards and forwards and inside and out. Then we move on to the next number. We started this last year. Now don't let this intimidate you, she is about a year ahead of the her age group anyway because she has been wanting to "do school" since she was two! But, hopefully you understand my point in that this can be accomplished, and even at a young age.

The sooner they memorize their multiplication tables, the less intimidating math is. I think memorization is the best way to alleviate the intimidation that often comes as you add and build on previously learned skills. With these facts under the belt, math can become exciting while still being challenging. Everything you do in math, from simple mathematics, all the way up to advanced algebra and calculus, is tied to multiplication and division. So, to know all your multiplication facts, cold, gives you a big advantage and will take much of the "grind" out of doing math problems. It could make the difference between a confident math student and a frustrated math student, especially once

you reach the algebra level.

2007 ⇨ Somehow in the busyness of life this year, and my health issues, I have let the memorizing of math facts slide the entire first half of this school year. I have not been nearly as consistent nor adamant with J.Jay memorizing and reviewing his math facts cold. As a result, much to my chagrin, he slowly became a frustrated math student. The second semester of this school year we have had to step back and review memorizing his multiplication tables cold. As he reviews and memorizes more of the facts cold, his math confidence is rising and his frustration is disappearing. I should know better, but with much of homeschooling, often we get so caught up in just getting what we need to get done today, that we lose sight of the big picture. I have been guilty of this more than once! It's funny as sometimes I go back and read my original book just to get myself back on track! Ok, I'm weird I know... it's one thing to know what works well and which is the best road to take, it's another thing to actually do it, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year... okay, you get the picture. Just don't ever read anything in this book and think, "Boy, she sure does have it all together!" Believe me, I can assure you with 100% confidence that if that is what you think or have thought even for a moment - I am sorry to say it but.... **WRONG!!!** Remember, the journey is the reward. It isn't easy, especially when it comes to math, but it is rewarding when you are on the right path. (Hey, that rhymed!)

1999 ⇨ Many public and private schools now stress the importance of math concepts rather than math facts and rote memorization. Their justification is that math facts just bore the students and are too difficult for them to memorize. They feel that it is more important that they know what they are doing (ie. concepts) rather than just know the math facts themselves. I understand where they are coming from.... but I fear they can't see the forest for the trees. If a student has to count up on his fingers (or toes) or use a paper and pencil to figure out what six times four is by writing the number six down four times and then adding it up; or by making four sets of six dots and then counting them all up. **THAT** is going to make math boring! If he has his facts memorized, he can just smile, write down six times four equals twenty four, and go on to the next problem! If he knows that six times four equals twenty four, than he automatically knows that six, four times is twenty four. If not, the concept will come easily if you use manipulatives to demonstrate how "accurate" the math facts he has memorized are. One illustration should be all that is needed. In other words, if he knows the facts, he knows the concept. If not, it can be shown with ease.

2007 ⇨ I am not sure I was clear enough on my point here. I do think it is absolutely necessary to learn the concepts behind the math at all times. My point was and still is, if you memorize the basic facts first, explaining the concept is much easier. It doesn't work as easily the other way around. When they learn the concept first they think, "Why do I need to memorize all this when I already know how to figure it out anyway?" After all, rote memorization for most kiddos is simply not very fun! When they have to figure it out every time, there is a great deal more room for error in their calculations and a great deal more time spent simply on "figuring it out". When they know the facts, they will make significantly less mistakes in their calculations and will be able to perform higher math skills in half the time and with a great deal less intimidation and computation in the process.

1999 ⇨ The real issues when it comes to the importance of math are the principals that are learned in the process. Especially with higher math as it becomes more difficult and involved. Why should one struggle through the challenges of algebra when they aren't planning on going to college? My twelve year old son, Robby, is doing Saxon Algebra 1 this year. Even though he says he intends on going to college, on days that he is struggling he has been known to say, "What is the point?" I think that is a fair question. One you may well have asked yourself. The answer to that question will explain the real reason why I see math as such an important subject. Also, it will explain why I think pursuing higher math is best for most every student. Those daily struggles that are inevitable when learning and mastering higher math, set the stage for the student to learn how to conquer difficulties in life. Once a student struggles through and figures out what the surface area of a right prism is, which initially looked so confusing to them, they think, "Hey! I CAN do this! This makes sense after all." After learning about such intimidating sounding things as algebraic equations, polynomials, trinomials, subscripted variables, Pythagorean theorem, and so on... Life in general seems much less intimidating. These are the two very important life lessons, or principals, that are learned through math, especially higher math:

- #1. REGARDLESS OF HOW BIG A PROBLEM SEEMS OR HOW HARD IT SOUNDS, AS LONG AS I HAVE THE INSTRUCTIONS, I CAN FIGURE IT OUT!

Now applying that to math may not seem like a major benefit to you, but wouldn't you love for your child to think that way when it comes to the difficulties they may face, some even daily, while living on this earth? So many problems and trials in life seem overwhelming if not impossible when we are facing them, or worse yet, in the midst of them. But if your child has learned this

lesson (with the help of higher math) and if they know where to look for the instructions they need (the Bible), nothing will be impossible for them. *"...all things are possible with God."* Mark 10:27b .

#2. THERE IS A RIGHT WAY AND A WRONG WAY TO DO EVERY PROBLEM.

Not only does this knowledge cement absolute values and morals, but it also eases life's daily struggles immensely. It's much easier to make the right choices, even when they are difficult, when you know for a fact that there is a right way and a wrong way. If your heart is in the right place you will want to do the right thing. Having the knowledge (or shall I say, *wisdom*) of an absolute right and wrong, removes much of the confusion when it comes to life's tough choices. That makes it clearly a decision of the heart. It also fine tunes your guilty conscience because when you do make the wrong choice, you know it. *"Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right."* - Proverbs 20:11 .

Reading / Spelling

The value of learning to read well is obvious. Although they say some kids can learn to read by themselves, for the majority instruction is required. Before, during, and after your child becomes a reader, you should still read to them daily and further instruct them in their reading and spelling skills. Then you should continually challenge their reading level by encouraging them to read (and reading with them if it helps) good, rich, classic novels that may be just a tiny bit above their current reading level. They grow in language and vocabulary by being exposed to higher language and vocabulary. When good vocabulary is used in good context, the reader can grasp the meaning even if he or she has never heard the word before. By being exposed to good classic literature, their vocabulary will grow immensely. Also, I have heard many complain that their child is weak when it comes to spelling. In my tiny view of life, a good spelling program is a must, but the best way to improve your child's spelling is by increasing their reading time. The more they read, the better they will spell. They will come to know how words are spelled and used simply because they have seen them so often before. Of course, don't expect your 3rd grader to enjoy reading novels well above their level, like, The Yearling. But don't just feed them "easy" books either. If they are not comfortable reading slightly above their level, don't let that stop you. Read it to them!

There are two very important things you should do to make sure your kids develop the love of reading. First of all, make sure that your child sees you reading by yourself, often. That will make them realize that reading is something you do "for fun". Something you enjoy. Reading should be a very natural and common part of life in your household. As a general rule, the more the parents and older siblings read for pleasure, the more the child will read for pleasure. Secondly, it is vital to always keep your kids supplied with LOTS of excellent reading materials. Everything from classics, to autobiographies, to instructional books. I recommend setting books out on coffee and end tables, and low shelves at all times. Rotate them often. I get great big beautifully illustrated "coffee table" books from the library and keep them out. I have gotten books on famous composers, artists, animals, World War II, a horse encyclopedia, books with character stories, you name it. Don't "dumb them down". If you pick up a book on Mozart and think, "My Johnny would never be interested in that!" Get it anyway. Leave it on the table for a week or two. Johnny may get extremely bored and look down and think, "Who in the world is Mozart?" Next thing you know he's picked it up and is thumbing through it. Guess what.... he's learning! But make sure you also keep your kids supplied with books they can read fairly well. My rule is let the books they read for pleasure be the books of their choice (that you approve of, of course). But the books that you put out on the tables, assign them to read as part of their school work, and the ones that you read to them, should always be about a year above their current reading level. If you are consistent with this, they will still enjoy reading on their own, and their reading comprehension level will be continually increasing.

2007 ☞ You guessed it... another conviction for me! I haven't been doing the library and coffee table books nearly enough lately. Since I spend a great deal of my day in and often homeschool from my bed, I have gradually been doing this less and less. I am running to the library tomorrow for some wonderful coffee table books!

Another important aspect of teaching reading (which I have taught all my kids and highly recommend) is teaching them speed reading with comprehension. As their reading improves, begin to time them. Give them readers with comprehension questions at the end. No stress or pressure with the initial goal should be for them to be able to read while being timed and then to do well on the comprehension test at the end of the section or story they just read. Once they are comfortable with that, share with them their reading time and their goal should only be to see if they can beat their own time, while still doing well on the comprehension questions. Continue this (maybe just as a fun activity once or twice a week) and record their words per minute as you go along. I use readers that are

broken up into short stories and that tell me how many words are in each story. Then I just divide the number of words by the number of minutes they took to read it. Do this consistently from the time they are confident readers all the way through high school and you will be amazed as you see their speed growing while their comprehension remains good. Both my oldest and my fifteen year old read well over 500 WPM (words per minute) and that is simply from having used this method with them consistently over the years. My eleven year old is quickly approaching 300 WPM with full comprehension. I am not talking about speed reading for the sake of speed reading, I am talking about reading fast while maintaining full comprehension. For comparison sake, the average literate American adult reads with full comprehension at a rate of 200 WPM.

We have recently discovered what we consider to be awesome historical fiction books by G.A. Henty. These are wonderful books written in the late 19th century which I highly recommend, especially for boys. They have been reprinted in the original unabridged format in recent years and are simply invaluable if you are homeschooling boys. We recently discovered that many of the Henty books as well as some other terrific classics are available on CD in MP3 format. We use these in two ways. J.Jay will listen to the CD while he follows along in the actual book that is being read. This is great not only for reading skills, but also to so they can hear the proper pronunciation of unfamiliar words and retain what the story with greater comprehension. Listening to one of these CDs without using the actual book is a great way for them to enjoy the story and learn historical fiction and great values without have to “work” at it. You can purchase these CD’s from **www.JimHodgesAudioBooks.com** and I highly recommend them! So much, I called them as asked for permission to include their website in my book!

Writing / Language Arts

1999 ⇨ Writing is of extreme importance because it is one of the two key ways people communicate. The other key way of communication is, of course, speech. The spoken language includes not only the words themselves, but also one’s tone of voice and their body language. Although there are many who can eloquently express themselves in speaking, often the best way to get your true ideas and opinions across is in writing. Writing gives you the avenue to think out what it is you are trying to express and word it “just right” so that the reader will understand you clearly. With written language there is no tone of voice or body language to be misinterpreted.

When teaching a child writing, you must guide them first how to construct letters, then move on to words, then sentences, paragraphs, and finally to more complex sentences, stories, reports, and so on. The ability to write grammatically well and legibly, must be trained. The best way to teach writing skills is by lots of practice! Writing can be a tough subject to teach though, because for many students it is a tedious task. Why then, is it so important to teach good writing technique and grammar as well as good penmanship? Very often, the first impression one may have of you is from something you've written. A college application, a job application, and a resume are but a few examples. These documents will give an immediate perception of you and your abilities based not only on their content, but also on their neatness and the overall presentation. With this in mind, you can give your child a big advantage in life by teaching them how to write beautifully, both in content and in appearance.

2007 ⇨ When J. Jay was ten years old, he was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome which as I've said above is a high functioning form of Autism. He is very high functioning and we see him more as brilliant than anything else! If I had a choice of his Asperger's or not I would without a moment's hesitation choose Asperger's. He has an amazingly brilliant mind, an almost photographic memory, and can play the piano beautifully. I truly see it not as any kind of a disability, but rather as a gift. All that said, he hates to write! Yes, as I said above with written language there is no tone of voice or body language to be misinterpreted. This is important because one of the difficulties he has is the lack of ability to "read others" meaning he is more often than not oblivious to body language, tone of voice, and other social clues during conversations. That means his ability to write well is even more important, yet as I said above, he hates to write so penmanship and creative writing (frankly ANY writing) is frustrating and tedious for him and can cause him to have a little "breakdown" if you will. So, it's a bit of a catch 22. Many if not most homeschoolers have at least one child who have some type of a special need, learning disability, or medical disability which makes homeschooling that child even more challenging. Consider it pure joy that you have the PRIVILEGE of being able to homeschool them and give them the attention and love they so need! More on special needs in Chapter 12 - "Homeschooling with Health Issues".

1999 ⇨ Another form of "Language Arts" I want to address here is foreign language. Yes, this should be secondary to writing and grammar itself, but I still think it is an important aspect of a well rounded education. This year we are using the program "From the Roots Up" as part of our English. This is a program to study and learn Latin root words. Studying and learning Latin will automatically

enhance one's understanding of the English language. After all English, as well as most other languages, was derived primarily from Latin. Next year Robby is going to begin a two year high school Latin course, while I intend on continuing Brittney in learning more Latin root words. My intention is for both of them to eventually even learn yet another language after Latin is studied for at least two years. Learning other languages will insure that our children will be better suited to go out and spread the gospel to other peoples as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19 - *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* Learning Latin gives any student a far superior understanding of the English language as well as an excellent base for them to then learn other languages.

2007 ⇨ With our oldest, Robby, after learning about Latin root words, We did one year of high school Latin utilizing a DVD program, and then he did Spanish I and Spanish II in high school, again using a DVD program. Many colleges require 2 years in the same foreign language as an entry requirement. Brittney did Latin root words in our homeschool and she chose French as her foreign language of choice. She took French one in her freshman year and is now taking French 2, as a Sophomore in a private Christian school. Our plan is for all of our kiddos to take at least learn Latin root words at the very least, and to take at least two years of the same foreign language on a high school level during their homeschool years as well. J.Jay did some Latin roots last year, but nothing too intensive. This year he really wanted to learn German as he has a good friend who moved her recently from Germany and speaks fluent German as well as English. So of course, I wanted to go with his interest so we purchased a great DVD computer program to learn German and we are having quite a bit of fun doing so. It's an added bonus that he gets to try out what he's learning with his friend, who helps him out and corrects his mispronunciations. Elijah has been listening in and has learned some German words too! I do recommend that you make sure your homeschooled high schoolers get two years of the same foreign language. They can do this self-taught utilizing the excellent DVD programs that are available today. Or you can enroll them in classes specifically for this, either in a homeschool co-op, or often at your local community college.

History

1999 ⇨ Every time I look at the word *history* I see "*HIS-STORY*". It is with that emphasis that I think history should be taught. History is an excellent way for a student to come to the understanding that God is Lord and Master of our lives.

After all, He has been in control since the beginning of time. Many history textbooks that are being used in schools today exclude God's hand in history. I am continually amazed and saddened that so many children have been taught that Christopher Columbus "discovered America" while searching for gold and treasures. My daughter, Brittney, was recently given a book about Christopher Columbus. The cover stated that it was his journal, "In his own words". Neither God nor Columbus' true intentions (to spread the gospel) were ever mentioned throughout the book. The book was written much the same as public and some private school textbooks are written, that he went to search for gold and treasures. The "In his own words" part were a few sections of his daily journal reporting about conditions at sea, Indians they had met, etc. They purposefully left out all of Columbus' references to the real nature of his trip in the first place! Needless to say, that frustrates me. It is vital that our children are taught the true Christian heritage of our country, not the biased version they are being fed too often in the public and sometimes even private school system.

History can be taught by using textbooks, or better yet by using real, what I call "whole" books that put the reader back in time to relive history as it happens. We tend to use a bit of both in our homeschooling. My oldest son, Rob, has developed a love for the World War II era over the course of time. This love didn't come from a text book but rather from other "whole" books he had read on the subject. Recognizing this interest early on, I assigned him to write a research report about World War II when he was in the fifth grade. That turned out to be the beginning of an ongoing fascination that began with World War II and has spread to an interest in all of the major wars. He has become a "history buff" and has more than once said it was his favorite subject. Try to find an interest your child may have in one aspect of history, be it an event or a person, and go with it! Expose your children to numerous books on the subject and watch the excitement take hold.

2007 ⇨ There are tons of quality historical fiction books to help inspire their interest in historical events and great people throughout history. Don't just focus in one area, World History, Biblical History, United States History (or your native country, if different). Give them a broad range of books to choose from, from fiction and non-fiction. When they come across one time period or event that really interests them - run with it!

1999 ⇨ At seven, Brittney is just beginning to get a grasp of history that will serve as the basis of discovering what her interest may be. After studying American History in first and second grade, she whizzed through her 3rd grade American History book before the year was half over. So I put a time line on the wall for her that begins at creation and continues all the way to the year 2000. Every day she

makes a "person" and places he or she on the time-line. She is making one for each of the people she has learned about in her American History book this year, as well as Biblical people she has studied. She even made a little person for herself and put her on the time-line! At the center of the time-line is Jesus and the cross. The first thing she said is "Oh! Now I get it. That's what B.C. means... Before Christ!" The time-line has been a real eye opener for her to see that Adam, Eve, Moses, and Noah, and others from Bible times lived so long ago, before Jesus was even born as a man. And then to put all the others into perspective after He died on the cross and arose. George Washington doesn't seem to have lived quite so long ago when you compare him to Moses!

2007 ⇨ We now have a time-line on the back of a sewing board, since we have moved so many times it just made sense to make it more portable! We pull it out from time to time, but not enough! It seems to be an every other year thing for us lately. Hey, whatever works, right?!

1999 ⇨ I think I have stressed enough the importance of history as a subject you do not want to overlook. This is one subject that can and should be interesting and exciting. If you found yourself in a boring history textbook, it may be time to step back and take another look at how you can discover a hidden interest your child may have that will spark their enthusiasm for His-story!

Science

The first words of the Bible, Genesis 1:1 says: "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" There is no better way to learn how awesome, how powerful, how creative and how complex our mighty God is, then by studying the world that He created! That in itself is reason alone to study science. As with history, science is too often taught with a worldview of how the world came into existence, being the theory evolution, rather than the way God told us the world came into existence, by His creation!

When your children are young I think it is very important to teach creation science versus evolutionary science. But, make sure in doing so, you don't leave out the world's view on this subject. Train your children to be listening for words like "millions of years ago" and "evolved" and so on. Explain to them that when these words are used the person, show, or author, as the case may be, does not believe that God created the world, but rather believes "it just happened". Research these terms and this subject with your children and teach them why you believe what the Bible says and why so many others may believe what the world tells them. One of the wonderful benefits of this approach is that during this research there are a great deal more facts that point so clearly to creationism and

so few true facts (we've yet to find any) that support the evolution theory. In light of this, the research reinforces the view that God did indeed create the world and everything in it.

2007 ⇨ Once your children are in high school and they have developed a good base for creation science, it would be ideal to take a year to intensely study apologetics, which is the branch of theology that is concerned with the intellectual defense of Christian truth. The Greek word *apologia* means "defense". In order to be able to defend Christian truth you need to have a good understanding of what others believe. This includes evolution, as well as other religions. Learning more of the specific variances between creation science and evolutionary science is an excellent way for them to learn how to better witness to others. It will also give them the knowledge to be in a better position to discern these topics if they decide later to enter into a secular college.

1999 ⇨ I can't stress enough that you must be on your toes all the time and make sure that the science books and/or reference materials you are using are written from a Christian/creationism perspective. There will most likely be some cases in which you use books, especially reference books, that are written from an evolutionary perspective. This can be a good thing, depending upon how you utilize these materials. But you must be completely aware of the information that is in every book that you have in your home so you can be prepared to explain it when the situation occurs. If and when your child comes across this misinformation you can turn it into an opportunity to further educate your children about the world's view and how it is so prevalent in our society that it just sneaks in everywhere!

There are many excellent books on creation science. Informational type books as well as textbooks. One of the privileges we have today that was not available just a few short years ago, is an abundance of Christian curricula and books to choose from in which science is taught from the perspective that God is the creator. A book that I really like is called *It Couldn't Just Happen, Fascinating Facts About God's World* by Lawrence O. Richards. It is chock full of proven facts and it closely examines and answers the question, "What does the evidence *really* say about the Theory of Evolution?" It is an excellent resource for you to use when teaching younger children and would serve well as a textbook for the high school student. There are many other books that would serve this need as well. To sum it all up, since the basis of science is to learn about God's world, the main reason that science is so important in the homeschool is because it serves to further emphasize and learn about God as The Creator.

2007 ⇨ There are so many excellent high quality books that have been written since I originally wrote the above, it is beyond exciting! There are enough quality science and reading books available now to fill up your book cases with books that show credible evidence for and teach from a truly creationist Biblical perspective. These excellent books are an excellent way to teach and further validate the reality of creation to your impressionable children.

Homeschooling with Health Issues

Chapter 7

*I have my morning mourning
It happens every day*

*I wake and for just a moment think
Today will go my way*

*The day that I will get up
with no pain and not one tear*

*The day that I'll do all the things
I haven't done in over a year*

*Maybe today I'll ride my bike
or play some racquetball*

*Or take a walk around the block
Today I'll do it ALL*

*But it's only just one moment
for the second that I move*

*My body screams in agony
There's nothing left to prove*

*That's when my morning mourning starts
But it never lasts too long*

*Cause the moments that follow prove to me
I'm right where I belong*

*Today I have another day
A brand new life to live*

*It's not about what I can get
But rather what can I give?*

*God didn't put me on this earth
to please my every whim*

*To ride bike or play racquetball
but rather to live for Him*

*And then God sends me loving words
That come straight from above*

*I hear Him through my children
And from my husband flows His love*

*Just simple words like "Mama"
Which if I were in a rush*

*I just might miss that little word
That has come to mean so much*

*A hug and kiss from my daughter
before she starts her day*

*Means more to me than all the things
I "planned" to do that day*

*And soon my little one runs in
beaming, "Mama, you're awake!"*

*I wonder why I ever thought
My pain I couldn't take*

*And when another son hands me my pills
Each name he's memorized*

*And sets down the drink that he has poured
(with a straw) at my bedside*

*And then my loving husband
who always brings me toast*

*But never without asking first
what I'd prefer the most*

*It's in these special moments that
my morning mourning ends*

*And an attitude of gratitude
Greets me once again*

*For God has spoken all these words
And done these things for me*

*For I see Jesus every day
In my precious family*

*For if He healed me of my pain
All my sickness and disease*

*I might not see so clearly
All this love He's giving me*

*So I decide that I am happy
That I have another day*

*To love my family and be loved
What more is there to say?*

2007 ⇨ Unfortunately, this is one topic I can speak with experience on. You may be wondering whose health issues I am referring to. The homeschooling parent? Spouse? Kiddos? Answer: All of the above! Okay, here's the rundown first, then on to the nitty gritty.

My Health Issues:

- ◆ Celiac Disease - the only autoimmune disease for which they know the trigger, gluten. Gluten is the protein found in wheat, rye, oats, barley, and malt. (Oats only due to contamination factors.) I have had digestive and a host of other health problems my entire life. My mom took me to the doctor when I was very young as I simply wouldn't grow. Going to the doctor in those days was quite unheard of. We simply didn't (except for when I was bitten by a snake!) We went to the health department for our immunizations. Doctors are expensive! Well, this particular doctor was clueless and he told my mom that I was perfectly healthy and not to worry about it. Furthermore, he said not to worry about the fact that I hardly ate anything and got sick when I did. He told her to give me those yucky chocolate sports drinks for extra vitamins. And furthermore he said that I would eat if I was hungry. (Which makes zero sense to me now!) Meanwhile, my body was poisoning itself and attacking my small intestine then, and has continued to do so for years. I was forty years of age before I had even heard of Celiac Disease, and that was when my youngest was diagnosed. Researching the complications, it explains most all of my other health issues. All of which I personally contribute to ingesting gluten for all these years unbeknownst to the fact that I was poisoning myself and damaging my small intestines.
- ◆ Spinal cord injury - Actually I have two spinal cord injuries. One is incomplete, but very precarious. According to my neurologist in Illinois it looks complete on film and I should be paralyzed already and it's just a "matter of time". It is in my thoracic area. The other is incomplete and quite mild and is not expected to get any worse. This one is in my cervical area and is due to being thrown from my seventeen hand horse that we had back when we lived in Ohio. Oh... did I mention I was only 5'1" tall? By the way, if your doctor tells you not to ride horses you really should listen to him. It's not smart to be thrown off of a horse when you already have spinal arthritis in

your spine! I am incredibly blessed that I am not a quadriplegic! (I say blessed as everything happens for a reason, and I don't believe in "luck") One of these days I will learn to listen to doctors. These days my focus is to continue living my life to it's fullest, while praying that I don't become paralyzed in the process! If I do, that's okay - I'll just have to be spunky from a wheelchair. Whatever is God's will... It's all good.

- ◆ Multiple Sclerosis (some hearing loss, vision problems, and lots of other issues that go with it.)
- ◆ Spondylosis - spinal arthritis (due to old scoliosis surgery - rod shifted).
- ◆ Multiple digestive disorders (GERD, recurring polyps in colon, diverticulosis)
- ◆ Fibromyalgia

My Previous Health Issues While Homeschooling:

- ◆ Three last pregnancies (not including miscarriages) were very difficult due to complications and early labor. This resulted in a total of nine months of complete bed rest between the three, many hospital visits and stays.
- ◆ Uterine scar from previous c-sections ruptured just prior to delivery of youngest child.
- ◆ Four babies lost due to early miscarriage
- ◆ Cancer scare which resulted in full hysterectomy

Hubby's Health Issues:

- ◆ Asperger's Syndrome (Very High Functioning Autism) We don't see this as a disability, but rather as a gift. He is a genius, but gets frustrated easily, angers easily, and gets bored easily. That explains the moving twenty-six times in over twenty-two years of marriage! Greg and I both joke that being married to him is like being married to a brilliant teenager! He agrees and then adds, "I don't wanna grow up!" But I love him to death.

He is as eccentric as they come and always interesting to be around. Challenging, but fun! Frankly, I'd rather be married to a brilliant teenager, then a boring old man any day! That said, we both are in agreement on one thing and that is - no more moving! We are going to stay here in South Carolina for many, many years to come. I don't want to move again until I move to heaven!

Kiddo's Health Issues

- ◆ My Youngest, Elijah has Celiac Disease (an autoimmune disease which is triggered upon ingesting gluten). He was actually the first one diagnosed with Celiac after they originally suspected that he had Leukemia. I was simply thrilled that it was not Leukemia... still am! Celiac Disease is manageable with diet alone. There is no medicine to treat it and again, the only treatment is to never eat anything that contains wheat, rye, oats, malt, or barley. If Elijah, like me is very sensitive to even trace amounts of gluten. If he gets any gluten whatsoever (usually we don't even know how, so it's most likely due to cross-contamination of some type) his white blood cell count drops which compromises his immune system and makes him very susceptible to other illnesses. He's gotten pneumonia, a middle ear infection, croup, walking pneumonia, and colds.

- ◆ J. Jay also has Celiac Disease, which is most likely the culprit for some of the other health issues he deals with. Since Celiac Disease is highly hereditary we were all tested after Elijah's diagnosis. J. Jay's symptoms are not as obvious on the outside as Elijah's, but more internal in nature. He is short for his age and his percentile ranking has been steadily decreasing over the years. He now ranks in the fifth percentile for height. He also has Juvenile Scoliosis for which he must wear a back brace. Both of these were most likely the result of having Celiac Disease and it being undiagnosed until recently, thus his body was being poisoned and not growing properly for ten years! He also has Asperger's Syndrome, which again we see as a gift. He is absolutely brilliant, plays the piano beautifully, and has a near photographic memory. We have always seen him as gifted, which is what we in this family view Asperger's as being. That said, it does add another level of difficulty when it comes to behavior (mostly self-control when

frustrated), and not being able to read others' social cues well.

- ◆ My daughter, Brittney, has severe ADHD for which she has had to take medicine from the time she was nine years old to even be able to function. (See the story at the end.) She decided on her own to go off her medicine and has been doing well enough to stay off. Her grades have gone down and she is having a harder time in some other areas, but she is learning how to compensate for it. I have always told her that I see it ADHD as a gift as well; not a disability at all. Once she learns how to take advantage of the good parts and keep herself organized and keep the not so good parts in check, she can get twice as much done then any other "normal" person - and in half the time! You just have to learn to use it to your advantage. I know this from experience as I have ADHD as well and am so grateful that I do. It is the hyperactivity part of it that has kept me going even when my body has been screaming for years to stop!!

Prior to being diagnosed with Celiac Disease I could only walk with the aid of a walker, cane (usually two canes!), or by being pushed in a wheelchair. Other than that I could only take a few steps at a time, and couldn't stand for very long at all. I want to share an excerpt from my blog that I wrote on my fortieth birthday, only three months after going "gluten-free".

2006 ⇒ Since going gluten-free (which is no small task in itself - but already very much a way of life that we just take in stride) my health has improved in ways I could never have imagined. My wheelchair, walker, and both canes are all in the garage under a nice thick layer of dust as I am walking wonderfully now. Although I still struggle with pain - my right drop foot has stopped dropping, but my pain levels have dropped! On a scale of 1-10, my pain has gone from literally never less than an 8 and typically a 9+ all the way down to about a 3-4 and sometimes even 2!!!! WOW!!! GOD IS AWESOME. I still struggle with my energy levels, fatigue and the fact that my muscles in my legs and arms had already atrophied, so I can't run the mile or anything and I have my limits - but I never really cared for track and field, so no big loss. (And who likes stairs?!?!? Elevators are the way to go!)

So - even though it's my birthday which means I'm another

year older (and this is a BIG ONE!) I am doing and feeling better than I have in well over 2 years, probably even more! So I have determined that I'm not getting older after all...I am getting YOUNGER!

Seriously, God is amazing and he DOES answer prayer. Not always the way you think or expect or even imagine (he answered mine through yet another disease?!?!) But this disease was most likely what caused my other diseases and most of my problems as that is what it does - very insidious! But God knew, and He performed a miracle on me and my body. He WILL answer your prayers too. Never, ever give up.

The other miracle is that this disease was diagnosed at a young enough age that it shouldn't affect my boys' future health much (as it did me) as long as they remain gluten-free their small intestines should heal completely. This is a very big miracle considering the statistics show that it takes an average of fourteen years and eleven doctors to be diagnosed with Celiac Disease!

So, although this disease can cause malignancies, other autoimmune diseases, and a host of other digestive problems - if they remain gluten-free their small intestines should remain healthy and none of the "side affects" listed above should come to pass for them.

Celiac is not a bad word in our house - it's a blessing.

We are proud to be "Celiacs" as it is a gift from God to live and eat in such a way as to heal my body and preserve the boys. God loves us! So even though I had my "Big One" birthday pity party last night as I awake this morning all things seem new and I do hereby declare - Happy Birthday to me! God has given me a more active and less painful future to look forward to and I am so grateful.

2007 ⇒ Okay, now that you know more than you ever wanted to about my families' health history, let's get to the good news. God IS bigger than the boogie man! If you get that line then you probably have young kiddos who love their vegetables!

I have had many people come up to me over the years and say things like, "you homeschool, wow! I could never do that!"; or "How

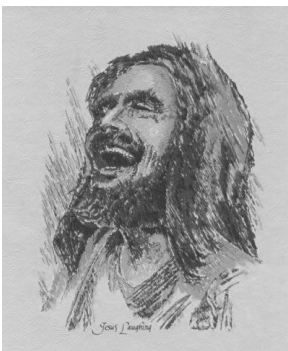
do you do it all?" or "I am just not patient enough to teach my own children." My favorite is when I am in a wheel chair or using a walker and someone says something like, "You are amazing, I could never do what you do!" I am sure you have heard it too, or maybe you are new to homeschooling or just thinking about homeschooling and that is how you feel. I feel like laughing. Do they really think that I've got some special talent or magic beans or something? My response to any of the above questions is typically the same. "In all honesty, I can't homeschool on my own either, it is all by the grace of God." And it is! He gives me what it takes each day as I need it. If God has called you - He WILL give you what it takes to homeschool successfully. So I agree with the masses, I could never do that. But God can!

If you get nothing else from this chapter, I hope you at least get an insight into the fact that homeschooling, and even life for that matter, is not about my abilities, or your abilities. The simple fact is: Regardless of your abilities, circumstances, health issues, or whatever - God is on the throne! If God is calling you or has called you to homeschool, then you don't have to worry about what you are capable of. Just be confident in what He is capable of! Nothing is impossible with God!

Let me share with you some very real and practical things that I use to get me through each day.

- **Attitude is everything!!** As it states in Joshua 24:15, we are to "Choose THIS DAY who you will serve." Start every day, whether still in bed, in the shower, or during devotions with the CHOICE that you will be in a good mood. Specifically ask God to use whatever happens today - even if it's pain - for His glory.

- **Visual Reminders help**



I have a picture of Jesus which is called, "Jesus Laughing" which I just love. I have a clear mental picture of it in my head, and when I am in the bathroom I just look at it all the time as I have it taped to my bathroom mirror! Also, it's my avatar on my instant messenger so I see it ongoing basis throughout the day when my hubby is at the warehouse and I am at home

communicating with him via instant messenger. I just can NOT look at this picture without smiling. ☺

- Letters from daughter, Brittney. Brittney has written me quite a few letters over the past couple of years that I just absolutely treasure. It's hard for her to get her feelings out verbally, but she communicates them wonderfully on paper. I always have a letter or two in my person, as well as next to my bed. Whenever I am feeling down or useless I will read one of Brittney's letters. It really helps me to refocus on what is truly important in life.
- **Optimism breeds peace.** When you make it a point to smile and be optimistic you automatically feel more content and at peace, regardless of your circumstances.
 - My pastor recently preached a sermon entitled "Peace in the Midst of Uncertainty." One of the things he said is that God often allows events or uncertainty linger in our lives as it builds our faith. We are dissecting the book of John and he was in chapter 16, where Jesus was telling the disciples about what was to come. He didn't answer all their questions and left them with a good bit of uncertainty. His answer to the question of why He allows events and uncertainty to linger in our lives was this: If we could "see" and "know" exactly what was going to happen and why, then we wouldn't need faith! He said, and I quote, "There's no peace when you don't use what you believe."
 - This leads me to believe that PEACE comes when you put your FAITH into action! Which bring me to one of my favorite verses, Hebrews 11:1 - "Now Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."
- **Pessimism breeds pity.** Inwardly as it creates

discouragement that makes you feel even worse. And outwardly as it makes everyone around you feel uncomfortable and discouraged as well. Nobody is going to want "what you have" in Jesus - when you don't even want it! Love your life. Love your circumstances. Go beyond just contentedness. Literally, count it all joy! Easy to say, hard to do. Not really. Just decide - make your choice. And do it! Hmm... I'd say it's half FULL!

- **Don't feel sorry for yourself.** And if there are times you must - give yourself a ten minute pity party (set the timer!) and then GET OVER IT! What is the worst that could happen? For me, I could fall in the shower and hit my head on the faucet and croak. Then I would go straight to heaven and get to dance with Jesus and see my Daddy! YIPPEE!! It's ALL GOOD! Really, God doesn't give us ANYTHING we cannot handle as long as He is the driver in our lives. So, if you are finding yourself in fear, step back and ask, who is in control anyway? If it's you - you will always live in fear. If it's God - there is nothing to fear - He's an absolute genius, and a loving one too. He knows what he's doing, as long as we recognize who He really is, we shouldn't feel like we have to know what He's doing. (Granted it sure would be NICE to know!!) But, what's the fun in that??
- **Recognize your limits.** Define your limits and STICK TO your limits. Hardest one for me! Easier for me to stick to my limits on a bad day, but when I have a "good" day I want to get everything done and I get super hyper and just want to go, go, go. Make sure every family member is totally aware of your limits. I am amazed at how often my husband and kids are the ones to "keep me in line" with my limits. (In a loving way, of course!!)
- **Prior Career:** I am the type that has always loved to jump right in and lead something... anything! In my prior life I used to be a computer software instructor. The company I worked for dealt primarily with law firms. I would install and set up their network (back in the Novell days!) and legal specific software and

WordPerfect. I would write macros customized for their firm, and customize everything. After it was all set up I would train all the staff in a classroom setting on how to use everything, and then train the network managers and attorneys one-on-one. I loved the fact that they all thought I was so wonderful because I made their lives easier and could solve all their computing problems! I thought I was IT! I was clueless of course, and this is actually the time that the Lord really turned my life upside down and made me realize I was completely off track and not living my life for him. But that's yet another story!

- **Homeschooling & Church Leadership Roles:** Now let's skip ahead to my next life - when we began homeschooling in 1993. I still had (and often still have!) an 'I can do anything' attitude, but now I try to turn it toward serving God and others. So... Not only did I homeschool, but over the years I have always been highly involved in some leadership type role. During my homeschooling years alone I have:
 - I have been the president of two different homeschool support groups. Both of which I was also one of the founders of.
 - I taught various Sunday school classes including:
 - A women's class
 - Middle school (7th - 8th grade)
 - 6th grade
 - Elementary girls
 - In church I have done or led the following:
 - Preschool children's choir group.
 - Led numerous Vacation Bible School (VBS) classes
 - kid's church drama programs
 - Have been an AWANA leader for years
 - Sang in the church choir
 - I spoke at and/or led the following:

- Numerous support group meetings
- Spelling Bees
- Ran a homeschool P.E. program for one year. During that same year I also ran the Presidential Physical Fitness program and organized a field day at end of year.

All while homeschooling my own kids. So, it's safe to say I've been running myself into the ground for years!! This is still my hardest issue. Now it's more a matter of necessity than choice. I would love to slow down, but haven't been able to pull it off yet. I am down to only leading AWANA and homeschooling two boys now, oh yea... And writing books, and creating HOMESCHOOLPOLY, and being the CFO in our business... I guess some things never change. But, I have changed not because I wanted to, but because I've had no choice. Maybe if I had made better choices when I could have - I would be in better health today! Pray and pray hard about where you are to commit your time. As a wife, your husband and raising your children are your #1 mission. All other causes, as worthy and wonderful as they may be - fall behind them. Otherwise - you will fall behind!

- **Now Running a Business - HOMESCHOOLPOLY!**
I gave all that up to focus on homeschooling my children, and now, literally just since June of 2006, the Lord has directed my steps in a way I never could have fathomed. Somehow, He inspired my husband and I to create HOMESCHOOLPOLY, the details of which are so amazing, I cannot even get into as it would take all my time here this workshop! I did NOT plan to be running a business alongside my hubby. Honestly, I never imagined or frankly even desired to be committed again in such a huge way - due to my health issues and the special time needs of my children still at home. But, this has been such a real life experience for us that I made my plans, but God quite literally directed our steps. He knows me intimately and I am beginning to realize just how much he is sustaining me day by day to do what I need to do. And this new role he has given me is to be used for His glory. He has given me such a rich and unusual set of circumstances and history that I pray He will use me hopefully to encourage others to

trust Him.

- **Oh Yea... And writing a book and various other items along the way!**

Am I bragging? No way. Am I insane? Obviously!! Seriously though, I don't have the foggiest idea how I even got here... but God does! I made my plans, but God directed my steps all along the way in a completely different direction than I had planned. For me, what has made and continues to make homeschooling and life in general not just 'worth living' but FUN is simple... pure trust placed fully in God, every single day regardless of my circumstances.

- **Ask for help.** This is yet another major weakness of mine to this day. I have a super duper hard time asking for help, even when I sorely need it! I actually had an incident that occurred not too long ago with a family member that has made it even harder for me to reach out when I need help. Every now and then, but only if I am really in a bind, I am finally getting fairly comfortable asking my mom for help with the kids - but even that is hard for me to do. My problem is guilt. I too often subconsciously (and not so subconsciously) feel like asking for help violates rule #1, which is don't complain - have a good attitude. Also, I see my job in life as a helper to others, especially my hubby, friends, and family members. So I feel like I should be doing more for them, not the other way around! And as far as my kiddos - I don't want them to grow up feeling like Mommy was always an incapable sicko. So... that puts a whole new twist on my guilt factor. Hard as it is to ask for help though - it's necessary to ask when you need it. Other people cannot read your mind. My husband is always trying to convince me of this. And I AM convinced. It is just very hard for me to live out those convictions. Try to prepare ahead of time if you can for the help you need. (yea, right - that never works for me because I don't know how I am going to feel from moment to moment - much less day to day!)
- **Pay for help.** It would be VERY EASY for me to pay for help (have a cleaning woman come in or better yet - a cook!) But I can't afford it. :(We had a cleaning lady come a few times when we lived in Illinois when I was at my worse health-wise a couple of years ago and it was WONDERFUL! If you can

afford it - DO IT!! And... don't feel guilty about it. I'd do it in a second if I could even barely afford it and if I can ever afford it again I can guarantee you there will be a lady with bucket & cleansers on my doorstep at least once a week!

- **Focus on your spouse.** Figure out what is most important to your spouse and try to make that your focus when you are able to do so. For instance, I have always cooked big meals at my house. For a while, my family went from eating well, to fending for themselves more often than not. One day my husband said something and it finally clicked. He said, don't worry about house cleaning, or laundry or anything else. If you could just focus on the kids and provide a nice meal when you can that would be the best. It made me realize that I was using my limited energy in the wrong places during the day. During my most productive time (for me late morning, early afternoon) I would focus on kids, chores, bills, errands, activities, cleaning, and more and by the time dinner time rolled around I was exhausted and in more pain and didn't have anything left over to cook a meal at all, especially all that's involved in cooking a healthy meal when you have three celiac's in the house! I finally "got it" that this one thing was more important to my husband than all those other things I had been in his eyes, wasting my energy on. Now, I try much harder (though I often fail) to have healthy dinners for the family as often as possible. With our health issues, this requires more effort.... What works for me is the crock pot. That way I can do the bulk of the work during my most energetic time). One dish meals. Using good quality frozen foods so it's quick and easy. Cooking more on my good days so I have leftovers for my not so good days. There are many different suggestions on this topic. One of my friends cooks all her meals for the week in one day and then she freezes them to reheat as needed. I could never do this because if I did I would be out of commission the entire next week recovering from the cooking day! YIKES!! If you don't have any special dietary needs, there are terrific new companies where you can go there for a few hours during one day and they have everything you need to prepare a week's worth of wonderful meals. Then you just bring them home and freeze them. Some of them encourage you to bring your kiddos with you and select and prepare the meals together. That could be a great solution. Of course, the best solution is to teach your

kids to do the cooking for you!

- **Assign chores** for every member of the family. Chore cards, chore charts, find out what works and use it. Be consistent. I have used various methods over the years depending upon the circumstances and kiddos. In Chapter 11, I show you from my original writing of this book I have our chore chart, which I continued to use for years. I now use Chore cards for my two youngest only. They are two-hole punched index cards made into a flip chart of sorts using metal ring clasps. I made the original cards for both using a single color marker (green for GO) and basic drawings for fun and site recognition for Elijah so that he could look at the pictures and know what to do even if he couldn't read the words. Their first card simply has their name on it. Then they flip and do what is on each card. They love these and do them with enthusiasm 99% of the time. As an example, Elijah's flips over his name and his next card is "brush your teeth" with a drawing of a toothbrush and toothpaste. He does that then comes back and flips to the next card which says "get dressed" and I've drawn a picture of a pair of pants and a shirt. After he's dressed he comes back and flips to the next card which says "clean room" with a picture of his bed & dresser, and his toy bins, etc. and so on. After all his chore cards are done (eat breakfast, clean up dishes, etc.) the next card says "Do school with Mommy" and we start school. J.Jay has added and continues to add his own cards to his as we go along. He added a card for each school subject and a card to practice piano. This method has worked great for us. Again, find a method that works well for your family and use it consistently. Consistency is the key.
- **Keep your house clean and safe.** Touchy subject for me, as my hubby is a neat freak and I was born a natural slob. I have come to very much enjoy a perfectly clean house over the years, but as my health has continued to deteriorate, so has my ability and energy (and desire?!?!?) to keep it perfectly clean, or even close to it, at all times. I mean, we LIVE there! With Greg's Asperger's it's a big issue for him, and a less than pristine home stresses him to no end. This is probably the biggest issue we don't see eye to eye on, but I desire to have a clean home for his sake. I have used various methods over the years, and now am using chore cards as I explained above. As you all probably know by now, nothing works unless Mom

(or Dad) reinforces it every day 24/7. This is a harder one for me to enforce as I just don't see it as important as other way to spend our valuable time. Our time is incredibly limited and precious - especially with homeschooling and my doing so much in our family business with HOMESCHOOLPOLY™. These days, if you drop by my house any given day, chances are it will NOT be clean. Did I mention that we also have two Golden Retrievers and a cat, all of which are inside animals? But it is generally safe - unless you are allergic to pet hair that is! Oh well, I try!

- I am also dealing with some very specific issues that make this issue even more challenging. Up until the past three - four years I had this always under control. Chores got done on a daily basis, routines were well set. Dad was happy, so life was pretty good when it came to housework!

Everything is different now due to some of the same things you may be dealing with, but for us coming directly out of various "health issues".

- Dad has Asperger's - likes routine, spotless house, no noise. Otherwise gets very stressed and his volume level rises.
- Mom has a spinal cord injury and is not allowed to lift more than 2 lbs. Has limited energy and resources, thus where and how time spent is precious. Also, not being able to often roam throughout house checking and re-checking often thinks things are in much better shape (chores-wise) than they really are! Also, Mom has MS so stress is a big factor. When Dad is stressed Mom tries to zone a bit (my term) to not allow stress to affect her. This frustrates Dad.
- We only have 3 kiddos left at home and one of them, Brittney, is very active in her private school. (One of the many reasons why we prefer homeschooling!) Due to her schedule she is not available to help out very much. Add to that the

fact that she's a teenager in a formal school setting which means she is smack dab in the middle of the forest. (Read "What About Socialization" to learn more about the forest I am referring to.) Also, I firmly believe that it is NOT God's plan for her to homeschool. With everything going on in the Berthume home, she really needed and continues to need a "break" if you will or she gets overwhelmed. She is very compassionate towards me and it is hard for her to see me going through some of the things I have gone through. God never gives us more than we can handle. I honestly feel like her staying home with as sensitive as she is to my health issues, it would be simply more than she can mentally and emotionally handle. God has a plan for her and is raising her up to do mighty things, of that I am sure.

- J.Jay also has Asperger's as well. A high functioning form of Autism. and one of the things we deal with is his inability to follow through and complete tasks. There is more to this than I can write about - but it makes for a more difficult situation than typical. He is not at all independent when it comes to many things. He is actually very dependent and specifically dependent on me. This comes into play for everything from completing his schoolwork, to doing his chores. Everything requires my presence for him to stay on track. He is in no way willfully disobedient, just not capable of staying the course as his mind overpowers his body!
- Elijah just turned 5 and is the baby of the family. We went through quite a bit with him before he was diagnosed with Celiac Disease. They actually thought he had leukemia. He was very tired, lethargic really. Was losing weight, not eating, barely playing, and couldn't even play T-ball. He was so tired I would go into his room and just find him asleep in his chair, or on the

floor at times! Ever since he was finally diagnosed and is now gluten-free, his energy levels are back, but he still tires easily. He is very much the "baby" of the family and I have experienced how fast they grow up already with my oldest (too fast!). I do baby him, too much I am sure, but I fully intend on continuing to baby him for as long as I can!

- And, I just added this little section after finishing most of this book. For now our nephew, his fiance and their almost 2 year old sweet baby girl are living with us as well. That's three more people to love, and mess up the house! They help clean it up too though and we are very much enjoying having them live with us so - it's all good!

So... don't think I'm someone who has it all together, because I am certainly NOT! Just ask my husband! This (housecleaning & chores, etc) is the thing I personally struggle with the most when dealing with health issues and that causes me the most stress on a daily basis. That said, here are some things I have learned over the years. Now I just need to put more of them into practice!

- Be consistent, be firm, don't let up. This is the #1 most important thing. You must have chore schedules and routines that take place every day. If they miss one day, make sure it's just ONE DAY! The longer you let a chore "slide" the harder it is to get it back under control. It is like the snowball affect. One it starts rolling downhill it takes everything (all the other chores, disciplines you've worked so hard at) down with it!
- Methods - Find what works for you and your kids. You must have some type of method to make sure the assigned chores actually get done on a regular basis. There are lots of resources for this and sometimes it's good to change methods periodically. Try to use positive reinforcement as much as possible to keep them on track. Star charts on poster boards are another method we've used that I haven't discussed elsewhere. This is a great method with positive

reinforcement. When they get so many stars they get a reward like taking them to their favorite park, eatery, or whatever they may enjoy the most. Finally, it's good to vary your system from year to year so it doesn't get old and boring, then again don't mess with a good thing if what you are doing is working well. How's that for contradictory advice?

HOMESCHOOLING - THE "NITTY GRITTY" OF ACTUALLY DOING SCHOOL WITH CHRONIC HEALTH ISSUES.

- **Be creative!** Homeschooling from bed
 - A big bed is a great place to snuggle and read together. Reading is always learning. The worse I get, the more we read!
- **Be firm, be consistent, yet be flexible.** Not contradictory. Have plan B days for bad days. Assign a book to read for a book report. Assign them to do some major research on a particular topic of interest or that is on your agenda to study soon. Have easy art projects handy, writing assignments, "Imagination" days. You name it - be creative and plan ahead of time for your bad days.
- **Be happy!!** Do what you can do, and do it all with a smile on your face. Smile instead of frown and when you feel really bad, just crack up! No, I don't mean lose your marbles and end up in a straight jacket, laugh hard and loud until you fall out of your chair. It really does wonders for your body and soul - not to mention your attitude! Fact is happiness is a choice and one that you need to make over and over again every day.
- **Play uplifting music, OFTEN.** I like Newsboys, praise & worship, hymns, classical, oldies, and my absolute favorite and most uplifting is J. Jay playing the piano. Whatever music YOU LIKE that is going to put you and keep you in a good mood - put it on!
- **Move your body as much as possible.** Don't stay in bed unless you HAVE TO! I find that on my bad days, even relocating to our sofa (which has awesome recliners built in)

does wonders for both my outlook on the day as well as the boys. (Not to mention my hubby, who truly does not like to see me in bed!)

- **Use a rolling book cart** for your schoolwork, books, & planner. (4 wheel cart with handle) for your schoolbooks. Easy access, kids can pull it to wherever you are schooling. I bought my first one at a homeschool fair and it was not cheap. I recently bought another to use for our conference materials at an office supply store for only \$19.99. It's perfect for me as not only is it convenient, it is easier on my spine as I am not supposed to lift or carry more than two pounds. (Yea, right!!!)
- **Maintain Focus.** Make sure the focus is on God, family, schoolwork - not just all about health issues. Set weekly goals as opposed to daily goals.

HOMESCHOOLING CHILDREN W/HEALTH ISSUES:

- **Be accommodating** to specific needs/issues, but don't be coddling. Make sure you challenge your child and allow them and encourage them to live up to their fullest potential.
- **Take advantage of the help that's available.** We have limited funds and limited insurance, but a fellow homeschooling friend who has a child with Asperger's as well, highly recommended a Behavior Therapist to me for J.Jay to help him deal with some of his anger issues now while they are still small issues. She said she is the best on the planet! I checked into our insurance and it turns out that she is also an MD therefore will be covered with just a co-pay. How great is that?! I am now on the waiting list and still praying about if that is even God's will or not. Either way my point is, don't think you have to do it all. Let God lead you to resources and be open to them when He does.
- **Utilize family members if possible.** I am continually amazed at the number of grandparents who are very involved in the homeschooling of their children! I see them helping out at co-op, taking the kids skating, and some even teaching certain subjects to their kids. Think of how/if Grandma or Grandpa can play a more active role in your homeschool and ask them. They may be absolutely delighted to get involved!

Right now we have our nephew, his fiance and their daughter living with us and they are terrific about helping out as needed. Unfortunately, my problem is ASKING for their help!

☹

- **Keep your expectations in line with reality.** Not too low, but not too high. Don't be so rigid that you don't adjust them as needed either! I really don't like writing this book as I am convicting myself more than I really want to be convicted. Enough said.
- **Set Goals.** If you aim at nothing sure you are sure to reach it!
 - Set goals in writing
 - Short term - this week, this month, this school year
 - Long term - within 5 years, by a certain age, etc.
 - Set your goals high, but not lofty. Keep them attainable. If (and when!) you get off track, don't beat yourself up! Just re-focus on the goal at hand and jump back in with both feet.
- **Listen to words of wisdom** when it comes to their treatments / big decisions / etc. Remember that every person they spend consistent time with, be it therapists, other adults, or friends will in some way affect who they become.
 - **God** - commit much prayer and be listening for His answers! Wait upon Him when unsure.
 - **Spouse** - both stay very involved in the big decisions, even if you are the main parent providing the day to day care. Regardless of how physically involved your spouse is or can be - keep them mentally and emotionally involved at ALL TIMES. Pray together.
 - **Close friends** - especially Godly ones whose children or situations are similar to your own.
 - **New friends** - be aware that God often sends certain

people your way for “such a time as this”. Be open to what He is doing.

- **Non-Immediate Family Members** - depends. Use your own judgement and be discerning.
- **Mom’s intuition** - We all know very well how well we know our own children! (How’s that for a some grammar fun?) We know when there is something wrong. Don’t be afraid or intimidated to rely on your own intuition. God made us the Moms and He gives us unique insight into our children, much as He has insight into us - His children! Trust your instincts!
- **Find Support.** Try to find someone (at least one) with a child who has similar issues as yours. Honestly, unless someone else has ‘walked in your shoes’ it is very hard for them to truly relate. Having someone who can truly relate is an invaluable resource. Just don’t let the time spent together turn into a big pity party as that’s counter-productive. Be honest, share the good, the bad, and the ugly - but don’t be pitiful. The goal is to encourage each other, not discourage. Always pray to that end. Also, encourage the children to interact as well if possible. This can prove to be a double bonus - good for the parent and good for the child.
- **Talk to your kid’s often.** About their likes and dislikes about the arrangement at home, their school/education, chores, etc. Ask for their opinions. What do they like best, what do they like least. Use this information to your and their advantage! We have a “poll” at least twice a year to assess their lives, and our homeschool from their eyes. I have them rate things on a scale of 1-10. Even though I am with them everyday I am amazed at the times their answers are completely different then I thought they would be on certain questions. Don’t assume you know how your child feels about everything. You may, but then again - you may be surprised!
- **Identify their strengths** and do all you can to provide them with the opportunities to excel in that area. This applies for ALL children, and is especially crucial for those with special needs.
 - For my oldest, who has no health issues, it is his people skills and leadership type personality that has always

been his biggest strength. So I have always encouraged him to get involved in as many community service activities and church leadership roles as possible. This is the area in which his confidence level has always been high and providing him the opportunity to shine in that area. I looked back at his high school transcript and here are some of the things listed that helped encourage his leadership strengths:

- Bi-weekly volunteer work.
 - Served as a L.I.T. **Leader In Training** in AWANA.
 - Nursing home ministry with monthly visits.
 - Took two missionary trips to Mexico.
 - Created and is successfully running his own business since age fifteen.
 - He was one of the founding members of our local church in California's leadership council.
 - He served on Compassion Project Leadership Council where he planned activities, attended meetings, and solely planned, organized, and was responsible for a December volunteer trip to the Cleveland City Mission.
 - He participated in Youth Alive Singers, a youth choir.
 - He was a member of the handbell choir which performed in church services, Christmas specials, etc.
 - He was also an assistant coach for local middle school girls basketball team in California. Helped during practices, attended games & tournaments, kept stats, refereed at times, and consulted with the head coach.
- For Brittney, now fifteen years old, her strengths are

sports and kiddos - especially babies! She loves basketball and fast pitch softball and is terrific as a babysitter. Her having more opportunity to play competitive sports is one of the main reasons we followed her and the Lord's leading to put her in a private Christian school for her high school years and somehow we manage to even pay the tuition month to month. (Honestly, we are a little late this month - but they are wonderful about it and we know from experience that God will provide!)

- Her freshman year she played JV basketball, JV softball, and Varsity track.
 - This year - her sophomore year she played Varsity basketball and is now playing on the Varsity fast pitch softball team as well. Softball was always my sport - I love watching softball!!
 - She deciding to be an aide for one of her school classes. During that time she helps the elementary children in the lunch room. They all love her!
 - She has also been a L.I.T. **Leader In Training** in AWANA for the past 3 years. This year she is helping out in the 3rd grade girls room.
 - She serves in the nursery/preschool at church on Sunday mornings, usually about once a month.
 - She is also an extremely valued babysitter to many families in our neighborhood!
- J.Jay who is eleven is a very gifted pianist. His strengths also include reading and science.
- He takes piano lessons, we have a piano and we have a keyboard for him at the warehouse as well. So he plays daily. I LOVE listening to him play!
 - We keep him supplied with music. For Christmas

We got him a selection of 20 piano concerto and sonata CDs. He loves Yanni and John Tesh so we've learned about both of them and watched their DVD concerts.

- We keep him very well supplied with quality books - LIBRARY!! Science- this is harder, but we also get lots of non-fiction books. He used to read 90% non-fiction. As he gets older and is enjoying more books, he is now getting into fiction as well. Love the lamplighter series, excellent books for boys. Also, he recently read Eragon and Eldest the first two of a trilogy written by a homeschooler.
 - He also enjoys documentaries very much, so we watch lots of them! Another show that we record and watch is "How it's Made" from science channel.
 - Finally, he really enjoys gymnastics as well. He's been climbing up poles and walking on his hands since he was teeny tiny! He was doing gymnastics last year, but we stopped for a while as our schedule got too full. We are planning on letting him return to our local homeschool gymnastics program as soon as our conference season is over.
- For my little Elijah who is five, he's very VERY into pretend play. He has already decided he wants to be a movie producer when he grows up. (Movie maker is what he was calling it, until J.Jay, his older brother, straightened him out!) Anyway, he has several imaginary friends. He loves to build towns and villages using Legos. His latest fascination has been pirates, but he also loves knights, horses, and all things manly! He spends many of his days dressing up in costumes and capes - everything from Bibleman to Superman, to dragons! He has hats, masks, and more and even an entire "armor of God" costume! Sometimes he will go the entire day in his Superman pajamas!

- We've set him up with a "costume" bin in his closet, we are always on the lookout for cheap items to add to his collection. We don't celebrate Halloween, but I do take advantage of the clearance sales afterwards. I got him a gorgeous red dragon costume a couple of years ago for only \$2! It was too big then, but now it fits him great and is one of his favorites. ☺
- He makes movies with J.Jay (and J.Jay makes movies for him) making up towns and villages using, Legos, toy bins, boxes, and anything else they can think of.
- He loves to listen to pirate music. He pretends he is a pirate while listening! He recently stood on a chair and was pretending with ships that were sitting on tables in Dad's office. He jumped down into the "water" which resulted in an encounter between his chin and the floor. Five stitches later after the emergency room doctor told him he was the best patient he had seen in a long time, he said "I prayed to God and He helped me." Awwwwwww....
- We give him plenty of unstructured free playtime to use and enjoy his amazing imagination. He can literally entertain himself for hours if allowed the freedom to do so. He also has regular "play dates" with his best friend, Joseph, who is another five year old homeschooler with a terrific imagination. The two of them together are like two peas in a pod. It's a hoot to watch them play!
- Since he is so into play, I don't push him on the academics as much as I did my other kiddos. I am enjoying the fact that he simply enjoys to play and pretend as much as he does. We do our devotions, phonics, math manipulatives, and reading of books on a regular basis but not much more than that unless he expresses the desire to do more.

- All of our kiddos are different. Find out what your child's strengths and interests are and give them as much opportunity as you can to allow them to succeed! Whether your children have health issues or not - every child needs to feel that he is "good at" something. It does wonders for their self-esteem. Don't try to fit them into your mold though. (Square child, round hole). God made them unique and has a plan for each one. Regardless of any health issues - and sometimes, as in my J.Jay, BECAUSE OF his health issues; every child has at least one gift. Help them find it and give them the tools to use it and develop it to its full potential!

Be THANKFUL for your and/or your child's health issues. I realized back many years ago, that if it weren't for my health issues I would not have continued to homeschool this long. Fact is, I have always loved working, I loved my career prior to homeschooling. Homeschooling is rewarding and invaluable when you step back and take a look. But day to day it's exhausting, tedious, and in the view of today's society, quite thankless. My selfish self would have gone back to work where I get my ego stroked and money in my pocket without a doubt, if not for the health issues. I am so thankful that God knows me and loves me well enough to do whatever is necessary to keep me home with my kids doing exactly what He knows is the most important thing I can be doing - raising up my children in the way they should go!

Now... let's go on to the original chapter I had written which was not entitled Homeschooling with Health Issues, but rather, Homeschooling the ADHD child. Here you go:

1999 ⇨ I really did not want to get into the issues I would have to address in order to write a chapter on homeschooling a child with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). I tried to talk myself out of it, and wrestled with myself for quite some time. As you can see, I lost. You see, my second child, Brittney, has been diagnosed with ADHD. Before I go any farther into this subject, let me share with you a letter I wrote to a very well known Christian family organization not too long after she was diagnosed. My hope in sharing this is that this letter, however personal, will help you in some way if you also are struggling with a child who has this disorder. The name of the organization has been omitted to protect the innocent!

Dear [Christian Family Organization],

I am writing this to you in sincere hopes that this will wind up in your hands, and not be answered by a member of your staff. I highly value your opinion and would very much like some advice and to know where you stand on this issue as I present it. I am a "veteran" homeschooler (have been homeschooling for five years), the "Chairmom" (President) of our local homeschool support group, and most importantly a wife and mother of three. But here is the kicker.... I have an ADHD child.

It seems that to homeschool and have an ADHD child is not allowable in today's homeschooling culture. The given opinion (which I was forced to subscribe to until I simply could no longer) is that homeschooling "cures" ADD. Many "experts" do not believe that ADD or ADHD is even a valid disorder, but rather one that has been created by the public school system and their 'one size fits all' type learning environment, and/or overcrowded classrooms. To think that a homeschooled child would not only truly suffer from ADHD, but need medication as well, is unheard of. This can only leave the homeschooling mother in my situation to believe that she must be doing something wrong.

The letter went on to get their advice, but it was with this mind set that I had struggled and plugged along with my daughter Brittney, trying to cure this disorder through our homeschooling efforts. But to no avail.

I wrote this into my journal on the day I "gave up" and finally took her to our family doctor.

Today has been one of the most difficult ones in my life. I have known for quite some time now, more than a year, that Brittney has ADHD. I convinced myself that since I am homeschooling her, I could forgo the usual treatment of medication. I also was convinced that not giving in and having her formally diagnosed and medicated was the best thing for her. I didn't want her to be "labeled" with any type of a disorder or disability. Also, I now realize, I did not want to be labeled either. As a weak mother who succumbs to such an "overly diagnosed" disorder and sees medication as the answer to her problems. I now see that I was clearly wrong.

Brittney's uncontrollable and negative behavior has been worsening day by day and I was convinced that I could control it. As I watched my family fall apart, I learned that I have just about as much control over her ADHD as I had my miscarriages - None. God, in his Sovereignty, gave Brittney this disorder and He has total control over

it... Not I. Just as I could not keep my babies in my womb, I cannot ignore, dismiss, or cure Brittney from ADHD.

After much prayer and tears, with Greg (my husband)'s encouragement, I made an appointment with our family doctor. He spent some time with Brittney asking her open-ended questions, looking at her nail-bitten fingers, and just observing her. He also consulted at length with me and had me complete an in-depth questionnaire both from a mom's and a teacher's point of view about Brittney's personality, behavior, and tendencies over the past six months plus. He confirmed what I already knew, "Diagnosis: ADHD."

It actually turns out that, according to the doctor, I am already doing many of the recommended "right" things for her, "behavior-wise" such as, written rules and consequences, set daily routine, set daily chores, and consistent FIRM discipline. But Brittney can't manage herself on the "inside" and how she feels and reacts to circumstances regardless of anything I do. He said the thing she really needs to "feel normal" on the inside is medication to balance out her brain. The medication is actually a "stimulant" which stimulates the portion of the brain which helps one to focus and concentrate. This area does not function properly in someone with ADHD.

Reflecting back, I can remember seeing a prime time news show about ADHD and ALL the kids that are being "thrown on Ritalin just so the teacher can gain some control in her classroom". I decided right then and there... "That's something I will NEVER do!" Well, once again, God proved me wrong. Open mouth, insert foot. I have to believe that the majority of parents out there really do love their children and thus wouldn't have them on medication that they didn't feel was beneficial to them. Unfortunately, I have seen too much in this world to not realize that there are those parents out there that may not be justified in medicating their young ones. They are the ones that make children like Brittney suffer without medication for an undue period of time, simply due to the stigma they have created.

I have to admit, there is a certain "stigma" attached to Ritalin. One that I am now uncomfortable with, but I am sure, knowing me, one that I will soon be defensive against. Needless to say, we walked out of the doctor's office today with a prescription for Ritalin. (The lowest dose to start out with.) The doctor assured me, that even though I am reluctant in going down this road,

it will prove to be the best thing for Brittney. After all, what's more important: My feelings or shortcomings (I should have been able to handle this with her on my own!); Or, Brittney's physical and mental well-being? Putting it that way makes the answer seem obvious and makes not trying out medication in her case, seem very selfish.

I look for nothing spectacular, but hope for a calmer, gentler, more stable daughter. I am treading on new ground, at least for me. I feel I need more prayer than Brittney, as she is thrilled at the prospect of "not having a constant stomach ache" and feeling "calmer" her words, not mine. I pray that I will also be a calmer, gentler, and more loving mother so she may learn by my example.

1999 ⇨ That was only a few short months ago, but already I have reached the "defensive" stage that I predicted above. It seems that after heading down this road I have come across, even more abundantly, the mind set that homeschooling can and should cure ADD. I know from experience, this is not always the case. I recently read yet another homeschooling book (the title of which I will not name) and in it the author devoted an entire chapter under the heading "Can Homeschooling Cure ADD?" Here are some excerpts from this chapter.

1. "Although the kids are encouraged to "Dare say no to drugs," they must say "yes" every morning to a very potent drug that alters their physical and mental behavior." (He was peaking in reference to the fact that four million American schoolchildren take the stimulant drug Ritalin every day...)
2. "A July 1994 *Time* magazine cover story remarked the fifteen years ago no one had ever heard of ADD, but now it was the most common disorder in American children. How could a genetically based affliction suddenly arise out of nowhere? *Time* had no answer."
3. "But one thing we do know is that virtually every ADD case history discussed by authors involved some traumatic experience in early education."
4. "We are all capable of becoming ADD under certain circumstances that rattle our nerves and cause extreme frustration."

Simply put... this infuriates me. Here is an "expert" on homeschooling. His credentials are listed as a writer, observer, lecturer, and educator. The majority of his opinions I would otherwise agree with and value. But, in my humble opinion, he is coming straight out of left field on this issue. It makes me wonder, has he ever sat in a room for one hour with a true ADHD child? I feel that experience alone might alter his strict viewpoint.

The first quote I listed above totally pooh-poohs using Ritalin (unless of course you want to supply your children with "drugs"). What happens if your child has Diabetes? Are you actually going to supply them with the "drug" Insulin? Not if you agree with his viewpoint.

The second quote negates the validity of ADD as a disorder in the first place. All those doctors must be wrong!

Quote number three assumes a great deal. Brittney, for instance, has been homeschooled all of her life. She has never suffered from any "traumatic experience" in her education. She read fluently at five and now, at seven years old, reads at a fifth grade level. She loves reading and learning. She loves being homeschooled. Her problems did not result from trauma in her education. Her problems came with her from birth and came to a head gradually. Before taking Ritalin she couldn't even focus on her school work because her brother was, as she put it "breathing too loud".

Finally, the last quote is just pure silliness. If ADD comes and goes due to circumstances, it is not ADD. In order for ADD to be diagnosed it must be an ongoing disorder, circumstances can cause similar symptoms, but cannot cause ADD for an ongoing period of time.

Yes, ADD and ADHD really does exist, even among homeschoolers! I know well over a hundred homeschoolers and I know several of them who have an ADD child as well. My hope is to take away some of the quilt feelings that are typically associated with ADD and Ritalin.

As mentioned above, the day she was finally diagnosed was one of the most difficult days of my life. I was flooded with so many feelings, and none of them were positive. I sat down and wrote in my journal, some of which I included above, to vent and to use to explain our circumstances to my non-immediate family members, such as my mother and mother-in-law, as well as my sisters.

Considering that I am certainly not an expert on this subject I have decided to include this chapter mainly just to share the struggles we have had in

dealing with this condition. My hope is that in sharing our story you may be able to find a nugget of encouragement to help you if you are struggling with this same issue.

I did receive a very encouraging reply to the above letter that I wrote, with which they included various brochures, a cassette tape, and a book. They confirmed to me that ADD and ADHD are definitely true medical disorders. The brochures, tape, and book that they sent were all designed to help me in dealing with this very real disorder. Just that confirmation alone did wonders for me!

At the time of this writing, ^[1999] it has been just over six months since that "hard day" that Brittney was diagnosed with ADHD. She was on the Ritalin for the first four months. It took about three months to find the right dosage for her. We decided to take her off it completely though in January of 1999 because the decrease in her appetite was causing her to lose weight. We didn't want her to become too thin. Another aspect of the medication that I was not happy with was that it seemed to affect her personality. Before being on medication she was always smiling. A very happy go lucky little girl. We noticed that gradually her smile disappeared. She wasn't unhappy by any means, but she only seemed to smile when she had a reason too. That was one side effect that I couldn't live with. But, we still had a child with ADHD who couldn't complete anything off medication with the slightest bit of activity around her. (Even the noise of her brother's breathing!).

To make it possible to get through our homeschooling day and for her to be able to concentrate and do her work, my husband, Greg, who had worked out of our home for the past 3½ years got an external office. He now works there the majority of the day (although he can still work at home if and when he wants to). This major change has served two purposes for our family.

First of all, Brittney is very much a Daddy's girl and it was very disruptive every time he even walked past her (to get coffee or whatever) while she was doing school. She would immediately jump up and shout, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!!" and jump all over him and want hugs. It would then take at least thirty minutes to get her back in focus on whatever schoolwork she was working on prior to his appearance. So with Daddy not at home during our school day, one very real distraction was eliminated completely. (No offense, Dad.)

The second, and most important purpose Greg's external office served is that it freed up his home office to be used as a quiet room. We converted his old office into a study and Brittney now goes in there and closes the door and has complete quiet so that she can complete her math assignments (after first receiving

instruction from me, of course), her writing assignments, and whatever other work she may be doing each day that requires her to concentrate and/or write. She does wonderful reading even with distractions because she has an uncanny ability to tune EVERYTHING else out while she is reading. She can only do this while reading though. So the study serves the purpose for all of her other schoolwork. So she is not isolated in the study the whole time we are doing school, her subjects are in order so that she rarely has two writing assignments in a row. For instance, she'll do her math in the study, then come out and do her history in the classroom. Next, she will do her language in the study, and then come back out and do her reading in the classroom. And so on until all her schoolwork is completed for the day.

Our days are still difficult, but having the study has made it possible for me to continue homeschooling her (and not neglect her studies) and keep her off medication as well, at least for now. We are just taking it one day at a time.

Brittney would most likely be in trouble more often than not, if she were in any type of a formal school setting. I fear that she would lag behind academically as well, simply due to the inevitable distractions around her during each day. In our homeschool though, Brittney, at seven years old is well ahead academically. She reads above grade level, is an excellent speller, and she even does great in math (but she does NOT enjoy it!). She is thriving and happy. What more could a mother with an ADHD child ask for? (Other than an aspirin! Ha ha)

If you are homeschooling an ADD or ADHD child, rest assured that you are not alone! Don't feel like you should be able to cure this disorder because you are homeschooling. You do have an excellent advantage though. Be thankful that you are in a position to homeschool as the very nature of ADD makes homeschooling an ideal way for such a child to be educated with the least amount of emotional scars in the process. But, pray without ceasing... hard. Homeschooling any child is difficult, when one or more have a disability or disorder of any type, that makes your job even tougher. Look at the bright side... that may also be what makes it more needed and thus even more rewarding in the end.

2007 ⇒ Brittney went back on medication, but a different type that did not affect her personality nearly as much and although she's had quite a few medication sabbaticals she stayed on it for the most part, for years. It came down to the simple fact that off the medication she could not function on a daily basis not only in our homeschool, but in our family life.

She decided a few months ago that she wanted to go off of her medicine completely. She truly felt like she could function well enough in school and at home if she really put forth the effort. She went off and has been off since. She struggles more with her grades now that she's off of it, but she is learning as she matures how to compensate. I like her even more when she's not on medication as her happy, bubbly personality is so fun to be around and she seems more consistent with being in a good mood when she is not on any medication. She had to get to the point where she wanted to go off of it and was willing to do what it takes to make up for the difficulties that it causes her in school and at home.

I am so proud of her as I have been trying to get it across to her for years that ADHD is a gift. I do honestly consider it a gift. I have it as well and am incredibly thankful as it gives me that extra physical and mental energy that more often than not keep me going in spite of pain. If you or any of your children have ADHD I encouraged you to view it as a gift as well.

UPDATE! Brittney was not able to stay off of her medicine for very long after all. Shortly before this book went to press, her grades started to plummet and she could not bring them up. She is very smart, but in a classroom setting must she work extremely hard to overcome the distractions. Without her medication she was completely unable to focus well enough and was missing too much vital information. The second day she went back on her medicine she took a French test and got a ninety on it! Point taken.

TWO FINAL THOUGHTS ON HOMESCHOOLING WITH HEALTH ISSUES:

1. Look at each day as a single puzzle piece - I picture a beautiful puzzle of fall trees. If we just take one piece out of the box and look at it we have no clue what it is or where it may fit. Each day in life is very much like that. God sees the entire picture and it's beautiful! He knows exactly where and how each day fits together to form the amazing artwork of the life He is giving us.

Also we can take this analogy one step further in that as we grow in our days we are adding more and more pieces to the puzzle. At some point we look back and can begin to see a beautiful picture beginning to take shape. Even though

today's puzzle piece make not make any sense whatsoever, we can be confident that God works all things out for the good of those who love him. Even today's confusing puzzle piece is necessary to complete the beautiful picture of our life. He sees it all - and it's very good!

2. Be careful comparing yourself, your kiddos, or your situation to mine or anyone else's! "I'm worse off than she is!" or, "I'm not that bad, why am I not dealing with this better?" Rather take the circumstances of others and use all things to inspire and encourage you in your daily life. And remember that someone else's huge painful boil on their leg, does not make your stubbed toe any less painful! Huh?!?!

Support Groups and Co-ops

Chapter 8

*The day begins with good intent
"I'll do a lot today"*

*School is over, time for lunch
Then "activities away"*

*Before I've even had a chance
To wink or blink an eye*

*I soon find out the time has come
To bid the day goodbye*

*But as I lie in bed at night
And take stock of what I've done*

*I realize that, day versus me...
Again, the day has won*

1999 ⇨ The biggest need a homeschooler has (besides God's grace, of course) is the support of other homeschoolers. But.... the one thing that the homeschooler typically doesn't have much left over after meeting the needs of her own children and family and after serving in her church, is time for yet another commitment - a homeschool support group! If you add those two up, you realize that's a problem! I have served as the "chairmom" of a local support group called H.E.L.P.S. (Home Education Links for Parent Support) for two years. At writing, H.E.L.P.S. boasts a membership of just over one hundred families. I don't know what I would do without the friendships, support, field trips, activities, and all the other things I have gotten out of H.E.L.P.S. Thus, I feel very strongly about the need of homeschoolers to have an active support group to call their own. If I didn't feel this strongly, I certainly wouldn't be spending my time serving as the chairmom! I know there are many homeschoolers out there, "doing it all on their own" and happy that way. I can respect that, but I would like to use this chapter to make a plea to those, as well as all other homeschoolers to emphasize why I think support groups can be a great asset to homeschoolers.

2007 ⇨ Let me interrupt here to say I am now for the most part one of those mom's who are out there "doing it all on their own" that I spoke so harshly about above. There are two reasons for this. First of all, we have moved seven more times since I wrote the above. Secondly, the homeschool support groups have died down significantly and the co-op climate has grown to incorporate both in many instances. There has been such change in that area and where I am now there is not a group that really fits my needs well. I will explain more later. So... keep in mind as you are reading the rest of what I originally wrote, that I was way too opinionated 8 years ago!

1999 ⇨ To show some of the benefits of being involved in a homeschool support group, let me first list some of the things that most groups offer. Of course, these offerings will vary from group to group, but I will list some things that our group has to offer so that you can get an accurate picture of what a "typical" support group might consist of.

Monthly Newsletter
Monthly Support Meetings
Annual Curriculum/Book Fair
Field Trips
Teen Builders (a homeschooled teens group)
Membership Directory
Library
Pizza-Hut Book-It Program
TCBY Reading Incentive Program
Physical Education

Annual Spelling Bee
Annual Geography Bee
Mentoring Program (for supporting new homeschoolers)

Wow! Isn't that a lot? As you can see, there are many things here that you cannot do, or at least not do justice to, without others! Like a spelling bee for instance, you must have a group of students in order to hold a spelling bee! How can a support group afford to offer all those things? That brings me to a very important reason to be involved in a support group... *Resources.* As homeschoolers, we are our best resource, sometimes our only resource. When I say "resources", I am referring to the things I listed above, in addition to other classes or programs that can serve to enhance your homeschooling efforts. We, individually and as a school, are not a large private or for-profit organization that is well funded and can pay for the resources that we need. Throw in the fact that most homeschoolers are already on a tight budget, and you will soon realize that paying for such resources may not even be an option. In light of this, we must put forth a "cooperative" effort into providing these resources if we wish to have them available for our homeschool. It is up to us, as dedicated homeschooling moms and dads to put forth this effort. I believe if each of us, as homeschoolers, will play a small role, then none of us should have to become "burned out" trying to do the bulk of the work themselves.

When we lived in Florida, it seemed that this load was spread pretty evenly. Unfortunately, in South Carolina we have very few volunteers, each carrying too large of a load. This should not be the case. As history has shown here in our area, it will not work for very long. We have great groups that start up and are booming for a few years, but then fizzle out when those few enthusiastic souls who were carrying it, got tired and lost their enthusiasm. We need to spread the load in order to assure success over the long haul.

I would like to encourage each of you to find a local support group, claim it as your own, support it, and serve in it! If there are no local support groups in your area, find some other homeschooling moms and start one! (It's not as hard as you think.) The homeschool movement is growing very rapidly and often the easy way for new and veteran homeschoolers alike, is to sit back and reap the benefits of the groups that are already established. I urge you to do a little bit of sowing as well. Plan one field trip, host a meeting, call a fellow homeschooler and offer a shoulder, it doesn't have to be big. You never know, your efforts may just alleviate some of the additional stress from another homeschooler and in turn help her to continue in the role she is serving.

✻ **Resources:** There are lots of resources on the internet to find out what is available in your area. A specific website I recommend is: **www.hslda.org**.

Just click on your state and you can easily find contact information for your state and local support groups. Another great website for information is our ministry site: **www.HomeschoolersConnecting.com**! This our free membership homeschool community site where homeschoolers worldwide are invited and welcome to ask their questions and share their knowldge! We must come together as homeschoolers and realize that we need each other. As homeschoolers, often our very nature is to solve problems on our own, this may be a good attribute in some ways, but I fear it's detrimental in others. God himself urges us to stick together. *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."* - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Even though we may have decided to homeschool for different reasons, and we may use different approaches, there is none other who can be there for us in the same way as another homeschooler. The support and prayers of other homeschoolers should be highly valued. In many cases they have been there, done that... and understand.

2007 ➡ Not only has the makeup of homeschool support groups and co-ops changed considerably over the years, but so has the sheer number of homeschoolers! This has made this one of the only chapters in the book that has actually become a bit outdated. I still very much value the support and prayers of other homeschoolers, but I actually get that support in other ways at this point.

It seems that many of the good old local homeschool support groups have either been replaced by, or morphed into co-ops over the years. For the most part I only see co-ops as 'gravy' if you will, and do not give it much weight towards our homeschool education/curriculum. So, I prefer co-ops that are more physical or social in nature as opposed to purely academic. We did a co-op last year in which Elijah did K3, and for J.Jay they had Latin, Ancient History, and Zoology. He actually had some of the very issues I spoke about in the socialization chapter. J. Jay is short for his age, and yet advanced for his age. He was picked on a bit, and was not learning much of anything while there, because he does not learn well in the traditional way.

By the end of last year he was adamant that he did not want to return to co-op this year, and at that time, Elijah said he didn't really care either way. So, we were not planning on doing the co-op this year at all. About a week before it started back, J. Jay and Elijah both declared that they did indeed want to do co-op again after all!

We were able to get in at the last minute. Elijah was in K4 (he just turned five in November of 2006!) and J. Jay went into the middle school class, which consisted of sixth through eighth grades. I was quite concerned about how they would treat him, considering his size, but he didn't think twice about it.

J. Jay's classes were life skills, the continuation of Ancient History and Composition. It didn't take J. Jay long to get frustrated, especially with the homework they assigned for the composition class. He is a perfectionist who wants to please everyone (ie. teachers) who hates to write! (ie. Asperger's) It was simply not a good mix. He stuck it out and didn't complain though, but he was not very happy going. He fit in socially quite well though, which was a very cool thing! Elijah deals with fatigue issues so he would love it or hate it (his co-op class that is) depending upon his energy level that day. We decided not to return to co-op the second semester of this school year, as not only was it not meeting our needs, it was actually adding to J. Jay's frustration levels and taking too much time away from our homeschooling!

I would love to get them involved in a co-op next year, but not one that is academic in nature. The support groups are more online now as opposed to in person. Most activities are posted via email and we pick and choose those in which we wish to participate. Frankly, it works well for us this way as my health is precarious and it is hard to plan way ahead anyway. We do roller skating twice a month, and we do various field trips. Geography Bees and Spelling Bees are offered through various groups, so there are lots of choices out there. I do long for the day of support group meetings where a whole bunch of homeschool mom's just get together to gab and eat without the kiddos in tow. We have even been praying for direction on somehow using our HOMESCHOOLPOLY™ warehouse for homeschoolers, but are still unsure of how. I could start a support group just for the purpose of sharing and to meet that desire I have down deep, but in all honesty my cup is full (notice I didn't say runneth over!) and I am just too tired to start one. So, if you know of such a group close to me... please let me know!

Your Mission

Recognize It and Remember It!

Chapter 9

*Oh Lord, I want to hear your voice
And know it's not my own*

*To be sure of your will for me
And not feel so alone*

*I'm so afraid, I will misjudge
And think my will is from you*

*Because I know my weaknesses
And what I tend to do*

*I'm quick to act, and slow to think
"It's all under control"*

*I try to do things for myself
But that can take its toll*

*I need to stop and listen
And be sure the voice I hear*

*Is not just that of my own thoughts
Ringing in my ear*

1999 ⇨ What is your mission? I went back and forth with myself about whether or not to add this chapter in a book about homeschooling. I felt the Lord's urging for me to include it. I want to use this chapter to ground those of you who are just getting started, or just thinking about getting started. I also want to use it to alleviate burnout for veteran homeschoolers. There are many homeschoolers who serve in areas other than their own homeschool. Some even serve in a foreign mission field. Many homeschoolers though wonder how they can serve God in another area, when they are spending so much time with their children and homeschooling in general. The pressure that we tend to put upon ourselves is often the catalyst to homeschool burn-out.

2007 ⇨ **Boy, was I one to speak! I've been to burnout and back again more times than I care to admit. Ok, back to the original...**

1999 ⇨ I think much of this pressure would be alleviated if we simply viewed homeschooling for what it really is... **OUR MISSION!** Yes, homeschooling is what you should consider your mission work. After all, hopefully God is the one who called you to go down this road, right? As a homeschooler, your mission is: found in Proverbs 22:6 - *"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."* If you look upon homeschooling as your mission from God, it will make it much more worthwhile and less burdensome in the process. After all... homeschooling is hard! We need something to keep us in focus. Let us not forget that the Lord has given each of His children a very specific mission. Jesus said, *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*- Matthew 28:19-20a That is known as the 'Great Commission'. Homeschooling provides an opportunity to fulfill that mission by discipling our children.

2007 ⇨ **Amen, Honey. You go girl!**

1999 ⇨ Since homeschooling is your mission, I think every homeschooling family should have a mission statement! Our family and school mission statement is: *"Whatever you do, work at with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."* Colossians 3:23 I think if each of our family members will act out this mission statement daily, we will each be shining a light into a dark world. Here's an example of how this works, even in jobs that seem somewhat insignificant.

Have you ever been to a restaurant drive-thru and the person taking your money says in a dull and lifeless voice, "That'll be nine dollars and eighty-seven cents, Ma'am". You pay her and she replies with a monotone, "Thanks." Off you drive, probably none worse for the wear. But, maybe you've been on another day and were greeted by a much friendlier employee who said in a cheery voice. "Hi!

How are you today?" and then pauses for your reply. After you say your canned answer of, "I'm fine." She smiles and continues, "Your total comes to nine dollars and eighty-seven cents." After paying her, she looks right into your eyes, smiles and says, "Thank you. I hope you have a good day!" What happens then? You drive away feeling BETTER!! She added some light into your day.

My hope is for my kids and myself to add so much light into others' days that some may ask, "What makes you so happy?" or "Why are you always in such a good mood?" Or maybe their employer will say, "You are very well-liked by all the other employees! How do you do it?" That in turn provides an open door to share the gospel of Jesus Christ! A gospel that will be more readily accepted when they have already seen you living it out in "whatever you do".

I urge you, as homeschoolers, to consider homeschooling as your mission. I also urge you to pray about establishing a mission statement for your family. Don't fret that you are too tired after homeschooling to serve the Lord. Remember that you are already serving the Lord because you homeschool. All other service to him is like icing on the cake!

I do want to point out though that cake tastes much better with icing!! So don't use the fact that homeschooling is your mission to give you an automatic out to all other areas of service! But do pray and heed the Lord's direction before committing to many other areas of service. Don't over commit to serving in so many other areas that you are too spent to properly homeschool your own children. Even Jesus himself made sure that he left himself with time to pray and seek His Father's will. He knew that His mission, being the cross, was the first priority during His days here on this earth. I think that if God has called you to homeschool, it should be your **number one** mission. So if you are homeschooling, make sure you keep your priorities such that homeschooling comes first, before all other areas of service.

2007 ☞ I really don't know what more to even add to that! I still wholeheartedly agree with everything I said above. Amazing, isn't it? I haven't lived up to it very well, but I agree more than ever!

I was thinking after reading this about where I stand now with my mission priorities and I took this opportunity to realign them as they should be:

Mission #1

Homeschooling my kiddos, serving my hubby and trying to be the best mom I can to my grown son and daughter-in-law. I am learning many hard lessons along the way in this last

endeavor as I am treading on new ground and not always very good at it! I just pray I am a fast learner!

Mission #2

Being an AWANA leader. I just love my AWANA girls!!

Mission #3

Encouraging other homeschooling parents, especially moms! That was and still is my desire in originally writing and now updating this book. That is why I speak at homeschool conferences or conventions whenever I have the opportunity. And finally, I strongly see that as the purpose in how God inspired us to design the board game HOMESCHOOLPOLY™. To encourage and validate homeschooling parents and to minister to them with lots of valuable information on great homeschool companies that are out there that they might not have otherwise known about. And to encourage them financially by having lots of discounts and coupons to go with the game. In all honesty, we don't even make enough money from the advertising sales of the Homeschool Resource Guide we include with the game to pay for the cost of printing it. But it is something that I have felt strongly about since God inspired Greg with the idea of doing HOMESCHOOLPOLY™ in the first place. So, I hope in some small way God has used me to inspire you. If He has, it makes everything worthwhile... and then some!

Oh yea, and back to Colossians 3:23 - ""Whatever you do, work at with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." which I referred to above. Let's just say that is still very much our mission statement and it has been our homeschool verse for years. Every one of my kids can easily recite it (hopefully without rolling their eyes in the process!) because I say it so often! I guess some things never change.

A Homeschooler's Reputation

Blah Blah Blah

Chapter 10

*Nobody can accept me
Just the way I am
It doesn't matter who they are
They've always got a plan*

*First I should do this
Then I should do that
And maybe if I'm REALLY GOOD
They'll pat me on the back*

*I really do quite like myself
Just the way I am
But for others that's not good enough
Because I'm not like them*

*The war is raging inside of me
To prove myself again
Day after day I push myself
Will the battle ever end?*

*Everyone is different, this I know,
But how happy I would be
If I had a friend who liked me
Just because I'm "me"*

*I do have one who loves me so
Just the way I am
His name is Jesus, He died for me
The sacrificial Lamb.*

1999 ⇨ God loves you! Isn't that an awesome feeling? To know that the creator of the universe knows the very number of hairs on your head... and loves each one! He loves you so much that He sent His son to die on a cross for *your* sins! If only everyone else felt the same about you, life would be much easier. But they don't. No person on this earth is capable of the kind of love that God offers. After all, God IS love!

Since we all have a sinful nature you are very likely to run across others who may not love you at all. They may not even like you! They may even think that you are ruining your kids by homeschooling them. We have already addressed this issue when it comes to family members in a previous chapter. But, what about when it comes to complete strangers? Does it really matter what they think of you or of homeschooling, for that matter? The answer is... YES! Everything you do and say will influence strangers, either positively or negatively, in their opinion of homeschoolers in general. Let's take a closer look.

Do You Homeschool?

It is inevitable that whenever I take the kids shopping with me during "normal" school hours (early afternoon usually) a cashier, another mom in line, or whoever, will ask THE question, "Are the kids out of school today?" I know there are many homeschoolers that have come up with clever answers to that question, not wanting to continually get into a long conversation about homeschooling. Some of the ones I have heard are "No, they got out of school early today." or "No, they've already been to school." or a funny one that I like is, "No. They are on a field trip." (shuts 'em up, but still makes them stop and think!)

I tend to always just answer the question directly. I have never been one to shy away from a possible conversation! Especially about something I am so committed to such as homeschooling. So my answer is always the same, "No. We homeschool!" Said with as much enthusiasm as I can muster. It's hilarious some of the reactions I get. Everything from "Well... good for you!" to "You've got to be kidding! You teach them AT HOME?!?!?" To some comments that are downright personal and sometimes even rude, like... "Are you qualified? Are you a certified teacher?" I always try to answer the questions as openly and politely as I can. My ultimate goal is to smile and be very gentle and confident in my answers. After all, "*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*" -Proverbs 15:1 I have often thought of bringing copies of my poems along so I could just pull out the appropriate one and say, "Here, read this later!" But, I can't imagine how I could do that gently, so that solution is just going to have to remain a fantasy for me!

Most of the population today are simply not educated about homeschooling. Due to this lack of knowledge they often have a picture in their mind of what they think homeschooling is, however accurate or inaccurate. My goal is to influence that mental picture for the good of all homeschoolers. I would like to encourage each and every homeschooler to consider three things when it comes to speaking to strangers about homeschooling.

2007 ⇨ That is simply no longer the case! These days it is rare to meet someone who does NOT know at least one family who homeschools. Of course I am sure there are more homeschoolers in some areas than others, but for at least the past four years in Ohio, Illinois, and now in South Carolina homeschooling is becoming very commonplace. I still get some of the questions I listed above, but it is now the exception rather than the rule. When anyone finds out we homeschool more often than not we are met with praise rather than any negativity.

1999 ⇨ First of all, you may be the first and only homeschooler this person has ever met. How they remember you may very well be how they will view all homeschoolers in general from that time forward. For all of our sakes, make a good impression!

2007 ⇨ As I said above, this is no longer the norm. Yea!! BUT, it is still just as important to make a good impression! Read on...

1999 ⇨ Secondly, if you decide to use a clever answer and avoid their questions altogether, you are giving up the opportunity to positively influence someone's opinion of homeschoolers. God may even be wanting to use you to plant a seed for them or someone else they know to homeschool their children in the future. Don't miss that opportunity. It may not seem like a big deal to you at the time, but while we can only see one little piece of the puzzle of our lives at a time... God sees the whole big picture! Listen for His prodding, and don't miss any opportunities that arise.

2007 ⇨ Now that homeschooling has become more of a mainstream educational choice, this may very well be even more true now than it was then!

I Am Thinking About Homeschooling!

1999 ⇨ Finally, I am constantly amazed at how often someone will say, "Oh, I

am thinking about doing that next year. Are there many homeschoolers around here?" or "My friend wants to homeschool but she doesn't really know how to get started." and sometimes, "Oh, I homeschool too!" I have had lots of other questions as well from people searching for real direction. I always give them information about our homeschool support group and how to contact the group for more information, a newsletter, and so on. Sometimes I even give them my home telephone number (don't tell my hubby this, he thinks I get too many calls already!) and offer my help to get them on the right track. I love to share with them that yes, there are lots of other homeschoolers in the area. I like watching their eyes light up when I go on and on about the field trips we have, the homeschool roller skating, the parent support meetings, and so on. The relief and happiness on their face after sharing this information is worth every extra minute I spend talking to them... and more. I delight in any opportunity to encourage homeschooling parents so they do not have to continue to struggle alone.

2007 ☞ This is now the norm! Who'da thunk? ☺

Behavior Issues

1999 ☞ Another thing I want to discuss briefly when it comes to a homeschooler's reputation is the behavior of your children. Remember, everything you do and say reflects back on homeschoolers in general. That includes everything your children may do and say. (Scary, isn't it?) Be aware of how your kids behave, especially when you are at a homeschool type functions such as a field trip. Often the ones who may be hosting or teaching this field trip are non-homeschoolers. They may also judge homeschoolers in general based upon how different the children are in comparison to the typical field trips they give to public and private schooled children. In other words, if two homeschoolers are exceptionally disruptive, or keep interrupting the speaker, they may get the impression of homeschooled kids as being loud and maybe even rude. On the other hand, if the homeschooled students are polite and courteous, and ask honest, well thought out questions when appropriate, they will get the impression that homeschoolers are very well-mannered and sociable, not to mention smart! Don't put yourself under too much pressure, I am speaking in extremes. But do be aware of the impression that you and your children will leave behind.

2007 ☞ On the other hand, if your kids are loud and obnoxious like mine tend to be, since they take after their mom, they may just think... they are being kids! I was so judgmental back then, wasn't I? Having one kiddo with ADHD and another with Asperger's Syndrome has given me an entirely new outlook on the

pressure I had been putting on myself and unfortunately others when I originally wrote this. Above is the ideal, I still sincerely want and expect my kids to be well-mannered, sociable and smart! I now realize that perfection is unobtainable so I am generally quite happy if my kids don't embarrass me in public! Seriously, none of my kids have ever had a problem being social, they all tend to talk too much if anything! Anyway, expect the best from your kids, but at the same time - don't expect more than they are capable of. Keep it real!

1999 ⇨ The final issue is how you deal with your children in those same types of situations. A couple of times, I have witnessed a homeschool mom "swat" her child in public. Once right in the middle of a field trip! Granted, God's word tells us to discipline our children, "*He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*" - Proverbs 13:24 But I believe that is a personal issue that should be done with love and with privacy. Very rarely is it appropriate to spank a child in any way in public. Discipline should always be accompanied by loving words and instruction. It is difficult to even carry it out as God intended, when you are in a public setting. Consider also that it is very humiliating for a child to be spanked while in the presence of others. Another concern is that not everyone feels the same way as you or I may about spanking a child. In some instances, you could even come under attack by social services if one sees you administering a spanking or a swat in public and then reports it to authorities. Why take that chance? You can easily avoid damaging the reputation of homeschoolers, and the possibility of coming under attack personally due to your discipline convictions, simply by speaking to the child about his offense and administering the actual swat, if necessary, at a later time. If you feel that it cannot wait, go to a private place, such as a restroom, to administer the appropriate discipline. Never should that be done in public. The risks are just too great.

2007 ⇨ I still feel the same on this one. We as a family, only administer discipline in this way as a result of direct disobedience or defiance. If they are just tired, whiney, being foolish, or in some other way not acting as you desire while not deliberately disobeying there are other forms of discipline that work better for us and are easily administered regardless of where you are such as:

- Removing them from the situation, especially if it's a pleasurable situation for them.
- Taking a toy or privilege away from them.
- Reality discipline, which means disciplining them in

accordance with their offense. ie. They refuse to eat what you made them even though you know it is something they like. Remove the food from the table and cover and save the plate right in front of them. Tell them that is not acceptable so they can go to their room and stay there until they are ready to come out and eat it without complaining. Make it clear that if they choose not to eat it at all, they get no other food and they must stay in their room. That is just one example, this type of discipline would be determined by you based upon the offense itself.

1999 ⇨ Always try to positively contribute to the reputation of all homeschoolers, but at the same time, do NOT let it be yet another thing to add to your stress.

The House

One Word: CHORE!

Chapter 11

*I'm the type
That wants it all
A nice clean house
No marks on the wall*

*But my two year old
With crayon in hand
Has decided to scribble
Wherever he can*

*It just seemed a little
Too quiet when
I discovered my artist
At work again*

*He drew on the wall
And picture the rest
He got up in my chair
And drew on my desk!*

*Okay, that is it!
I scold him once more
Please color on paper
Not my kitchen floor!*

*I go into my bedroom
I must lay down
But instead you can
Just guess what I found*

*Mount Laundry is looming up
Up high on my bed
I realize there will be
No rest for my head*

*So I tackle the clothes
And the towels, and sheets
Into color coded baskets
All folded up neat*

*Now I can lay down
But as I do
I realize my mattress
Needs a sheet too*

*There are dishes, and sweeping
And mopping galore
My only survival is one word
"chore"*

*Yes, chores are the jobs
I assign to my kids
They clean their own rooms
After all, I did*

*But that is not all
Of the chores that they do
The kitchen, the living room
The classroom too!*

*I cook and I teach
Isn't that enough?
God gave me kids
For all the other stuff!*

*So how do I do it?
It's easy, I say
Just assign a "chore"
And show them the way*

1999 ⇨ I HATE housework! What makes it even worse though is that I LOVE a clean house! Arghh. Honestly, I cannot function very well in a disorderly environment. It makes my mind feel as cluttered as my surroundings. I think this may be true for most of us, as I know it is also true for every other member of my family. As comical as the above poem may be.... the truth is, I meant every word of it! Why should a mom have to do all the cooking and cleaning in the house when there are other family members who are perfectly capable of helping out? In my ever so humble opinion, she shouldn't!

Regardless of your children's ages, if they are old enough to be homeschooled in the first place, then they are old enough to pull their weight when it comes to housework. Even younger ones should be responsible if for nothing else, at least their own rooms. My youngest, J. Jay just turned three years old two weeks prior to me writing this chapter. I have been trying to train him to clean his room and keep it clean, practically since he was born! Or at least old enough to play with toys in the first place. My twelve year old son, Rob, almost always kept his room clean since he was a wee little thing (he still does). But neither Brittney nor J. Jay seemed to have inherited those "clean genes" from their dad, (they certainly didn't come from me!) as Rob did. So the training process for both him and Brittney is an ongoing process as they grow. Of course, it is an ongoing process for Robby as well, as it is for all children, but he seems to enjoy clean surroundings more than the others, so his heart tends to be into it more often than not.

2007 ⇨ I need to have my kids read this chapter! I still feel the same way, but as I said above, neither Brittney nor J. Jay seem to have inherited Greg's "clean" gene. We are having difficulty in this area big-time these days, and the sad thing is - my room is no exception. I mentioned above I was a natural born slob. With my limited time and energy as of late and running a business as well with limited filing cabinet... well it's not working well. I am being convicted while reading that I need to get myself a four drawer filing cabinet to replace or maybe even add to my two drawer to get better organized. At the moment, I am running our business for the most part from our home office so I don't have to go to the warehouse every day. Our home office is located in our master bedroom and this is where our homeschooling takes place quite often as well. Let's just say it doesn't look or feel much like a master bedroom anymore. If it wasn't for the bed itself you'd have no idea it was even a bedroom! This is not good.

1999 ⇨ You should start training them at a very young age and then continue

the training, adding responsibilities (ie. chores), as they grow. I have finally succumbed to the reality that J. Jay is going to destroy his room while playing. That is how he likes to play! Who am I to cheat him of that fun? But sometimes it can get out of hand. Usually, the way "we" clean his room is that I sit there and tell him what to do and he does it. I don't want him to get too frustrated in the process though, so depending upon the job, I sometimes help out as well. J. Jay LOVES matchbox cars. He has over a zillion of them in all shapes and sizes! He also has a car carrying case for the normal sized cars and he has a large wicker type basket for all the other cars, trucks, motorcycles, helicopters and so on, that don't fit into the carrying case. If I sat there and expected him to very carefully place every little car into its spot in the carrying case I would be asking too much of him. So when we get to his cars, He puts all the bigger cars and all the trucks into his wicker basket, while I place all the other cars in their spots in the carrying case. I figure this isn't giving in to him by helping him as much as it is teaching him teamwork! Anyway, back to the "getting out of hand" story.

The other day I walked into J Jay's room and it looked as if a tornado had touched down. We had cleaned it up beautifully right after school and I had let him play in his nice clean room while I was making lunch with a smile on my face. His room was now spotless and life was good, at least for the moment. Well, a moment was all it lasted! After hearing some loud crashing sounds coming from his room, I peeked in to find that he had removed all but two of his books from his bookshelf (there are at least a hundred of them!) and had them scattered all over the floor. In addition to that, he had dumped his wicker basket, previously filled with cars and trucks, upside down! He sweetly looked up at me with a cute little (albeit mischievous) grin as he grabbed the last two books and threw them on top of the already huge pile. "J. Jay!" I exclaimed. "What have you done?" To which he calmly replied, "I'm reading!" I have to be honest, I was a little too overwhelmed at that exact moment to even laugh! It just wasn't funny. "Well, read all you want right now. But after we finish lunch, YOU are going to have to clean it up!" As soon as lunch was over, Brittney cleared the table and Robby started in on the dishes while I marched J. Jay to his room. I sat on the bed and said, "Okay, J. Jay. Put all your books back on the shelf where they belong." Well, he really tried! But you know what happens when you set a book up and then turn around to get another? **THEY ALL FALL DOWN!** After letting him struggle long enough for him to realize what a big deal this was, and why you should only take out a few books at a time, I gave him a little talk to further emphasize this point. Then I said, "Here, you hand me each book and I will put them on the shelf." I purposely made him hand me each book, one at a time, because I didn't want his job to be too easy and I wanted him to realize that it's okay to make a mess... as long as you are willing to do whatever it takes to clean it up! I then had him finish cleaning the rest of his room on his own, with only verbal direction from

me. Hopefully, that lesson is learned. (Although I honestly doubt it!)

2007 ⇨ Let's just say that this lesson is having to be continually relearned with J.Jay. He loves a clean room, but he doesn't like cleaning it! Lately, Brittney does not even seem to comprehend the point of a clean room, but after having a few instances in which she could not easily find important things she was looking for, I am praying that she will realize this more as she matures. When it comes to Brittney and her room, we have had to "choose our battles" and decide what we can live with and what we can't. In the whole scheme of life, it's not a major issue that her room is spotless or even our version of clean in our eyes. But, it IS a major issue if there is food in her room, wet towels on the floor, or dirty clothes not brought out to the laundry room and washed. These are important things to us as these things have more serious repercussions such as ants, mold, and stinky odors!

Cleanliness Must Be Taught!

1999 ⇨ I do think that it is our responsibility as parents to teach our children how to be neat and orderly. How to take care of the home that God has blessed them with. Many of the kids of today have everything done for them. Their parents seem to feel like their kids are already too busy and really don't have the time to be expected to do very many chores, if any. Some parents even clean their children's rooms for them! Others don't expect their kids' rooms to be cleaned daily. Unfortunately, this is not teaching self-reliance or self-confidence. It is only teaching them how to enjoy a free ride. These kids often grow up expecting everybody else to do everything for them. They may have some real difficulties in life when they have to learn the hard way, that life doesn't work that way!

2007 ⇨ I have seen this so often and it really breaks my heart when I do. I have seen so many young people from other families that have grown up to have an incredibly difficult time with such basics as being independent, keeping house and managing their own finances. Too often they have not had much actual hands-on real life training in that area. Sadly, I've also seen the shock and confusion when they are hit full in the face with the reality that their daily life as an adult requires an abundance of hard work, sacrifice, and downright responsibility which must be self-motivated. There is no mom there to get you out of bed, make your breakfast and send you off everyday. Nor will you come home to a clean house with a hot meal on the table at the end of your day! That is the reality of life. This is one issue that I

continually become the most convicted about not letting up on. Frankly, it is much easier to go ahead and just clean it up yourself, or let them slide with their chores then it is to consistently have to train them and hone the training. Also, it is an ongoing process, not a one time event. Typically, they don't 'get it' (or should I say they don't understand the real value behind the training) until they leave home and have to use it. Then as they are prepared with the skills they need to function when they need them, it all starts to really come together for them. What's more when they see so many of their friends who are not the least bit prepared with these skills nor the reality of the true responsibility of being an adult, not only do they 'get it' but they actually begin to appreciate it! And the appreciation grows as their maturity and life experience grows. Wow, now that's when some of that REWARD starts to kick in!

Honestly, we are now dealing with this area in a big way with Brittney, who is in a private Christian school. One of the negatives of educating outside of the home is TIME or really the lack thereof! This lack of available time however does NOT change the reality or the necessity of continuing to train her in these skills. Whether she agrees and understands or not! We must continue to train her up as long as she is still our child. This is easy to say, and yet so difficult to do. Even more difficult when the kiddo in question is not or no longer being homeschooled simply due to the time factor.

At What Age Should Assigned Chores Begin?

1999 ⇨ At no later than five years old, all children should have chores to do every day in addition to the basics of keeping their own rooms clean. It doesn't have to be big, like cleaning out the garage; but it should be an area or chore that they are solely responsible for, preferably on an ongoing basis.

2007 ⇨ Ok, it's time to fess up now. Elijah just recently turned five years old. He is so much "my baby" it just isn't funny! He is responsible for his room, but is such an imaginative player very often destroys it beyond his abilities to clean it up. And I am not consistent with making him do it on his own and honestly rarely have the energy to even do it myself. More often than not, when it gets out of control I have J. Jay or Brittney clean it as an extra chore. This is wrong as I am not teaching Elijah anything by doing this and what's worse, I am enabling him to get away with slacking off! Bad mommy! Also, his side chores are pretty piddley compared to what they should be. I can now see that since having dealt with some of his health

problems and knowing how fatigued he can get too often, I have allowed him to be expected to do less than he is capable of doing. I am now formally convicted to change my ways! I need to look at it not as though I am making life harder on him, but rather that I am training him so that life will not be so hard in the end! The journey IS the reward, but it is also long and often hard! But, if you work at it with all your HEART it is very rewarding even as you journey along.

Share The Load!

1999 ⇨ I really do not do very much housework myself. As I said, I meant that poem! I cook all the meals. I teach their school, which includes planning and grading papers in addition to the actual teaching. I try to keep up with the laundry, although my husband, Greg, actually usually does the bulk of it. And that's pretty much all I do, other than big projects and organizing as times goes by. All the other work gets done on a regular basis by the kids, and some of it by Greg. God has blessed me with an awesome husband who is a neat freak. He often mops the floors (otherwise Rob does) and he usually does most of the vacuuming. And, as I said above, he also does the majority of the laundry. I never (well, rarely) ask him to do it, but he has always taken on that responsibility by choice. Thank you, God! The rest of the jobs are divided up among the kids, based upon their ages and abilities.

2007 ⇨ I do even less housework now than I did then as I am medically not allowed to pick up more than two pounds. Unfortunately, I don't always obey that, but I try!

Flip-Charts aka Chore Cards

1999 ⇨ J. Jay is still very young, so he is only responsible for cleaning up his room at night and picking up after himself as he goes along. Robby and Brittney though have additional specific chores that they must do every day at a certain time. So they will not have room for any excuses (such as, "I forgot") I made up a "flip-chart" for each of them, using large index cards and round rings I purchased at an office supply store. This has worked wonders for us and I would recommend it if your children seem to have trouble remembering things, as mine did. When I made up the cards, I also included some important personal hygiene things (like brushing their teeth!) that I don't want being overlooked. Most cards have hand-drawn pictures on them to help illustrate my point.

2007 ⇨ I stopped doing the flip-charts (which I now call chore cards) for about four years. I returned to this method this year for J. Jay and Elijah and its working great - as long as I am consistent, that is!

As you can see, they are consistently doing chores throughout the day. But, I feel it is very important that they have plenty of time left over for free play as well. So, don't overload them! Despite all these chores, their homeschooling, and all other activities, my children then have at least a couple of hours, if not more, left over each day for free play.

2007 ⇨ Wow, what was I superwoman or something? I have gotten so off track now I am jealous of my old self. All I can say is that my kiddos are NOT going to like what I am reading and now getting convicted about how far off track I have gotten over the years. They have had it way, **way** too easy lately. I think it's time for me to slow down and smell the coffee. Wait a minute, I hate coffee. Roses, smell the roses. Honestly, I'm not a big rose person either, but I think you get my drift! All I need now is the youth and energy I had back when I was keeping track of all of that. No, seriously all I really need is the conviction that I had back then! I literally need to go back to the basics of practicing what I know is so important, but somehow lost sight of over the years. I don't know if I am writing this book for you or for me!

Keep A Daily Schedule

1999 ⇨ I also included a copy of our family schedule. I have our school time identified with diagonal lines and their free time identified easily with a darker shaded area. I did this (the lines and shaded areas) so the kids could look at it and realize that they have plenty of time to play! It helps alleviate the "feeling sorry for myself" attitude that can sometimes be brought on by chore time.

2007 ⇨ I thought it was pointless to overwhelm you with both our old schedule and our current schedule since it's only for example sake anyway. On the following page is our current daily schedule. The one we try oh so hard to adhere to... but often don't! Life is more important than schedules. So keep a schedule, but don't let it keep you!

Berthume Daily Schedule

2007 ↻	Berthume Daily Schedule				
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00am - 9:30am	Do Chore Card	S C H O O L	S C H O O L	S C H O O L	S C H O O L
9:30am - 10:00am	Katie or J.Jay will serve breakfast EAT UP!				
10:00am - 10:30am	Clean up dishes & do after break-fast chore cards				
10:30am - 11:45am	J.Jay babysit Elijah while Mom plans				
12:00n	Lunch time	Lunch time	Lunch time	Lunch	Lunch time
12:30pm - 1:00pm	Clean up dishes & do "after lunch" chore cards	Clean up dishes & do "after lunch" chore cards	Clean up dishes & do "after lunch" chore cards	Clean up dishes & do "after lunch" chore cards	Clean up dishes & do "after lunch" chore cards
1:00pm - 2:00pm	S C H O O L	Quiet Time Study, reading, and/or quiet play	Quiet Time Study, reading, and/or quiet play	Quiet Time Study, reading, and/or quiet play	Quiet Time* Study, reading, and/or quiet play. Then Free / Play time!! * 1 st & 3 rd HS Skating: 1pm-3pm
2:00pm - 3:15pm		Free / Play time!!	Free / Play time!!	Free / Play time!!	
3:15pm - 4:15pm		Free / Play time	Free / Play time	J.Jay PianoLessons 3:30-4:15pm	Free / Play time
4:15pm - 4:45pm		J.JAY Practice Piano! Elijah Free/	J.JAY Practice Piano! Elijah Free/	J.JAY Practice Piano! Elijah Free/	J.JAY Practice Piano! Elijah Free/
4:45pm	Free / Play time	Free / Play time	Free / Play time	Free / Play time	Free / Play time
5:15pm - 6:00pm	**Help mom as needed!	**Help mom as needed!	Eat Dinner & Get ready	**Help mom as needed!	**Help mom as needed!
6:00pm	Dinner Time	Dinner Time	Leave - Church	Dinner Time	Dinner Time
6:30pm	Do Chore Cards	Do Chore Cards		Do Chore Cards	Do Chore Cards
7:00pm	Free / Play time	Free / Play time		Free / Play time	Free / Play time
7:30pm - 8:00pm	Elijah: Bathtime Then do chore cards J.Jay: do chore cards	Elijah: Bath Then do chore cards J.Jay: do chore cards		Elijah: Bath Then do chore cards J.Jay: do chore cards	Elijah: Bath Then do chore cards J.Jay: do chore cards
8:00p	Elijah: BEDTIME J.Jay: IN BED Devotions, read	Elijah: BEDTIME J.Jay: IN BED Devotions, read		Elijah: BEDTIME J.Jay: IN BED Devotions, read	Elijah: BEDTIME J.Jay: IN BED Devotions, read
9:00pm - 9:30pm	J.Jay: Lights out! Brittney: BED Devotion, read	J.Jay: Lights out! Brittney: BED Devotion, read	Elijah: BED J.Jay & Britt: IN BED Devotion, read	J.Jay: Lights out! Brittney: BED Devotion, read	J.Jay: Lights out! Brittney: BED Devotion, read
10:00pm	Brittney: Lights out!	Brittney: Lights out!	J.Jay & Britt: Lights out!	Brittney: Lights out!	Brittney: Lights out!

The Future

Where Do We Go From Here?

Chapter 12

*I wish I knew the words to say
To make you understand
I don't want to pressure you
I just want to hold your hand*

*And lead you through the darkness
So you can see the light
And have your eyes be opened to
The One who made it bright*

*He loves you more than I do
More than I can comprehend
A love that lasts forever
With no beginning and no end*

*He's reaching down, just take His hand
His love will never fade
He died upon the cross for you
Your sins they have been paid*

*All the questions you battle with
Will seem so small and trite
Such peace and joy will fill your soul
You will have won the fight!*

1999 ⇨ What does the future hold for you? What does the future hold for your children? Of course, only God knows the answer to those questions. The most important thing we should be focusing on for our child's future is that they grow to develop a heart for the Lord. That they come to know Him as their own personal Savior. That they grow to love God and appreciate the gift of His Son so fervently that everything in their lives is a reflection of that love.

God has given us, as parents, commands which tell us how to raise our children. He has also promised to bless us if we keep his commands. His promise to us is something we can hold on to for peace of mind when it comes to our children's future. If we keep his commands, we can cling to that verse even during the difficult times that will arise with our children because we know God is in control and He has promised to bless us. He alone holds the key to your child's future.

I have a tendency (or shall I say weakness) to be so detail oriented that I often lose sight of the "big picture". (As my husband, the visionary, calls it.) What is the big picture for you and your family? It is very important to figure out what your long term goals are and to write them down. Don't be reactive in handling each phase of your child's life as problems arise, but rather be proactive. Plan for the years to come. Set goals defining how you would like your baby to behave when he becomes a toddler, and then what you would desire from him as a preschooler, during the elementary years, as an adolescent, as a teenager, as a young adult, and finally as an adult. Don't expect troubles to arise, plan on how to solve and/or avoid possible troubles BEFORE they occur. You will, of course, be caught off guard at times, but plan for that too!

Teens

I recently read an article in a Christian missions magazine for women, entitled *Those Terrible Teens*. One of the statements made in the article was, "For any household, the teen years can be trying at best and terrifying at worst." That attitude was underlying throughout the entire write-up. I am sure that the writer of this article had only the best of intentions, but I would have to say that I disagree with that mind set wholeheartedly. Even though I am sure that our society would love for everyone to believe that statement, I think everyone, especially Christians need to take a second look at that viewpoint.

2007 ⇨ What is really funny to me is that I wrote this chapter as if I actually knew what I was talking about when my oldest was only twelve years old at the time! I find it funny, in a somewhat pathetic way, that I wrote about teenagers and I didn't even have one yet. What was I thinking? It's very easy to have opinions on that which you have yet to live through or experience firsthand. It's quite

another thing after having lived through it! As they say hindsight is 20/20. Although I still feel blind-sided in this area from time to time. We now have a great deal more experience in this area, and the main thing I have learned is that every child, person, and family is so unique it's impossible to make any hard and fast blanket statements.

I STILL believe strongly that teenage rebellion is not a given. We have yet to experience rebellion with either of our oldest. That said, it sure isn't easy, but then again nothing is easy when it comes to raising kiddos, so why should the teen years be any different? In some ways I prefer the teen years. You can reason, carry on the deepest of conversations, and literally see their gradual metamorphosis into adulthood right before your very eyes! It is such a privilege, and yet scary - all at the same time! The teen years are so important and for most of us are filled with emotion and confusion all mixed up with an ongoing overdose of hormones! Do you remember when you were that age? If so, hopefully you can remember the mixture of daily emotions - excitement and fear. One day you just want to play around and be a kid, the next day you want to be an adult. You want total freedom and think that is what you deserve, yet you fear being on your own. (Even though you would never admit it!) I could go on and on, but I'll stop.

Both of my oldest kids went through a real soul searching period during their teen years, in which they really had to come to terms with their own beliefs. I think this is not only normal, but to be expected for most. Even though they both had become Christians at a much younger age, they each had to go through their own individual process of not only what they believed, but why and what that truly meant to them personally. Honestly, I would be more concerned if a teen does not have any struggles or soul searching in this area than if they do. These are key issues in having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and ones that can only be dealt with as they grow in maturity.

Most of the things I have learned in raising teenagers, I learned the hard way. Usually with my own teens, but also I have learned by seeing the successes and mistakes of other parents of teens. In the following tips I speak about young adults. Again, I want to reinforce that when I do so I am speaking of kiddos that are no longer kiddos! This is generally ages twelve or thirteen, depending on maturity, and up. Now that I have clarified that, let me share some of my worthless and humble opinions, use what helps - pitch the rest!

Tips From The Trenches

1. Treat all the young adults in your life with respect and ongoing understanding. Never forget that the problems they have and the issues they face, no matter how trivial they may seem to you, are very real in their lives.
2. Do not belittle them or their opinions. Listen intently first and pause and think before you speak. Although they may not want you to think so, the words you offer not only carry a lot of weight in their spirits, but also can greatly affect the decisions they end up making.
3. Treat them as young adults, not big kids. If you treat them like big kids, they will act like it. On the other hand if they feel respected by you as you treat them more like a young adult, gradually and gradually as they move through their teenage years they are a great deal more likely to live up to it as they want nothing more than to be in your high regard. You may think I am being redundant here, but that's okay I will take that chance. I can't stress this point enough!
4. Pray for them each and every day! I know this seems obvious, but I don't think any of us humble creatures here on earth really fully understand the amazing power of prayer. God is faithful and loving. Not only do I pray for all my kiddos in my quiet time, but every day during our school devotions I pray out loud for our son Robby, his wife Kathryn (who I have been praying for since Robby was seven years old before I even knew her name!), and I pray for our daughter Brittney since she spends her days at her private school. I specifically pray for whatever their needs are, and then, always pray for God to protect them:

- (1) mentally
- (2) physically
- (3) emotionally
- (4) spiritually

J.Jay and Elijah have heard me pray this so often that now J.Jay is beginning to make the same prayers for them. If Daddy is away we pray for his protection in the same way. We can never EVER underestimate the power of prayer!

1999 ⇨ The first place to go when you are researching anything in your life, is the Bible. Using the mind set of teenage rebellion as I mentioned above as an example, there are no references at all in the Bible of teenage rebellion. Yet, there are no lack of teenagers in the Bible. For example, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was believed to be around fourteen years old when an angel appeared to her and informed her of the upcoming virgin birth. And she did not rebel at all, but rather she maturely responded, "May it be done to me as you have said." Also, what about David, a young teen who showed how strong his faith was by going up against Goliath? And there are others.

Consider the possibility that "teenage rebellion" is not a natural occurrence at all, but rather a result of today's society. In my humble opinion, teenage rebellion in many cases is caused by kids being exposed to too much at too young of an age. Some of the things I am referring to are violence, sex, and adult topics on television as well as in the movies that they are allowed to watch. If they are one of the few teenagers who have parents who monitor what they are exposed to media-wise, you may not think this would be the case. Unfortunately, if they are in a public or a private school, they are spending approximately fifty percent of their waking hours surrounded by same aged peers who ARE watching such topics and thus are being negatively influenced by them.

In addition to this, they are often encouraged to have boy-girl relationships at a very young age. School dances now start in junior high school, sometimes even elementary school! To the parents, this is seen as normal and innocent. Many parents even think it is 'cute' when their child has a boyfriend or girlfriend, as the case may be. This is simply too much exposure, worldly knowledge and even emotional responsibility for any teenager to handle and not rebel!

Set Goals

Set your goals ahead of time. For the pre-teen and teenage years for example, know what you believe, what you expect, and why. Your teenager does not have to rebel, especially since rebellion is not simply a natural occurrence for all teenagers. But it is the parents' responsibility to raise them outside of the normal culture of today. Yes, this is possible. From a very young age, monitor what they are allowed to watch on television and on the movie screen. Notice I said from a young age. That is why you must plan ahead. If you wait until your youngster is thirteen to start thinking about these things and planning for their teenage years, it may be too late. You must lay the groundwork early. Day by day, year by year from the time they are born. And continue laying it until the day they leave the home, always looking ahead and planning for the next stage of life. If you haven't done this, don't get discouraged. It may not be too late, but do start now.

Set your own guidelines and limits to what is permissible in your home. Based upon the Bible and based upon your convictions. Not based upon our society or what may be considered the norm. In other words, based upon *your* values, not the values of your children's friends. Just because they turn thirteen or even sixteen years old, does not mean that they should automatically be allowed to watch movies that are rated "PG-13" or worse yet, "R". As you well know, you can't just go by the ratings. Remember, those ratings are doled out by this godless society that we live in. Don't just trust society's judgement. Sadly, just because a movie is rated "PG" or even "G" doesn't mean it is free of any objectionable material. It is our job as parents to be one step ahead of our children when it comes to all of these issues. How else can we be adequately prepared?

To make my point, let's use the movie "The Titanic" as an example. This movie is an adulteress tale of a young woman and a young man who "fall in love" and wind up having sex in a steaming scene in a car. All within only a few days of having met each other. This movie has it all, sex (not to mention sex outside of marriage), lust, greed, violence (bodies careening and crashing onto the side of the railings as the ship lurks vertically just before it actually sinks), as well as nudity. But this is the most popular movie for teens across the country. Most parents think it is fine as well. Many look upon it as a history lesson. One that is important for a teenager to learn. I was recently shocked to find out that out of an entire class of sixth graders in a local public school, all but one had seen the movie, The Titanic. Parents need to wake up and smell the coffee. Are we so deluded as a society that we can't see past the 'history lesson' to the reality of such a movie and its affect on an entire generation?

Back to the solution. I think the solution is two-fold. First of all, don't brace yourselves, convinced that the terrible two stage automatically follows babyhood. Nor should the parent expect their teenager, or child of any age, to rebel. Simply put, if you expect rebellion, then they will be sure to meet up (or shall I say down) to that expectation. Secondly, your child, especially older children, should be made aware of the fact that all rebellion, including teenage rebellion is a choice that they must make, not a 'phase' that they must go through. It is something that they can control and even avoid entirely, if they so desire.

One of the reasons why we have chosen to homeschool is because it provides us with the time and the circumstances to control what peers our children our being influenced by. Remember, your children are always being influenced either positively or negatively by their peers. Homeschooling is the best means for me to provide the type of peers that I want them being influenced by. While homeschooling, I, as well as my child, have a say as to who they are being influenced by. In a public or a private school, children are automatically surrounded by peers of various types. Some who may be positive influences, and undoubtedly some who will be negative influences. The control is simply out of

your hands as a parent. Homeschooling provides the best scenario for me to retain some, if not all of that control.

2007 ⇨ I still completely and 100% agree with everything I said above. I do think the teenage years are filled with hormones and more often than not, emotional turmoil. Especially for girls, but honestly I think the main reason it comes out in girls more is because God simply made us more emotional in the first place. Females tend to wear their feelings and turmoil more on the outside, whereas boys tend to turn it more inward. I would love to still be homeschooling Brittney as I think that would alleviate many of the issues she is dealing with (ie. boyfriends, peer influence, etc.) which are in my humble opinion, inevitable anytime they are in a formal school setting. The control that I referenced in the above paragraph is out of our hands more often than not, as she is fifteen and spends so much of her time away from home in a private school setting and with her friends. But, I don't see that as a bad thing. I see that as God's plan for her life. As a mom, I have finally been learning (again, the hard way!) that God is in control, not me. He has His own specific plans for our kid's lives and we are to introduce them continually to Him, and raise them as best we can to become responsible young adults. We need to listen and follow His lead, even when it differs from our plans.

1999 ⇨ I am not saying that homeschooling in itself is the solution to the mind set that rebellion is a natural occurrence. I AM saying that this mind set needs to be changed. I am also saying that the transition from one phase of childhood to another, including the transition from adolescence to adulthood can be not only seamless, but even enjoyable!

2007 ⇨ Seamless? That I seriously doubt. All of life is full of seams and if we don't come to terms with that, we are either in denial, or speaking from ignorance. At the time I wrote that I was speaking in ignorance. Forgive me! If you do ever meet someone who has actually gone through the process of raising more than one teen and can say the process was seamless, please let me know! I'd love to sit down and get some advice from them, as I have two that haven't even started that process yet. I say "more than one" because as we all know firstborns are often easy going, yet perfectionists. So just getting one through seamlessly doesn't really tell the full story. Get two through with no seams or bumps, and then give me a call!

1999 ⇨ God commanded us in Proverbs 22:6 to: *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he old he will not turn from it."* The word "train" does not mean, stand by and let them learn it on their own or from peers. Rather this word

"train" is a verb that requires action. Action on the part of the parents.

One final note on planning for your child's future. Have you ever heard that a frog will let you boil him? If you place a frog into a pot of boiling water, he will immediately jump out. But, if you place into a pot of lukewarm water and then gradually increase the temperature, degree by degree, he will continue to sit there even after the water is boiling. He will never even attempt to jump out of the pot. Why? Because the temperature increase is so gradual that he doesn't realize what's happening, until it is too late. I think too many Christian families are under this same spell. We need to take responsibility and JUMP OUT OF THE POT of what is considered the "norm" in today's society.

2007 ⇨ This has always been my favorite analogy and yet in some ways it has happened to our family. If you had told me years ago when I originally wrote the above some of the personal things we are dealing with today as a family, I would have JUMPED alright... in outright disbelief! The more I read and write the more I am convicted that we must all stand firm and grounded in our beliefs. Our society has come so far from what it was just a few short years ago that I can't even imagine what the world will be like in just eight short years when Brittney is twenty-three, J.Jay is nineteen, and Elijah is only thirteen and just beginning his teen years. YIKES! Honestly, I am not at all afraid as God is in control. I do plan to spend a whole lot more of my time in prayer and am committing myself right now to a stronger grounding in Christ. If we are not standing firm we will get knocked down and it is our children who will suffer. I am so glad that I am not responsible for their future, that burden is too great for me to bear. God already knows each one of our children's futures and He has a perfect plan. It IS my responsibility to "train them up" and that doesn't just happen by chance. It takes love, planning, desire, diligence and consistency; held together with prayer; and all wrapped up in grace.

1999 ⇨ It may sound difficult and even radical. But, we must remember that *we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us*. Phil. 4:13 (my paraphrase!)

30 Day 'Grace'

Chapter 13

*I cannot do this another day
Isn't there some other way?*

*My days are long
My nights are short*

*My head is throbbing
Can't I abort?*

*Homeschooling has taken
All that I've got*

*And a little voice keeps saying,
Just forget it! Why not?*

*You've done enough
Way more than most*

*Just put 'em in school
Before your nerves are toast*

*You're gonna break down
Just wait and see*

*That voice inside
Keeps nagging me*

*Normal people don't deal
With the struggles I do*

*Why can't I be normal?
If only I knew*

*Is this really God's will?
Can't I just take a break?*

*Private school for one year!
What difference would that make?*

*When these days come up
As they so often do*

*I have an agreement
Let me share it with you*

*I say, "God, It's me
Here I go again!"*

*Please tell me what to do
So that I'll understand.*

*Can I put them in school?
Can I please? Can I
PLEASE!*

*If they must stay at home
Tell me plainly, don't tease!*

*I can only keep this up
If I know it's from You*

*So give it to me straight
Lord, tell me what to do!"*

***A 30 Day 'Grace'**
Is the time that I wait*

*To hear back from Him
And He's never been late*

*God's answer to me
Is always the same*

*"I've written 'Homeschooler'
Right here by your name!"*

1999 ⇨ At least two or three times every school year, I go through a phase when I am convinced that my homeschooling days are numbered. Okay, more like days when I WANT my homeschooling days to be numbered! It usually has a great deal to do with my expectations being too high and my kids being, well... kids! But in the moment, I can never see it that clearly. My monologue usually goes something like this, "These kids argue constantly, have terrible table manners, and don't show me any respect. I am obviously not doing a very good job with them if they can't at least love each other! I think I am doing more harm than good. This entire family would probably be much better off if they were in a good Christian private school. I am so tired. I just don't know if I can keep this up any longer! And if they aren't going to behave well, what's the point?"

Pretty sad I know, I'm not proud of it. Now you know more about me than anybody should! Honestly though, that's pretty much it, verbatim. Remember now, I have been homeschooling for five years. You'd think I could see it coming and avoid this phase altogether. Unfortunately, it's not that easy. It is inevitable that these same feelings will arise from within me on an almost predictable basis.

Still Small Voice

I once heard someone say that if you hear a little voice in your head that is telling you things in a positive way, even if they are negative things or things you may need to work on, that voice is probably either your own subconscious or the voice of the Holy Spirit. But, God will never berate you. He loves you too much. So, if you hear a voice saying negative things like, "Boy, you really messed up now! You aren't doing a good job at all. I think you are doing more harm than good. Give it up!" That's not God's voice. It's either the voice of your own insecurities, or more likely it's the voice of Satan trying to discourage you.

I have speculated as to why I go through these same feelings of inadequacy, guilt, frustration, exhaustion, and even of questioning my decision to homeschool for "as long as the Lord wants me to" on such a regular basis. In searching through the scriptures, I think I have found the answer. Let me share with you why I've come to believe that the reason we all struggle so when we decide to homeschool and continue to struggle even when we are committed to it, is because of Satan. Simply put, Satan does not like it when God's people are close to Him and are living out His will in their lives. As it states in Matthew 7:21 - *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."* Satan hates it when we are doing God's will because he knows that as long as we are doing God's will, he has no chance.

2007 ⇨ I still struggle with this, but now in completely different areas. Now I sometimes question my ability to continue to homeschool them

well while dealing with my health situation. It takes me a great deal longer in the mornings to get my act together as I have to wait until my medicine 'kicks in' before I can physically or mentally (due to pain) function very well. Also, I often work at night on my computer doing business related work, paying bills, and writing. I am able to focus much better at night when the house is quiet. Since I can't get to sleep very easily anyway and working helps take my mind off of the pain I tend to be my most productive working into the wee hours. Unfortunately, the later I stay up working, the tougher my morning is the next day. That of course means we get a later start, which affects the entire day!

Also, let me be clear to point out that the schedule I put in Chapter 11 - The House, as our current schedule is the ideal, but not always the reality. Don't let my good intentions fool you! In my family, there are days that we refer to as my "bad days" when I have either been 'glutened' or have simply overdone it in one way or another. On these days I am totally miserable and bedridden, beyond functioning much at all. When this happens I am usually out of commission for at least one and usually two full days. Unfortunately, this typically happens about every couple of weeks or so. Needless to say these days all planning and scheduling is out the window. The reality is they end up being "reading days" if I'm more diligent, and simply "free days" if I'm really out of it.

I've said several times in this book that Satan wants nothing more than to mess us up. He knows what to use. As I've gotten stronger in my commitment to homeschooling for the long haul over the years, he's turned to using other tactics to discourage me. He takes the phrase "kick 'em when they are down" to a whole level! Now that I've grown to see the fruits of homeschooling with my oldest two, I no longer question whether or not it is the best way to educate my children. Nor do they frustrate me enough to make me want to hand them over to anyone else. Since he can't get me there so easily anymore, I guess he figures he'll try to get me where it really hurts. Which are my internal doubts about my physical and mental abilities.

Add to this the voice I try to silent that constantly repeats the words of my old neurologist telling me to prepare myself as with the precariousness of my spine fueled by the wire and arthritic bone spur that are both protruding into my spinal cord, I should be paralyzed already. I remember him trying to consol me saying, "Your back has held up this long you never know, it could hold up for a couple of

years, maybe even five!" I kept thinking to myself. Five years? Only five years?!? That was in December of 2004! Those words always haunt me on my bad days. I ask myself, "Can I still move my toes?", as I wiggle them to be sure. "What if I don't get any better?" You may have your own voices as well.

Satan knows this full well and unfortunately he's just evil enough to use it against me! He's more than "just evil enough", he is the epitome of evil. He preys on our weaknesses regardless of what they are. That is why I still feel so strongly about a 30 Day 'Grace' which I explain further in this chapter.

Before I go on, let me clarify something that's really bugging me, when I said my "old" neurologist I don't mean old as in his age, but old because he is no longer my neurologist. We moved to South Carolina in the summer of 2005. And although you may not get the right impression from what I wrote above, he was a terrific doctor whom I had great respect for. I generally do not care for doctors so that says a lot coming from me! He would still be my neurologist if we hadn't moved away. He diligently showed and explained to me all of the films I wanted to see and he took all the time I needed to answer the zillions of questions I always had. Okay, now that I have clarified that, let's get back on topic!

He's Prowling Around Like A Roaring Lion

1999 ☞ Unfortunately, Satan doesn't just cut his losses and give up. He is always looking for a foothold, which God instructed us not to give him. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:26-27 - "*In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.*" I think it is very important that we recognize these trials and struggles for what they are. They may be the Lord leading you in a different direction. But more often than not they are the schemes of the devil trying to tear you down. The only way to know for sure is to be on guard, and to pray. That is why I say, give God some time to answer your prayers. Don't make any rash decisions, just let go and let God. If this is His prodding, He will make that clear. Otherwise, He will make it equally clear that He is the one who has convicted you to homeschool and His conviction still stands firm.

Paul wrote some other passages that are helpful in recognizing the devil's schemes and how to avoid them. 1 Peter 5:8-9 instructs us: "*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers*

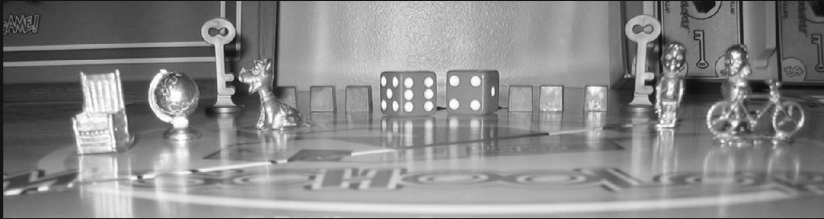
throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." It also tells us in Ephesians 6:11-12 to: *"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."* Prayer is your power to conquer the devil. I once heard someone say, "When God's people pray, Satan trembles." Even Satan is aware of the power of prayer. Let us not forget to utilize that awesome power.

It is with all this in mind that I have come up with what I call my 30 Day 'Grace'. I have made a commitment to myself, my family, and most importantly to my God, that I would never give up homeschooling until I have prayed about it for thirty consecutive days first. God has been amazingly consistent in turning me right back around (heading in the right direction, that is) usually within the first few of the thirty days! I've yet to even hit my 10th day, without being totally convinced and convicted that homeschooling is His will for me and my house. He usually shows me through something one of my children do or say, or through the testimony of another homeschooling mother, or through an encounter with a homeschooled child. He has also been known to show me through a conversation with a parent who has a child in a public or private school. I have so often come away from such a conversation exceedingly thankful that I have not had to deal with the issue or issues that this parent is struggling through every day with their child. He then shows me that the biggest reason why I haven't had to deal with it is because of homeschooling.

So, I will wrap up this chapter and this book to say, Homeschooling *is* BIG, but God is BIGGER!! And just remember - when you struggle, which you will, that you too *"can do all things in Christ, who strengthens you."* (my paraphrase of Philippians 4:13). If you do not know Jesus Christ personally, or are not sure if He is the one who gives you your strength, I urge you to seek him out. You can find Him in many places, but the first place I would look is in the Bible. If you don't know where to start, read the Gospel of John. If you are still unsure, focus on the third chapter of John. It is in John 3:16 that Jesus said: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* Jesus is the Son of God, and He is the only way to heaven. John 14:6 states: *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"* Finally, the Bible tells us in Romans 10:9 - *"That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

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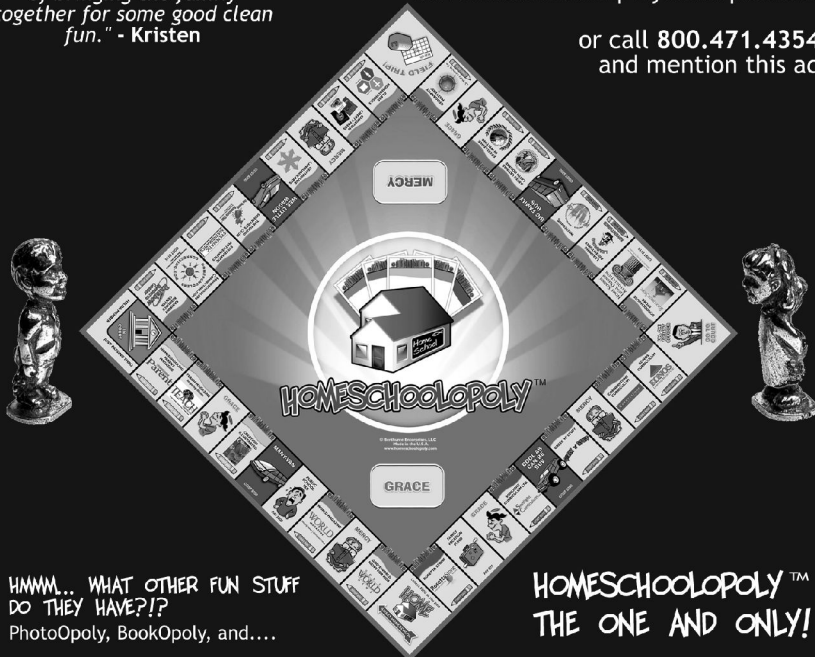
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