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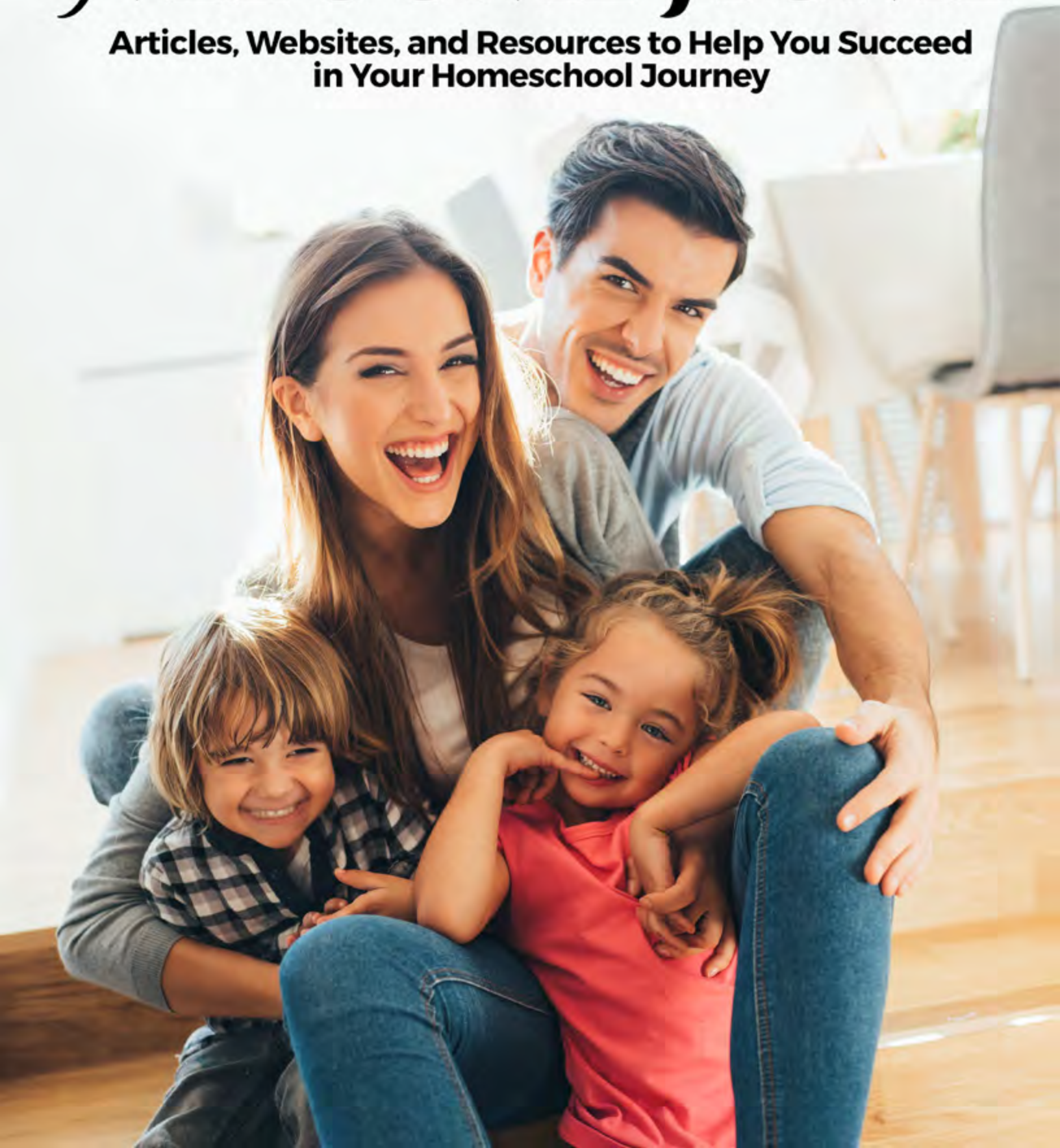
# WELCOME HOME

## Articles, Websites, and Resources to Help You Succeed in Your Homeschool Journey



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# The Most SIGNIFICANT Educational Movement of Our Time

Some observers have called homeschooling one of the most important social, political, and spiritual movements of our time. What's the difference between a movement and a trend? Trends come and go as interest wanes, tastes change, and technology advances. But a movement is something more. A movement is about a group of people—usually in the minority, especially in the early days of the movement—working in ways large and small to affect a significant disruption to the status quo.

There may be a moral or spiritual element involved in a movement, and emotions on either side tend to run high. Consider, for example, woman's suffrage and the struggle for civil rights, two of the most far-reaching social movements of the last century. In such emotionally charged movements, the culture eventually finds itself at a crossroads where a judgment on the subject must be made—a judgment that will have significant long-term ramifications for society. (Not all movements are positive, as in the case of the sexual revolution, which has given us legalized abortion, pornography as close as our phones, the objectification of women, epidemics of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, declining marriage rates, and generations of fatherless children.)

Of course, forty years ago, homeschooling barely registered as a blip on the cultural radar. In 1975, Raymond and Dorothy Moore published *Better Late Than Early: A New Approach to Your Child's Education*, a book

often credited with launching the modern homeschooling movement. Many families first considered teaching their kids at home after hearing the Moores interviewed by Dr. James Dobson on a pair of episodes of the *Focus on the Family* radio program in 1982. The following year, the Home School Legal Defense Association was founded by Mike Farris and Mike Smith with a goal to see homeschooling become legal in all fifty states. This milestone was reached in 1993.

The homeschooling community has grown significantly through the years and today is estimated to include 2.5 million students in the U.S. alone. Studies through the years have shown that homeschooled students consistently score higher than their public and private school peers on standardized tests and win awards and scholastic competitions in disproportionate numbers. Homeschoolers also tend to excel in college and often go on to become model employees, engaged citizens, community activists, and business leaders.

What should you know about homeschooling?

## Homeschooling is a walk of faith

According to Deuteronomy 6:6–7 ("And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up"), it's always been the parents' responsibility to educate their children, but homeschooling takes this biblical mandate to a new level. There is great promise for our families as we obey the commandments of the Lord and teach our children His Word and His ways. The Lord is faithful and we can rely on Him to guide and direct us in this journey.

## Homeschooling is a sacrifice

You deeply love your children, and highly value the education they will receive. It's hard work that requires commitment and a sacrifice of time, money, and energy. And because it involves venturing daily into unknown territory, homeschooling can be daunting and possibly overwhelming. Teaching parents are sometimes stretched in ways they couldn't have imagined going into it, but as with any great adventure, there is hope for a good future, and the blessings far outweigh the cost.

## Homeschooling is family centered

Home-educating parents are in charge of their school calendar, so they get to set their children's daily routines and weekly schedules. Relationship building can be their priority, giving kids the opportunity to gain a respect for their parents, enjoy time with their siblings, and love the learning process. I can't think of a more positive social context in which to learn than the environment of a loving family. After all, no one loves your kids or cares more about their welfare than you.

## Homeschooling is not a magic bullet

Teaching your children at home is not an automatic guarantee for success. Homeschooling is also not the gospel. Stepping out in faith to educate your kids at home won't save them. Only the blood of Jesus saves. You and your children must still work out your own salvation. However, home education can create a rich environment of good soil where your children can be nourished, grow, and thrive academically, spiritually, physically, emotionally, and relationally.

## Homeschooling is safe and healthy for kids

Unlike public schools, there's no need for metal detectors at home, and it's unlikely that anyone there is going to bully your little one. Yes, there have been extremely rare cases of parental abuse, but the root cause of such abuse is not homeschooling. A homeschooling family can instill their values and provide a safe, healthy, and positive setting in which to live and learn.

## Homeschooling can be customized to fit the student

Unlike the one-size-fits-all approach required to maintain order in a public or private school classroom, parents can choose curriculum and set a course schedule to best suit the student's interests and learning style. For instance, if you have a budding artist or musician, you can budget a disproportionate amount of school time for the child to explore and develop his or her skills. If your child wants to be a missionary to China, you can provide years of language and culture lessons that no other school has the resources to provide. Think of the possibilities! Math. Science. Literature. History. Sports medicine. Politics. Economics. You name it; a homeschooling student can learn it. In other words, your students can spend extra time studying and becoming masters in fields of study that interest them.

## Homeschooling is more about the heart than the head

Many families begin homeschooling because they want to provide their children with a better academic

experience than a public or private school can provide, but they often continue for completely different reasons. These reasons often center on moral or religious instruction and learning within the positive context of a family setting. In many ways, the modern homeschool movement is about the hearts of parents turning to their children and the hearts of children turning to their parents. When relationships are prioritized over academics, amazing things happen in the heart, the head, and the home.

## Homeschooling is not about teaching kids how to survive in an institution

In an institutional environment such as school, students are told where to be every minute of the day, what to eat, when to move, and how to respond to authority. School students are constantly subjected to negative peer pressure and must learn to navigate the jungle code of the hallways. And kids are forced to sit still, be quiet, and do nothing when every inch of them wants to run outside, climb a tree, and watch a caterpillar eat a leaf.

## Are you ready to join the movement?

So, what's preventing more parents from choosing to homeschool their children? In many cases, it's mainly the fear of making what is admittedly a significant paradigm shift.

Yes, it can be scary to take the plunge. In fact, I like to describe homeschooling as the adventure of a lifetime. Why? Because like the greatest adventures, it can be rewarding, unpredictable, exhilarating, and yes, even frightening. Sometimes the homeschool journey is like canoeing on a lazy river where you can bask in the moment and rejoice at the wonders of nature all around you. Other times it's more like a roller coaster ride buffeting you about with surprising twists and turns that shake your confidence.

Remember that you already possess the primary qualification needed to teach your children: You are their parent. Think about it. You've done a pretty good job so far. You taught your kids how to walk even though you have no professional training in physical therapy. You taught them how to talk without having taken a seminar in language instruction. You even made it successfully through a mandatory trial run of homeschooling in the spring of 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic. What's next? I'm confident that you have what it takes to teach them how to ride a bike, how to add and subtract, how to read, and so much more.

And remember, you are not alone on this journey. Millions of other families around the world are taking this road less traveled. Home educators are still in the minority, but the movement has grown by leaps and bounds in the past thirty years. Today we have outstanding professionally published curricula, online classes, support groups, co-ops, encouraging blogs, podcasts, plus state and regional homeschool conferences available to help. Most likely, you already have a friend or two with homeschooling experience and family members who will prove to be valuable resources offering help and wisdom along the way.

Of all the educational options that are available today, all the evidence points to homeschooling as the ideal choice. So, take courage, get off the fence, and begin your own adventure. I hope you and your family will ride this wave and join the most exciting, profound, and significant educational movement of our time.

Walking by faith and enjoying the homeschooling adventure of a lifetime!

***Davis Carman*** *is the president of Apologia Educational Ministries, the #1 publisher of Creation-based science and Bible curriculum. He believes that if there was ever a time to homeschool, it is now! He is also the author of five illustrated children's books designed to help kids learn a biblical worldview.* Good Morning, God *is based on Deuteronomy 6,* A Light for My Path *is an ABC book based on Psalm 119,* In the Beginning*, is based on the Creation account in Genesis, and* Psalms to Know Early*, and* Truths to Know Early.

# 5 Good Reasons to Homeschool

When our first child was born more than twenty-five years ago, homeschooling was the furthest thing from my mind. Now, as a publisher of homeschool curriculum, there is no doubt I am in it for the long haul. Along the way, I have encouraged, even urged, many thousands of families to join me in undertaking this adventure of a lifetime. But in recent years, my tone in speaking with these families has transitioned from kind and gentle to bold and very serious. When speaking to groups of parents, I often share my 5 top reasons to homeschool.

The bottom line is this: *How can a Christian parent even consider sending their children to a public school today?*

Yes, this is a strong statement. Tragically, the evening news far too often reminds us of its validity. And although the subject of physical safety is a very real and serious reason why you should consider homeschooling, it doesn't come close to the spiritual dangers your child faces at a public school today and in the days to come.

Several times a year, I present a workshop at conferences titled "Give Me One Good Reason to Homeschool." I open each session with a fun list of reasons to homeschool, such as "Your kids never miss the school bus" and "Playing with LEGOs counts as learning." I then segue to a serious list of important reasons to educate your children at home.

Here are five from my top ten answers to the question – "Why Homeschool?"

# 5 Reasons to Homeschool

### 1. Living Deuteronomy 6

Scripture tells us to teach our kids to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Jesus said this is the greatest commandment of all. As a homeschool parent, you can teach your children diligently when you rise up, when you lie down, when you sit, when you walk along the way—anytime!

### 2. Exploring Creation Outdoors

Perhaps you have heard of Nature Deficit Disorder. It's a real concern in today's society. Let's face it: For most kids today, their only outlet is . . . well, an outlet. But when you homeschool, your children are free to explore God's creation as part of their curriculum.

### 3. Developing a Love of Learning

Are you lighting a fire or simply filling a bucket? Homeschool parents have a wonderful opportunity to instill in their kids a lifelong love of learning. One key is that you know your children better than anyone, and you can customize a curriculum that considers their interests, plays to their individual learning styles, and allows them to learn at their own pace. Our oldest didn't read until he was ten, but he is now a college graduate and in a PhD program studying and translating Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and several other languages. So he more than made up for any supposedly "lost" time.

### 4. Learning in a Positive Social Environment

Apologia author Dr. Debra Bell likes to say, "If we were to build a school from the ground up based on how children learn best, we would build a home." Many of us have chosen to homeschool to avoid the negative social environments found in public and private schools. The family home provides love, security, and nurture as part of a healthy and positive context in which a child can learn and thrive. Educating your children at home is certainly good, but it is also natural.

### 5. Protecting Kids from the Liberal Agenda

Unless you were living under a rock, you know that the Supreme Court issued a troubling opinion on marriage that goes against what God Himself said about the sacred institution (Matthew 19:4–5). Already schools are indoctrinating children with a false definition of marriage and family, starting in kindergarten. In today's society, hedonism is the new god, truth has been replaced with relativism, and homosexuality is officially sanctioned as a good and normal lifestyle that must be accepted by all, lest you be slapped with a lawsuit or worse.

### Bonus Reason: Continuing What Actually Worked Well

Every family in America (and the world for that matter) got to experience a mandatory trial run of homeschooling in the spring of 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic. Maybe you didn't count yourself as an official homeschooling family. It's possible you preferred to think of yourself as a school-at-home parent. Regardless, you found yourself fully engaged in the education and training of your children. You were at the controls and directing the daily schedule and keeping everyone accountable to the lesson plan. And you know what? You found out that it worked pretty well. You and your kids enjoyed not sitting or standing in line after endless line. You liked the freedom to keep working on something of interest and not be slave to an arbitrary bell sending you from one subject to the next. You even observed that everyone seemed to enjoy being together, taking walks, riding bikes, and lingering together during meal times.

If it worked well for your family in the spring of 2020, then why go back in the fall?

### The Time Is Now

While it may be true that it's never too late to start homeschooling, why wait? Our children are most impressionable in their early years, and as we have learned, the public school system does not wait to start indoctrinating your child with a worldview that goes against practically everything Christians believe. Do not hesitate and let the world teach your child for you.

The enemy has been working his game plan for decades, from the dismissal of prayer in the classroom and the social acceptance of abortion to the "whatever" attitude that has permeated the hearts and minds of millions of young people. No five-year-old is prepared to handle today's onslaught of brainwashing, bullying, and sexual

deviancy. And how can we, as Christian parents, be okay with sending our tweens and teens to dark institutions to be harassed, pressured, desensitized, and possibly won over?

Now, I'm not saying that it's a sin to send kids to public school. But we simply cannot ignore the facts any longer. As a loving and caring parent, you want the absolute best for your children, and you place a high value on their education, training, and discipleship. They will grow up before you know it, so make the most of this opportunity "because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

Homeschooling is a choice, a lifestyle, a journey of epic proportions. Do you sense the urgency of the matter? It is a walk of faith, one with great blessings for those willing to rely on God for the results.

If you were ever going to start homeschooling, *now is the time.*

***Davis Carman*** *is the president of Apologia Educational Ministries, the #1 publisher of Creation-based science and Bible curriculum. He believes that if there was ever a time to homeschool, it is now! He is also the author of five illustrated children's books designed to help kids learn a biblical worldview.* Good Morning, God *is based on Deuteronomy 6,* A Light for My Path *is an ABC book based on Psalm 119,* In the Beginning, *is based on the Creation account in Genesis, and* Psalms to Know Early, *and* Truths to Know Early.


let's talk HOMESCHOOL

**"If there was ever a time to homeschool, it is now!"**
- Davis Carman

Join Davis and Rachael Carman as they talk all about the homeschool journey- the highs, the lows, the challenges, the victories, and everything in between.

**Listen on Apple, Google, Spotify and more.**

# 7 MUST-DOS When You Begin Homeschooling

**Debra Bell offers these 7 steps for getting started homeschooling or staying the course as a veteran homeschooler.**

1. **Shadow:** Tag along with a homeschooling family for a couple of days to get a picture of what the lifestyle looks like, at least in one home. Try to visit a homeschool co-op where you can see collaboration in progress. Squirrel away in a corner during these visits with a laptop or Ipad in hand, in part to help folks forget you are there. Soon they will fall into their daily routines and you will get a helpful snapshot of what this might look like when all the balls are in the air. Or, more importantly, how folks recover when a ball is dropped.

2. **Attend:** Homeschool conventions occur in most regions of the country beginning in early spring and run through midsummer. Get a group of friends together and carpool to one of these events so you have others to debrief with after the experience. At the convention, prioritize attending the relevant workshops, bugging everyone with endless questions and skimming through the most eye-catching curriculum. Try not to buy too much. Rather take the promotional literature home and spend time considering which choices make the most sense for your first year.

3. **Join:** Your local support groups and state association exist to help you succeed. Even if you are undecided about homeschooling, they will welcome your interest. So start attending meetings and activities while you are in process. Finding a place where you and your kids fit in in advance of your start date will be critical to setting you up to succeed and enjoy the process.

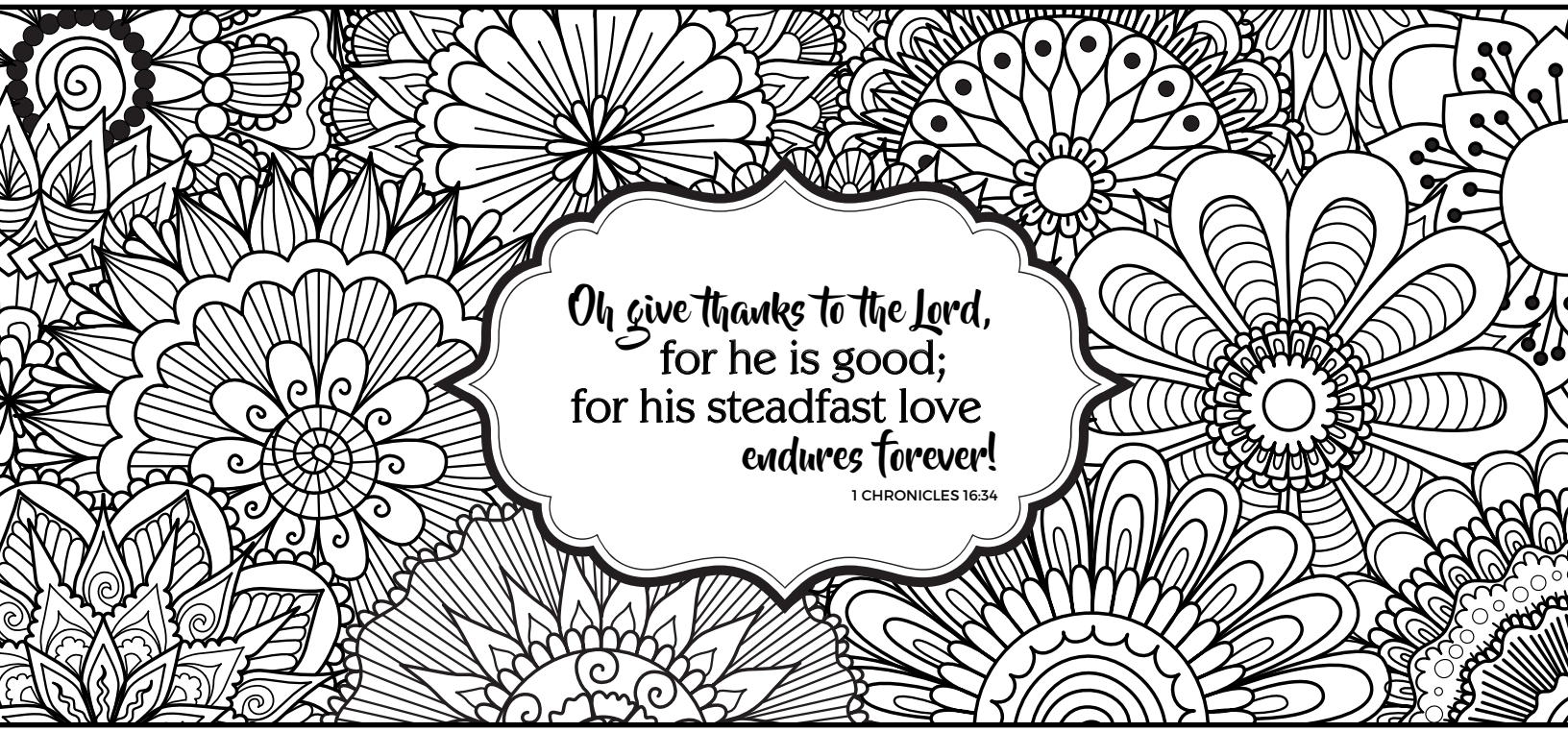
4. **Plan:** *The Ultimate Homeschool Planner for Moms* and companion planners for students and teens is a simple system for setting priorities, establishing academic and character goals for each child and tracking your progress. "Order brings peace," a quote attributed to St. Augustine, is no less true today than it was in the 4th century. Setting aside time weekly to prayerfully consider your priorities and set realistic goals is critical key to evaluating your success and maintaining a steady hand in the midst of establishing a new way of life together.

5. **Include:** Your spouse and kids should be in the decision-making loop. You can serve them by gathering information and casting a vision for homeschooling, but they need a chance to weigh in if you want their cooperation and support. Apply this principle to not just the initial decision to homeschool; but also, to the subsequent choices you make regarding joining a co-op, purchasing a curriculum, or setting a schedule.

6. **Read:** *The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling* and *The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling Teens* provide a broad overview of available resources, organizational tips, strategies to trouble-shoot challenges, insights into how your child learns best, recommendations for covering each subject area and in the latter title, a road map for college planning and preparation.

7. **Depend:** The promise of God's faithfulness and care is our source of comfort and strength during our parenting years. It becomes doubly so if we undertake responsibility for our children's education as well. When the stakes are so high, it is easy to forget He is there to help us. Personal devotions and prayer can easily become optional when it feels like there is just too much to do. But exactly because that is true, we need a plan to access the grace of God that empowers us daily. Protect that time, no matter how brief, before you call your class to order.

***Debra Bell, Ph.D.**, is the best-selling author of the award-winning* Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling, Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling Teens, *and* the Ultimate Planners for moms, teens, and students *(Apologia).*



# 5 Must-Knows BEFORE Selecting Homeschool Curriculum

It can be daunting to attend a homeschool convention and start to select homeschool curriculum. The first time I walked into a homeschool conference, I gasped and said, "I don't know where to start!" It can be very intimidating.

I want to share five key things you need to know before you begin to select your homeschool curriculum.

1. **You need to know God**. You need to know He has your back and He has a plan. You need to know He is faithful. Knowing Him will give you the peace, assurance, confidence, and grace needed to homeschool.

2. **You need to know yourself**. Although you may feel very alone on some days, you are not. The God of the universe is right there with you. In every frustrating or glorious moment, He is there with you. Homeschooling is a lot less about what you are capable of and completely about what He can do through you when you submit to Him. I didn't want to homeschool, but I have been amazed at how God has done incredible things through me. If you are joining the ranks of homeschooling parents, welcome! We should never limit God by what we can or cannot do.

3. **You need to know your children**. In my book *How to Have a H.E.A.R.T. For Your Kids*, I talk about getting to know our children.

When we pulled our oldest son out of public school after 13 days, I realized I didn't know him. I hadn't invested in him because I was so looking forward to someone else dealing with him. The first advice I received from a homeschooling friend was, "Spend time getting to know your son." I just wanted to run out and buy the curriculum. I wanted a list of books to purchase. That list doesn't exist. There is not a super list out there. Your list begins and ends with time on your face before God and getting to know your children. It's the best way you can go into that conference hall and know what homeschool resources to select.

4. **You need to know your objectives**. In the public system, the primary objective is that children fill in circles well and effectively. My objectives are that my children know God and serve Him every day of their lives, that they are articulate and well-read, and that they can write and do fundamental things. So, you need to outline your objectives. Different curriculums are going to meet different objectives. The combination of knowing God, yourself, your children, and your objectives will give you the confidence to walk into that curriculum fair.

5. **You need to explore and know your curriculum options**. This is no longer the homeschool fair of 1970. Once upon a time, all the curriculum options available to homeschooling families could fit on one table. In fact, back in the early days of homeschooling, many were having to do some dumpster diving behind schools to get textbooks. This is not true anymore. We have become such a growing market that textbook companies are marketing to us.

You need to know the different modes of education and what will work best in your circumstance and for your family. I am an advocate for home education. I am all about parent-directed learning. This means what we do in our home school does not look like what you do at your house, and this is as it should be. We should all do what fits our family function, our children, and the life goals we have for each child. Furthermore, we come in and out of seasons. Some seasons require we batten down the hatches and get a lot done, and in some seasons life happens — someone gets sick, there is a death in the family, or there is a big project to finish.

Having been a public school educator myself, I can't remember a time we ever finished the book. We can obsess about finishing each homeschool curriculum book, but that should not be the plan. We need to focus on quality and not necessarily quantity when teaching our children.

Focus on quality, not quantity, when selecting homeschool curriculum for your family, as well. Enter into that curriculum fair confidently because you have done your homework beforehand – knowing God, yourself, your children, your objectives, and the curriculum options available. Go deep with your children as you explore the educational options you have together, and enjoy the experience!

***Rachael Carman*** *is an author and speaker for Apologia Educational Ministries. The wife of Davis and the mother of seven children, Rachael challenges parents to live by reckless, obedient faith. As a direct reflection of her heart's desire to encourage, inspire, and celebrate motherhood, Rachael leads the Real Refreshment Retreat's weekend events that energize and invigorate homeschooling mothers with plus practical encouragement for the homeschool journey. She is the author of* How To Have A H.E.A.R.T. For Your Kids, How Many Times Do I Have to Tell You?*, and co-author of* How to Homeschool with Stunning Confidence, Contagious Joy, and Amazing Focus*. Enjoy more encouragement and inspiration from Rachael by visiting her blog at RachaelCarman.com.*

# HOW TO HOMESCHOOL ENCOURAGEMENT BUNDLE!

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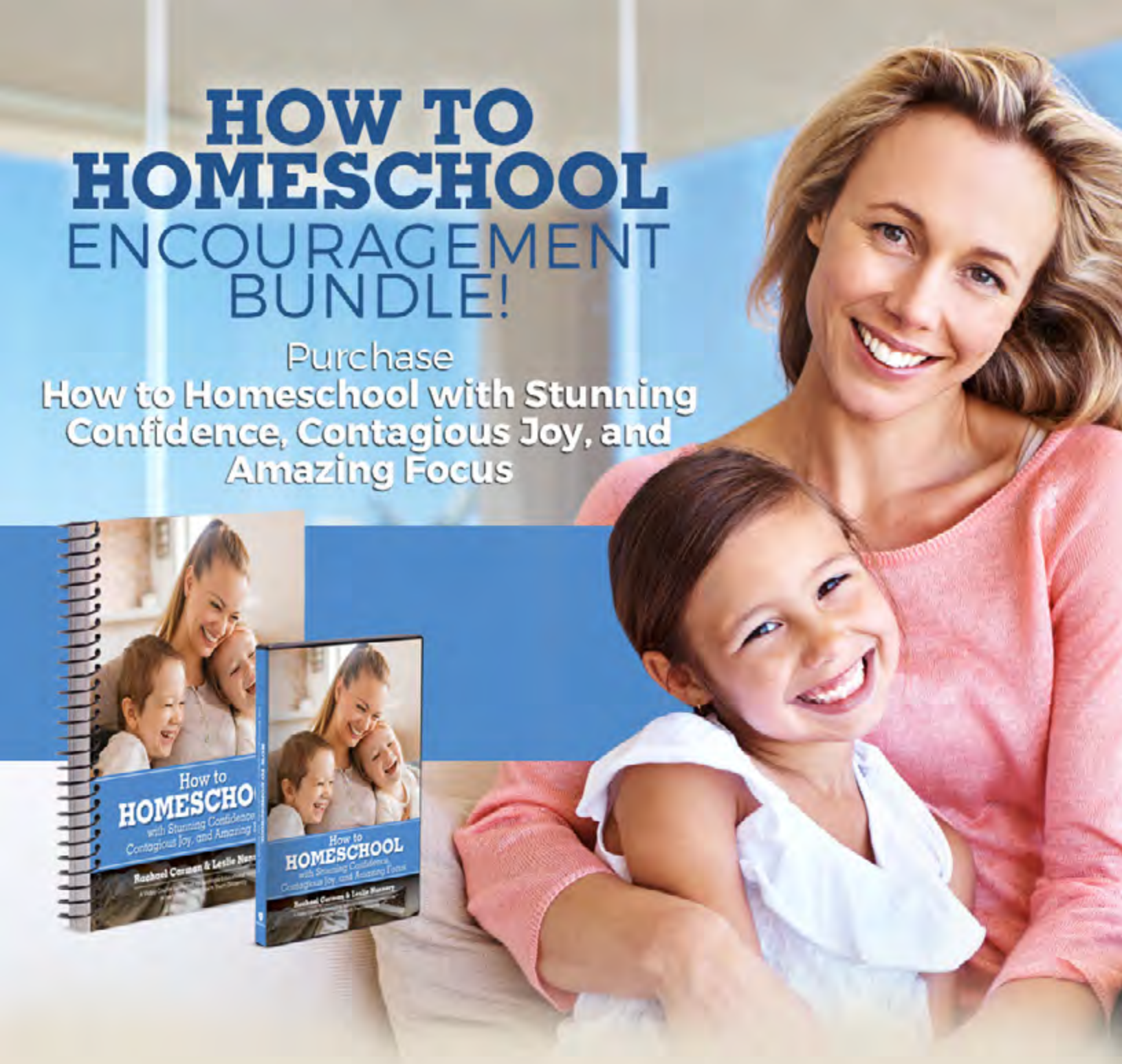


"This is one of the best homeschool support books/courses I've read in my eighteen years of homeschooling. I enjoy reading, but honestly, the videos made all the difference! I loved watching Rachael and Leslie chat like wise, older friends, seeing them springboard off each others' thoughts, hearing what they learned from their family's experiences, and being blessed by their humility and humor as they shared. They were so encouraging, and just real."

**April Elstrom**
*The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine, LLC*

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# Why HOMESCHOOL Teens?

**I am all for Christians entering and engaging the culture. That's the end goal. But I'm convinced adolescence is not the time to make this our priority. It's like trying to launch a rocket with a rubber band.**

So why homeschool for the long term? Here are the reasons that convinced us to teach high school at home:

## Spiritual Growth

Our home is the key place our children will see the power and mercy of the Gospel on display and experience how that can affect our lives. If your faith and values matter to you and these inform your daily attitudes, choices and actions, then your home is the best context for the spiritual development of your children. Sometimes this is a matter of faith for parents – all kids, prior to adulthood, will evaluate and either adopt or discard the values and beliefs their parents hold. Some kids will go through this internally without much indication of the process; others will experience a lot of questioning and struggle. But, no matter how your teen responds to the process, you can be confident this development is taking place and he is moving towards a place of personally held beliefs and convictions.

Homeschooling allows the daily context for that fragile time to be in your home and with your family. Research has repeatedly found that parents are the biggest influence in their children's moral development – if they do not abdicate that role. Peers will become the chief socializing influence, if parents are not around. It's not quality time that trumps quantity of time; kids need both from us.

Homeschooling allows a natural context to exist for spiritual growth, the only one that can truly integrate a child's emotional, intellectual and moral development. And that's important if we want our kids to learn how to live with integrity. Compartmentalizing our faith – being forced to leave it out of the equation, especially during adolescence– is risky business. Our children will learn to disconnect their academic achievement and their knowledge base from the moorings of God as creator and center of all we know and do. It also fosters moral development for utilitarian purposes: I will play by the rules because I want the reward that is offered for doing so. Emotionally, the Psalmist understood God was his source for peace and hope when his soul was wracked with disquiet and worry. He knew to look up, not within, for enduring solutions. Our kids do not figure out on their own how to bring their faith to bear upon all of life: this internal integrity needs to be made visible as we walk transparently with our God before them and talk with them about how this process works.

The culture-at-large is fragmented and idiosyncratic. Modern education is as well: forty minutes for science, the bell rings, hurry off to forty minutes of English. All the components of the school day are divorced from each other. What is the unifying whole? How does all this fit together and for what purpose? At home, you can seamlessly move back and forth between your child's emotional upheavals, academic tasks, and spiritual questions.

## Academic Opportunities

Homeschooling has come of age. In the past 25 years it has matured and multiplied, and it's now an established trend worldwide. The Internet will connect you to your local and state homeschooling community, and it will open up a wealth of online classes and other programs suitable for middle school through college.

Your access to this vibrant community and the opportunities it can provide is just a mouse-click away. Does your child need reinforcement and remediation in an area? You can plan for that without decelerating his progress in other subjects. Is she capable of working at a college level and accumulating college credit early? You can make that happen with online Advanced Placement [AP] classes or through your local community college system. Does your child have specialized interests? An exotic language he wishes to study or a hobby he devotes extensive time to? You can accommodate this diversity without the burden of also fulfilling someone else's diploma requirements.

Granted, the wide array of courses and expert teachers in a large, affluent, suburban school district or an urban magnet school can be convenient and consolidated. I admit up front, I spent the high school years driving my kids to a lot of opportunities I didn't want them to miss. You're the one who will become master of logistics and scheduling in your quest to design the best program for your teenager at home, but I'm here to say it can be done. And if you're able to spring for the technology, many of the best opportunities are now or soon to be online at democratic prices.

The homeschool community in particular is the source of much innovation and self-sufficiency. When I first began this adventure back in 1988, adapting curricula designed for mass education was the best bet; today, the best products for home use are specifically designed for homeschooled students.

And if you are concerned that colleges and employers will view a homeschooled applicant negatively, that's a myth. The trail's already been blazed in almost every area by homeschool graduates who made their way and left a great impression. I've been helping home educated students get into the colleges of their choice the past 15 years, and it is truly a non-issue. In many, many ways homeschool applicants have an advantage, if they've made the most of the opportunities homeschooling affords. Many admissions officers have noted that compared to gradates of conventional schools, homeschooled kids come to college better equipped with independent learning and living skills. They are more likely to assume leadership roles on campus and their graduation rate is higher, too.

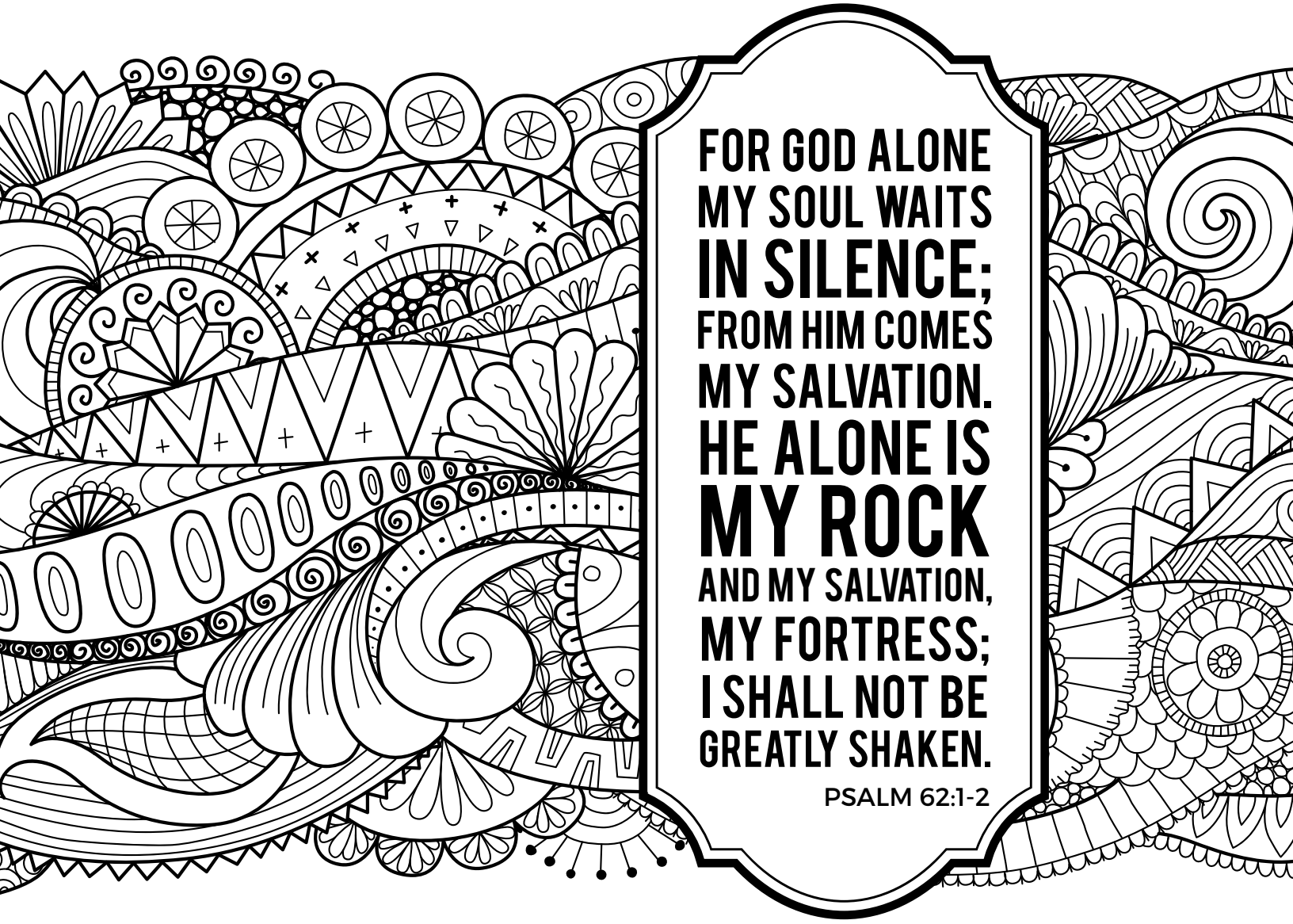
## Flexibility

The biggest advantage I found when I started homeschooling is why I continued – I love the flexibility it allowed us. It's the only educational choice that doesn't hold us captive to someone else's scope and sequence

and schedule. Because homeschooling can be modified on a dime to fit into the larger picture of family life, we were able to protect our priorities. If we wanted to focus on our spiritual life, we could do so; if we needed to increase the time devoted to math, we did; if we wanted a vacation, we took it. Likewise, if we wanted to change curriculum or pursue a new avenue of investigation, we did it, and if an unanticipated opportunity appeared, we were free to go for it. Our kids traveled abroad, took advance courses, held jobs and internships, volunteered, and slept in when needed during their teen years because homeschooling allowed us that flexibility.

Perhaps the approaching school year ahead looks daunting as you recall last year's challenges. I always found it helpful to take a spiritual retreat in August to renew my convictions about homeschooling and re-affirm God's call to it. He never failed to meet me there and extend the faith and grace I needed to look to the future with joy. God is faithful and He will once again supply all your needs in Christ Jesus as you continue to look to Him. That's my prayer for you and this generation of homeschoolers as September draws nigh.

***Debra Bell, Ph.D.**, is the best-selling author of the award-winning* Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling, Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling Teens, *and* the Ultimate Planners for moms, teens, and students *(Apologia).*



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**We believe in homeschooling, and we are here to help you and your students thrive! Learn more at apologia.com.**

# 77 FUN, SERIOUS, OBSCURE, AND OBVIOUS REASONS TO HOMESCHOOL

*And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.* — Deuteronomy 6:6-7

I have a workshop titled "Give Me One Good Reason to Homeschool." In that presentation, I start with a fun and light-hearted top-ten list to break the ice. Then I transition to a more serious set of reasons. I typically change the fun and entertaining list at the beginning depending on what is trending or what I think will connect with the local audience. Part of the problem is that my "fun" list is simply too long. So I am forced to narrow it down to ten, and get on with the more "important" side of the message. Of course, some of the light-hearted reasons at the beginning are actually fairly solid, convincing, and thought-provoking in their own right. So the dilemma is this: which reasons should I include in the list?

Then it hit me. I decided to write this article and simply list them all. If you need one good reason to homeschool, then surely you can find it here. I won't take the time to explain each one since I think you are smart enough to figure that out on your own. So let's get right to it. Here is my list of 77 fun, serious, obscure, and obvious reasons why homeschooling is awesome.

## 77 Fun, Serious, Obscure, and Obvious Reasons Why Homeschooling is Awesome:

1. Your kids never miss the bus
2. Praying and reading the Bible are allowed
3. You don't have to make up snow days
4. You don't need a note for the teacher after a doctor visit
5. You can do something else with that $12,000 per year per kid that private schools charge
6. Recess can last two hours on a nice, sunny day
7. Playing with LEGOs can count as learning
8. Your kids don't have to read until they are actually ready
9. No one will think twice if the principal and teacher kiss and hug in front of the students
10. It's a walk of faith
11. Ephesians 6 & Deuteronomy 6
12. You can teach all subjects from a Christian/biblical worldview
13. Your kids can miss out on the liberal agenda
14. The physical safety of your kids
15. Your kids can explore creation outside
16. Instilling a life-long love of learning
17. The opportunity to provide customized and individualized instruction
18. The positive social setting and context of family
19. Being able to give moral and religious instruction
20. Your kid's performance is not a function of your own education level
21. Your child's performance is not a function of your family's income
22. The cost is only 10% (or less) of the public and private systems
23. You can be assured of your child's safety in the bathroom
24. Kids can spend extra time in areas of their interest and skill
25. You are in charge of the schedule and can flex it to work for your family
26. You are their parent
27. Your kid won't be labeled
28. Your kid won't be harassed or bullied
29. No one loves your child more than you do
30. Parent's are in charge of the calendar
31. You get to drive the school bus
32. There is a short commute time to the classroom
33. The cafeteria is always open
34. You get to take advantage of discounts and avoid crowds by vacationing in the off seasons
35. Your kids can be in multiple grades at the same time
36. Your kids get to drink milk from a glass instead of a paper carton
37. Unlimited hugs from the teacher
38. Your kids can attend classes with "A Bad Hair Day"
39. Your kids get to cuddle under a blanket on a cold winter day
40. Your kids always get a role in the school play
41. You can avoid the long drop-off and pick-up lines
42. The student-teacher ratio is 3 to 1 or less
43. Your kids are the school janitor
44. The whole family gets to take P.E.
45. Making meals counts as home economics (a course most schools don't teach basic life skills like this anymore)
46. Your kids don't have to carry their heavy books around all day in a back pack
47. Family emergencies are automatically written into the lesson plan
48. No one has to raise your hands (which is not very useful in the workplace)
49. Your kids won't cry on the first day of school

50. You won't cry when returning to an empty home
51. Your boys can take a pocket knife to school
52. You can actually get it all done by 1:00 pm (when the kids are young)
53. Enjoying the holidays from Thanksgiving to Christmas can count as school
54. Everything can stop for a few months to enjoy, bond, and help with the new baby
55. Your home actually gets to be lived in (I feel for all those lonely homes during the day)
56. You can do your reading assignment on the porch, in the fort, or up in a tree
57. Every one of your students is the valedictorian of their class
58. Cleaning out the refrigerator doubles as a science experiment
59. Cooking and baking can count as learning
60. Because Common Core is a joke
61. Your kids can't fool the mom into thinking they understand the material
62. You can have more meaningful family time
63. Kids learn at their own pace
64. You determine the scope and sequence
65. Students can learn subjects not normally available in other school settings (ex: Chinese language and culture, foreign missions, movie making, etc.)
66. The teachers and students will actually look forward to school reunions
67. It saves tax-payers millions and billions of dollars
68. Pajamas can be the official school uniform (at least for a few winter days)
69. The pet dog is allowed to be in the room while the kids do their school work
70. Your students aren't exposed to negative social environments (aka the jungle code of the hallways)
71. Your students can practice freedom of religion (the 1st amendment)
72. Math class can take place while shopping at the grocery store
73. Vacations can become whole family educational outings
74. Brothers and sisters actually get to know and like each other
75. If caught talking to yourself, you can say you are having a parent-teacher meeting
76. The teacher never goes on strike (at least I hope not)
77. And a personal favorite reason to homeschool: You get to experience God filling in gaps so big a school bus could drive right through it

Walking by faith and enjoying the homeschooling adventure of a lifetime!

***Davis Carman*** *is the president of Apologia Educational Ministries, the #1 publisher of Creation-based science and Bible curriculum. He believes that if there was ever a time to homeschool, it is now! He is also the author of five illustrated children's books designed to help kids learn a biblical worldview.* Good Morning, God *is based on Deuteronomy 6,* A Light for My Path *is an ABC book based on Psalm 119,* In the Beginning*, is based on the Creation account in Genesis, and* Psalms to Know Early*, and* Truths to Know Early.

# Focus on Love

Of all the ways we strive to make our homeschool journey successful, one detail should always rise above the rest; a focus on love. Love may not solve every challenge we face, but it will make all the difference along the way. The lack of a loving atmosphere can ruin our good intentions.

We love our children and we want the best for them. Once we choose to homeschool, we give it our all. We research, read blogs and articles, consult with others, and attend workshops. It's a serious commitment, a true labor of love. We want to get this right. Homeschooling can become overwhelming, and at times we may forget to keep the main thing the main thing. When something feels out of balance, we may need to consider adjusting our charts, curricula, or schedules. On the other hand, the imbalance may not be found in the academic arena, but rather in our relationships.

In the beginning of our homeschool journey, I thought my job was to concentrate on the spiritual and educational development of our children. I quickly learned much of the growth would be my own. It became clear my role as a homeschool mom was not to micromanage. Together we found a rhythm that allowed for individual differences and learning styles. Because we had our fair share of friction to work

through, we were often reminded to look to Jesus as our perfect standard. His love never fails.

Since we spend so much time together as a family when we homeschool, focusing on creating a loving atmosphere is very important. As we focus on love we're reminded of essential truths found in 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3.

*And now I will show you the most excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.* 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3 NIV

These verses begin with listing good works. In verse one we read about helping others as we speak. Using our gifts, seeking to understand mysteries, and pursuing knowledge are mentioned in verse two. Choosing to homeschool can require a faith that moves mountains in my opinion. Verse three speaks of helping those in need. Yes, our faith may even require us to pay the ultimate price.

Let's look at the second part of these verses where there is a condition. We can do all the right things to be successful, but we gain nothing if we do them without love. In homeschool terms, if we choose the best books and extra-curricular activities, and students perfectly follow daily schedules while the house remains spotless, but we haven't spoken out of love as we teach and train, our communication may sound like loud echoes of a gong or clanging cymbals.

Parents, if we use our gifts and talents to teach in the homeschool community, drive van loads of kids all over creation, and volunteer for our special cause, but we do not act out of love to those around us, we gain nothing. If we trade a career for homeschooling, help the poor, and do mission work, but we do not act out of love, we sacrifice in vain.

We've all had our less than perfect days. Life is not a rehearsal, so unfortunately, we cannot go back and do them over. But, we do have today. If we've become too busy and our stress is showing, we should remind ourselves that no one family can do it all. We must pick and choose. If we're struggling with health issues or a family crisis, we can still concentrate on loving one another. All other matters become minor details. As we set our priorities, we are showing our children how to navigate through life in light of eternity. This is an education beyond the books.

When we need to refocus so we can get back on track, the next four verses of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 guide the way.

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."* 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 NIV

Each homeschooling family is beautifully unique. No matter our budget, size or the challenges we face, we have one thing in common: we need to focus on love. Love is the motivation from which our words and actions should flow. More than anything else we can do or provide for our children, focusing on 1 Corinthians 13: 1-7 will make all the difference in the journey.

If you enjoyed the encouragement in this article, check out *Filling Our Empty Cisterns* by Rachael Carman.

***Gerri M. Smith*** *spent nine years as a public school teacher before homeschooling their four children. She is also a customer service representative for Apologia.*

# How We Started Homeschooling: The Story of a Recovered Heart

**The short version of how we started homeschooling is simple: There was a lot of yelling and screaming.**

I looked forward to school. I had taught public high school and performed homebound instruction and I loved teaching! I did want to be home for my kids. But when Charles was a newborn, when the leaves were changing and the buses started their routes, I was already dreaming of returning to my passion.

We were living in Ohio, when Davis went over to meet the new neighbors. When he got back, he mentioned a word I had never heard before which would significantly change our lives, though not for five more years. That word was "homeschooling."

I soon learned there were other neighbors who were homeschooling. I thought these moms had nothing better to do, that they had no passion, no drive. I figured they just couldn't let go of their kids and get on with their lives.

**They proved me wrong in living color.**
God is so good. I came to know these women as lovers of their husbands, children, and their God. They were not the weirdos I had made them out

to be. No, these were women of God willing to sacrifice themselves to be all He had planned them to be. God was real to them.

## Moving On

Then came the time to move away from Akron. In choosing a new home, our highest priority was the schools. I had a plan, and it included a big yellow school bus.

This was the year I got my life back. I had visions of joining a Bible study again, cleaning the house and having it stay clean, and having lunch with friends. This was going to work out perfectly.

After we enrolled Charles, we began to pray for his teacher, but when we finally met her at an open house, Davis asked afterward, "Is that the teacher you have been praying for? Because that is not who I have been praying for." I felt the same way.

We had it all worked out, though. Davis would take Charles and the neighbor boy to school in the morning on his way to work, then the neighbor mom would meet the boys at the bus stop and walk them home. Everything seemed to be going off without a hitch.

## The Yellow School Bus

On the first day, Charles was tagged with #809, his bus number, as instructed. He was all smiles, off on a new adventure. That afternoon, I saw my neighbor come over the hill with her dog and her son, but mine was missing. "He wasn't on the bus," she told me.

I ran into the house and called the school. The secretary responded, "That must be who this is sitting here."

On day two, Davis took the boys to school and talked to the teacher to get the plan straight. So that afternoon I went down to meet my son after his second day of kindergarten. Again I saw my neighbor, her dog, and her son, but mine was nowhere to be seen.

"He's not here," I was told when I phoned the school. "He was put on the wrong bus."

Davis was hot. He talked with the principal and pointed out the teacher had failed to get Charles on the right bus two consecutive days despite the tag, which still clung to Charles's shirt. The principal was unwilling to change Charles's teacher. He asked us to please just let this thing work itself out. Work itself out?! What if Charles had gotten off of the bus just because he was ready to stop riding around aimlessly? What if someone had picked him up? What if . . . ?

We began picking Charles up from school and finally, on day thirteen, Davis took the day off from work to visit Charles's class. He described it this way: "It wasn't like anything bad was going on. It was more like nothing was going on."

So Davis took the radical step of withdrawing our son from public school.

## Now What?

I had been afraid of this possibility. I had investigated every available option to salvage my plan and my life. I had called every one of the private schools. I had formulated Plan B.

Then Davis asked the question: "What about homeschooling?"

"Oh, yeah, great. Let me get this straight: You get to go to work, and I get stuck here all day with the kiddos. This was the year I was supposed to get my life back!" I blurted.

"I was just thinking," he continued patiently and gently, "we have been praying for months for Charles's teacher, and I think we have been praying for you."

The words were like a hammer against my hard heart, a shock to my dead senses, a long-overdue wake-up call. The Holy Spirit had spoken through my husband, piercing straight through to my heart. I was speechless. This is how we started homeschooling.

## The First Year

Confession time: When we started homeschooling, I did not have a heart for my children. Although I loved my children, I was ready to get my life back, ready to get back to me. I didn't see my children as a trust or a blessing or a gift. Not really. Perhaps in words, but not in deed, not in my heart. In my hard, crusty heart, there was only me.

Our first foray into homeschooling was rough. My first priority was getting Charles to read. It was slow going. It would have been nice had someone told me then that he would be a late, though avid reader. Still, Charles and

I were having a good time. We were laughing together more, and I discovered that I liked him. That December, Davis remarked that he thought we were actually growing closer. Was this possible?

## The Heart of the Issue

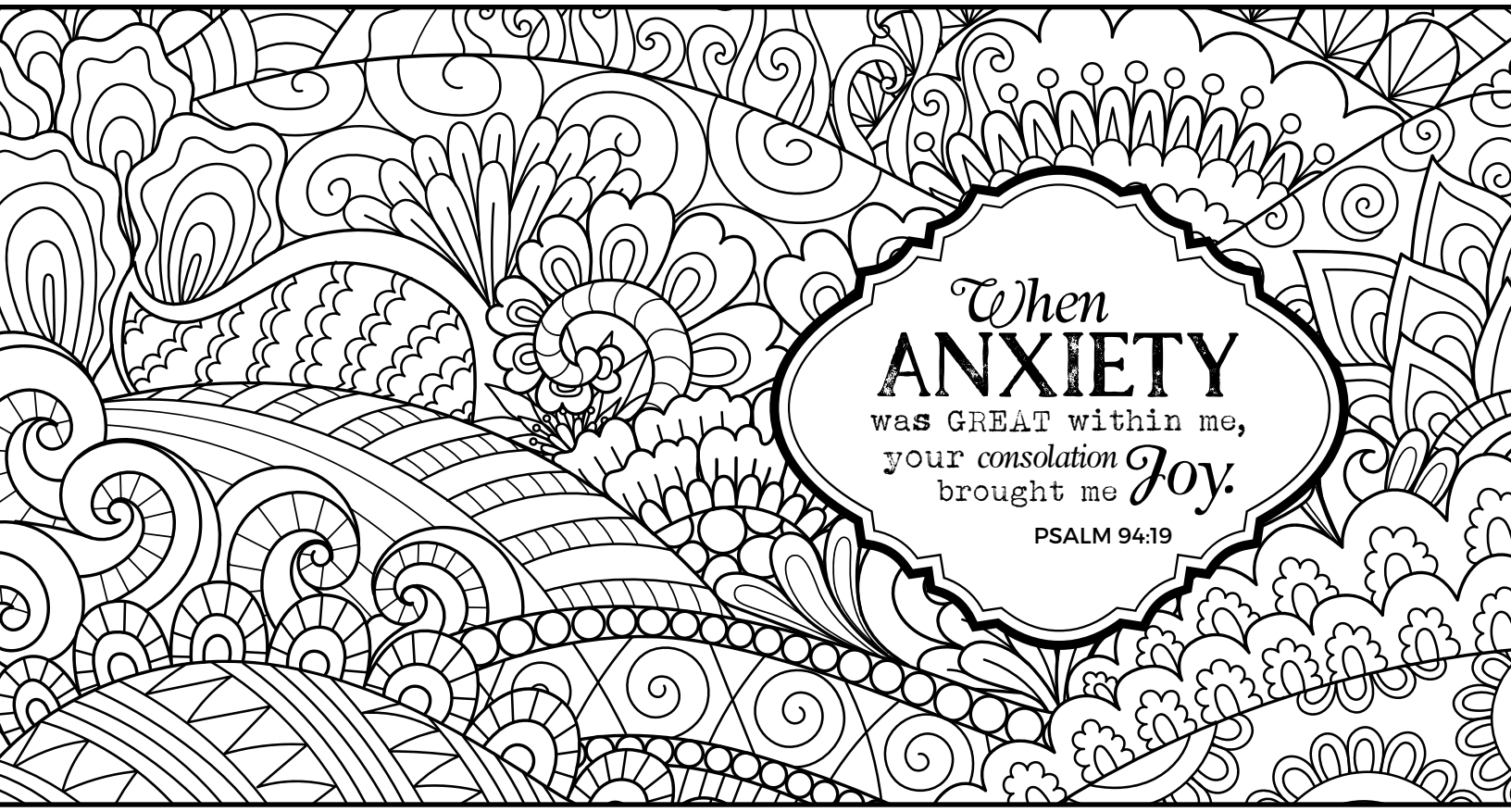
In the spring of 1997, at a homeschool conference, we literally wandered into a workshop hosted by Chris Davis of the Elijah Company. We really didn't care which seminar we attended. Yet during the next hour our perspective, attitudes, and subsequently, our lives were changed. By the end, we were both in tears, convicted by the Holy Spirit as to His call on our lives.

No one in the curriculum hall was selling a replacement heart, even if I had realized that mine was missing.

You can recover your heart. It may be lost, but it can be found. Your heart might be wounded, but it can be healed. The Great Physician is waiting! Just like the Tin Man in The Wizard of Oz, I got a brand-new heart. I am more vulnerable, more open, but I'm also more invested, more joyful, more contented, and more full than I ever thought possible.

Maybe you, too, have found yourself where you never expected to be standing. Or maybe you're experiencing emptiness in your relationships with your children. You may have met the standards for educating your kids, but have yet to give them your heart. Are you ready to take some practical steps toward heart recovery? Yes? Then let's get started!

***Rachael Carman*** *is an author and speaker for Apologia Educational Ministries. The wife of Davis and the mother of seven children, Rachael challenges parents to live by reckless, obedient faith. As a direct reflection of her heart's desire to encourage, inspire, and celebrate motherhood, Rachael leads the Real Refreshment Retreat's weekend events that energize and invigorate homeschooling mothers with plus practical encouragement for the homeschool journey. She is the author of* How To Have A H.E.A.R.T. For Your Kids, How Many Times Do I Have to Tell You?*, and co-author of* How to Homeschool with Stunning Confidence, Contagious Joy, and Amazing Focus*. Enjoy more encouragement and inspiration from Rachael by visiting her blog at RachaelCarman.com.*



# HOMESCHOOL BASICS to Stay the Course

Whether or not you receive grief for homeschooling, let me encourage you to stick with the homeschool basics and keep your eye on the finish line. One can expect negative feedback from those who might not understand the choice to homeschool, but thankfully very little came our way. So when I was hit with a rude comment from a homeschool leader during a support group meeting, I was caught off guard. We've now crossed the finish line, and we're so thankful for the journey. We even used the rude comment to our benefit, and I identified some homeschool basics throughout the years. Maybe we can use these homeschool basics for yours as well.

The comment actually came during a homeschool support group meeting for mothers. Our children attended a weekly gym class for homeschoolers sponsored by a local university, and this was when the support group met. A few weeks into our first year of homeschooling, the first day of gym class finally arrived and we were all excited. After registration, the kids went to the gym and I took the baby with me to the meeting. Announcements were brief, then came introductions.

I gladly shared our story when my turn came. "Our children are 5, 4, 2, and 6 months. After teaching in a public school for nine years, I resigned so I could stay home with our first baby. In a little under five years we

were blessed with four children. We have decided to homeschool while we have preschoolers. I'm not sure if we'll continue after that, or if I'll go back to teaching and send the kids to a Christian school. Like many families, we are praying it through one year at a time."

As soon as I finished, here it came. The leader leaned forward against her podium and declared, "I have found teachers make the worst homeschool moms. They try to recreate the classroom at home, and that doesn't work because homeschooling is a lifestyle. Welcome and thank you for coming." I couldn't wait to leave. The rest of the meeting was a blur.

On the bright side, the older kids had a blast and couldn't wait to go back. The next week my baby and I parked along the side of the gym. Oddly enough, several other moms and infants were in the same area. We made new friends and felt right at home with our new community.

Reflecting on the previous weeks of starting our oldest in kindergarten, I licked my wounds and sifted the rude comment to see if I might find some usefulness. I also remembered advice from my brother in law as I headed to college, "Don't let the books get in the way of your education." It's not too hard to figure that one out. Have you ever met an educated foolish person? We wanted our children to be well educated, but we also wanted to foster biblical wisdom and understanding.

And so began our eighteen year journey of learning together. I stayed home and spent the years with our children and teaching at co-op. Each year we found our new balance of staying socially involved while getting work done at home. In keeping that balance, families will differ because we come in all shapes and sizes. Available resources vary. Emergencies happen. But when we are called and committed to the homeschool lifestyle, we can have confidence in God's provision. As Mother always said, "Things have a way of working out." I hope you will find yourself crossing that finish line one day and feeling thankful for the homeschool lifestyle. As we journeyed, I identified four homeschool basics that served us well.

## Here are 4 homeschool basics we found helpful.

**Add** arrows to your lesson plans. Make adjustments. I learned this first of the 4 homeschool basics right away. According to our wall chart, the first day of kindergarten would begin with devotions, opening exercises, pledge, etc. Phonics would be finished by 9:15. Break time: change a diaper or two. 9:30: kindergarten math with the baby in the playpen, and toddlers playing nicely nearby. Yes, I thought I had it figured out until I drew my first arrow around 8:00 am. My 'book education' had just gotten in the way of doing life together. Only a few weeks into our journey, both comments were ringing true: homeschooling is a lifestyle and we can't let the books get in the way of a true education. Adjustments were made as we learned to accomplish the important elements of our education while staying flexible.

**Subtract;** simply take away what doesn't work. We are doing life together, not crowd control. Each phase of the journey will have a rhythm of its own, so it is beneficial to put aside old routines and find new ones periodically. For us, desks were fun at first, but they eventually sat empty as kids relaxed on the couch or climbed trees for reading spots. We stopped going to gym class once we joined a co-op. We replaced curriculum when we couldn't make it work. Changes can be scary, but they can also keep us motivated and excited. Personally, we didn't try to participate in everything, but we chose our favorites and eliminated the rest. No family can do or have it all; trying to will only lead to stress and burn out. Like old food in the refrigerator; if in doubt, throw it out.

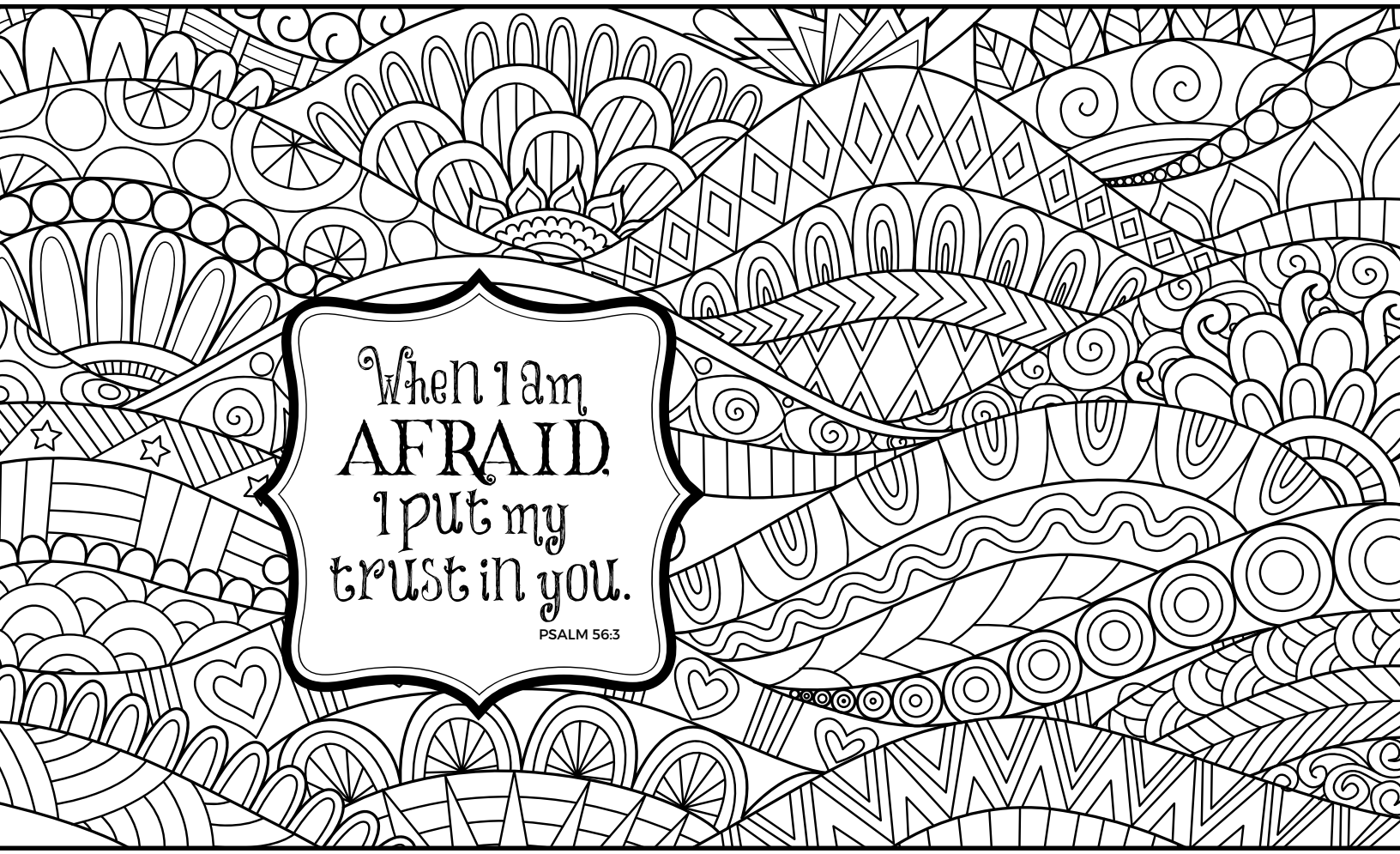
**Multiply** resources and opportunities by tapping into your community. Work with the talented people around you while you make your own contributions. Grandparents, neighbors, and others may have skills they can pass along to your children. Co-ops bring together parents with a variety of career backgrounds, so the potential is abundant. Some homeschool parents offer classes to others in their homes. Online live and recorded classes, such as those available through Apologia Online Academy, provide support no matter where you live. Even siblings can quiz and tutor

each other. 4-H is fun and educational, and projects can count toward credit in subjects such as art and home economics. Sports create a wonderful sense of community. Researching apprenticeships, internships, and dual credit courses can potentially save money. With my husband in business, our children earned credit with internships while gaining work experience. Multiplying your resources will lighten your load and make the journey more exciting.

**Divide** and conquer. Time management is a key to keeping your sanity. I struggled the most when I neglected personal devotions. Time alone with God kept me grounded, focused, and enabled me to keep things in proper perspective. Divide the workload by teaching children how to help with housework and meal preparation. They need these skills anyway. Next on my list, buy a good planner. I enjoyed choosing books for the kids, but this one was for me. With all the kids out of school now, my planners have become special keepsakes. The Ultimate Homeschool Planner by Debra Bell became a favorite during our last few years. Where were these in 1998? Her planners not only have pages for lesson plans, but include sections to journal memorable moments, keep track of appointments, and provide encouraging quotes and bible verses. Homeschool moms wear many hats as they keep a lot of plates spinning, so they need all the help they can get to divide and conquer.

Just think of the many hats a homeschool mom wears through the years. Sometimes she's also juggling a home business or working away from home. She stacks the hats on top of one another and keeps the plates spinning. A poem entitled "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost states, "Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference." It is challenging, but this is a journey worth taking. Be encouraged to stay the course and stick with the homeschool basics.

***Gerri M. Smith*** *spent nine years as a public school teacher before homeschooling their four children. She is also a customer service representative for Apologia.*



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# Is Your Career "ON HOLD" As a Mom?

More than once in the past few weeks I have had conversations with moms who were feeling frustrated with their situations. They had "put their career on hold" and they had to wait for the busy-ness of motherhood to slow down so they could "get back to what God had for them."

Folks. We have to shift our thinking about this. Let me start by giving you a bit of my story.

Before I had children, I had a pretty fun job. I worked at Walt Disney World. I was a marine biologist with the responsibility of collection, transport, and care of over 100 different ocean species living in a 6-million-gallon aquarium. I regularly swam with dolphins. I published scientific research on shark behavior. They sent me to the Florida Keys each summer to fish and dive at their satellite facility.

Yeah, it was fun. My career was starting to expand as I wrote for scientific journals and magazines.

But then I had our first child. Both my husband and I really believed that God was calling me to stay home and be there full time as our family grew. So to the amazement of several of my co-workers, family,

and friends, I quit my job and came home full time to be with our son (and in the next few years, more children).

I considered it a promotion to motherhood.

But I had to keep reminding myself of that. After all, it definitely was not as glamorous or mentally exciting as what I did before. Some days I felt like my "job responsibility" mainly consisted of cleaning up bodily fluids coming out of tiny humans.

I have to be honest. Those days weren't very "fulfilling," at least on the surface of my thoughts. With four children ages 6 and under, I was in full-on Mom mode: messy hair, sleep-deprived, and fueled by peanut butter and jelly crusts.

Yet, when I really thought about it, I knew it was the best thing I could be doing and was ultimately the most fulfilling occupation for me. Today I cherish those sweet reading times on the couch with all the children snuggled around me. *I* wanted to be the one who bandaged their scraped knees or scolded and encouraged them when they were learning to share.

And THEN… if we weren't weird enough in this culture…we really felt God directing us to homeschool our children.

So my "career" changed a bit more. I added curriculum to my days. I had to learn how to teach proper writing and grammar skills. I studied all I could about learning styles, scope & sequences, and transcripts.

Today, after 21 years of homeschooling, all of our kids have graduated and are out of the home.

You might say, then, that I can finally get back to my career.

But I would answer you by saying that I never left it.

What do I mean? Well, granted, I didn't remain working as a marine biologist once we had kids, but I continued in my skills and career-building as I faithfully (sometimes not-so-faithfully) did what God had before me.

During those days of homeschooling, I actually gained an education in areas that I had been lacking. Although my grammar skills had been OK before, let me tell you that after teaching elementary- and middle-school-level grammar four times through, I can now hold my own with the grammar-Nazis!

Looking back from the vantage point I have today, I can see how God placed me in various positions and gave me certain skills in order to prepare me for what He had for me right now.

You see, working at Disney put me in front of hundreds of people at a time, so I had to learn rather quickly how to speak to large groups. That job also gave me career experience and exposure. Coming home gave me an education on how children learn and grow. Each of my four children has different learning styles and unique needs. When I began homeschooling, there was little available curriculum so we often had to create our own (I can pretty much write a unit study on anything…I mean anything… Yep, even dirt…I can do it…).

I gained more skills in my academic field, too. Because of my science background, I offered to teach science to other homeschooled students as well as my own. In these little informal co-ops, I gained more skills as I began to understand the best ways to explain scientific principles, using examples and hands-on demonstrations.

And I loved it!

So what am I doing today? Well, I am speaking at homeschool conferences, science camps, and ladies' retreats to encourage families. I am also writing curriculum for middle school and high school. And I am filming instructional DVDs to accompany science courses, enabling me to use hands-on examples to explain scientific concepts.

But I could NOT be doing this if I hadn't gone through the skill-building pathway God had for me. In those early days of being home with my children, I had no idea what was ahead. The technology to do what I am doing today had not even been invented yet!

However, God knew.

He knew what would be the best "career path" for me. And as I have the blessing to look back with today's perspective, I am grateful to be able to see that what I did was not a side-track or putting my career on hold. Indeed, it was EXACTLY what I needed to do and experience so that I could build the skills necessary to do what I am doing right now (even the grammar!).

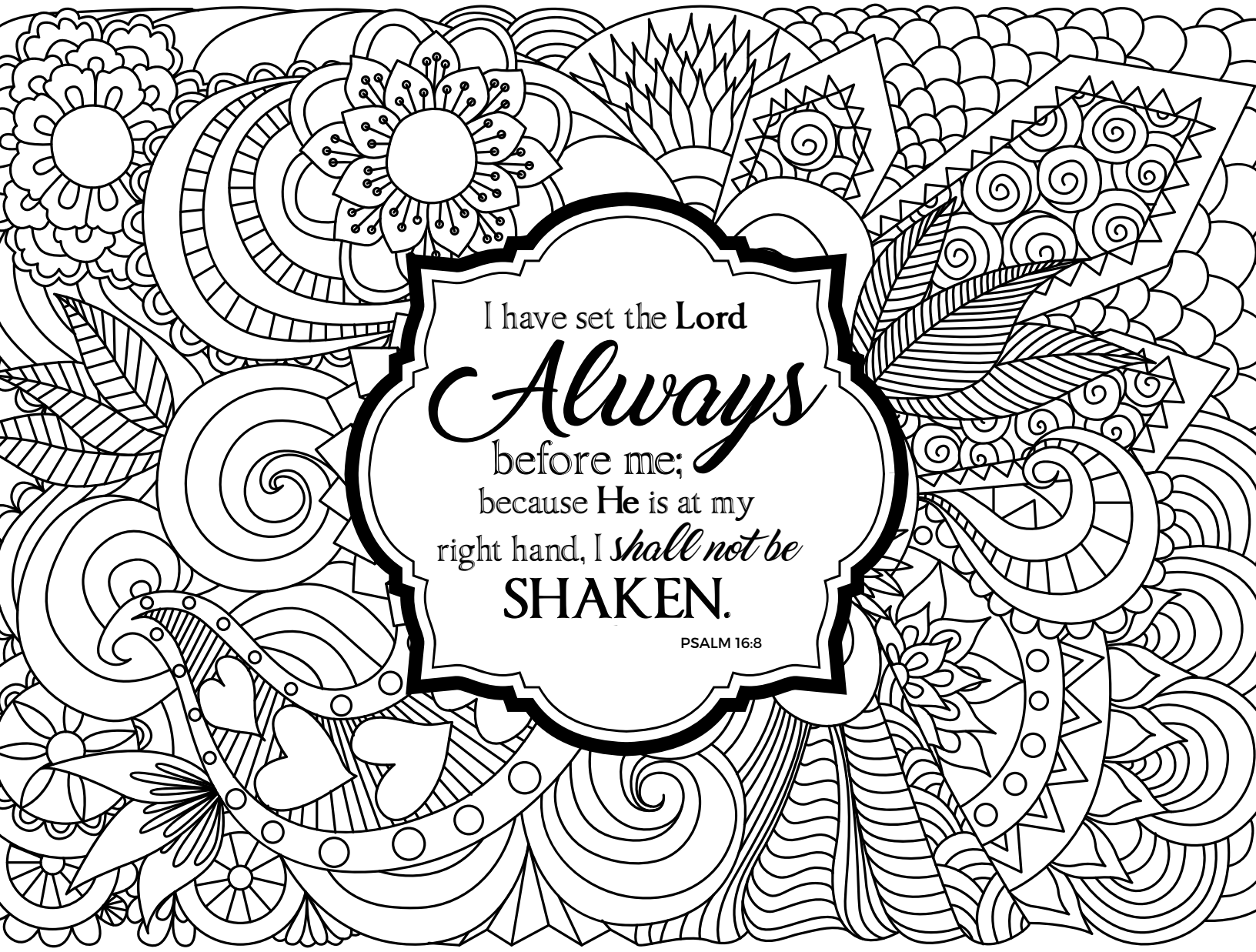
So if you are wondering about the spot God has you in right now, know that it is not a Plan B for your life.

Raising and training children in itself is one of the BEST things we can do with the ministry of our lives. It is the MOST fulfilling. In the long run, it is more fulfilling than ANY other career.

And know that your external career is not being put on hold. We all have to think of it as another step in God's plan for our individual journeys. Each journey will look a little different, because we each play a different role in the body of Christ.

But EACH ONE is a vital role. EACH ONE is worthwhile. And EACH ONE is made up of a pathway that God will use for His good.

***Sherri Seligson*** *and her husband, David, have homeschooled their four children for 21 years, recently graduating their youngest child. A degreed marine biologist, Sherri worked at Walt Disney World's Living Seas, publishing shark behavior research. She has authored Apologia's* Exploring Creation with Marine Biology *and* Exploring Creation with General Science, 3rd Edition*, instructional DVD courses for Apologia's science curricula, and companion curricula for feature films including* Dolphin Tale *and* War Horse*. Sherri is an international conference and retreat speaker. Using transparency, truth, and humor, she encourages moms on their homeschool journey and teaches families and students the importance of studying God's creation. You can connect with Sherri at www.sherriseligson.com, facebook.com/SherriSeligsonAuthor, instagram.com/sherriseligson, and twitter.com/SherriSeligson.*



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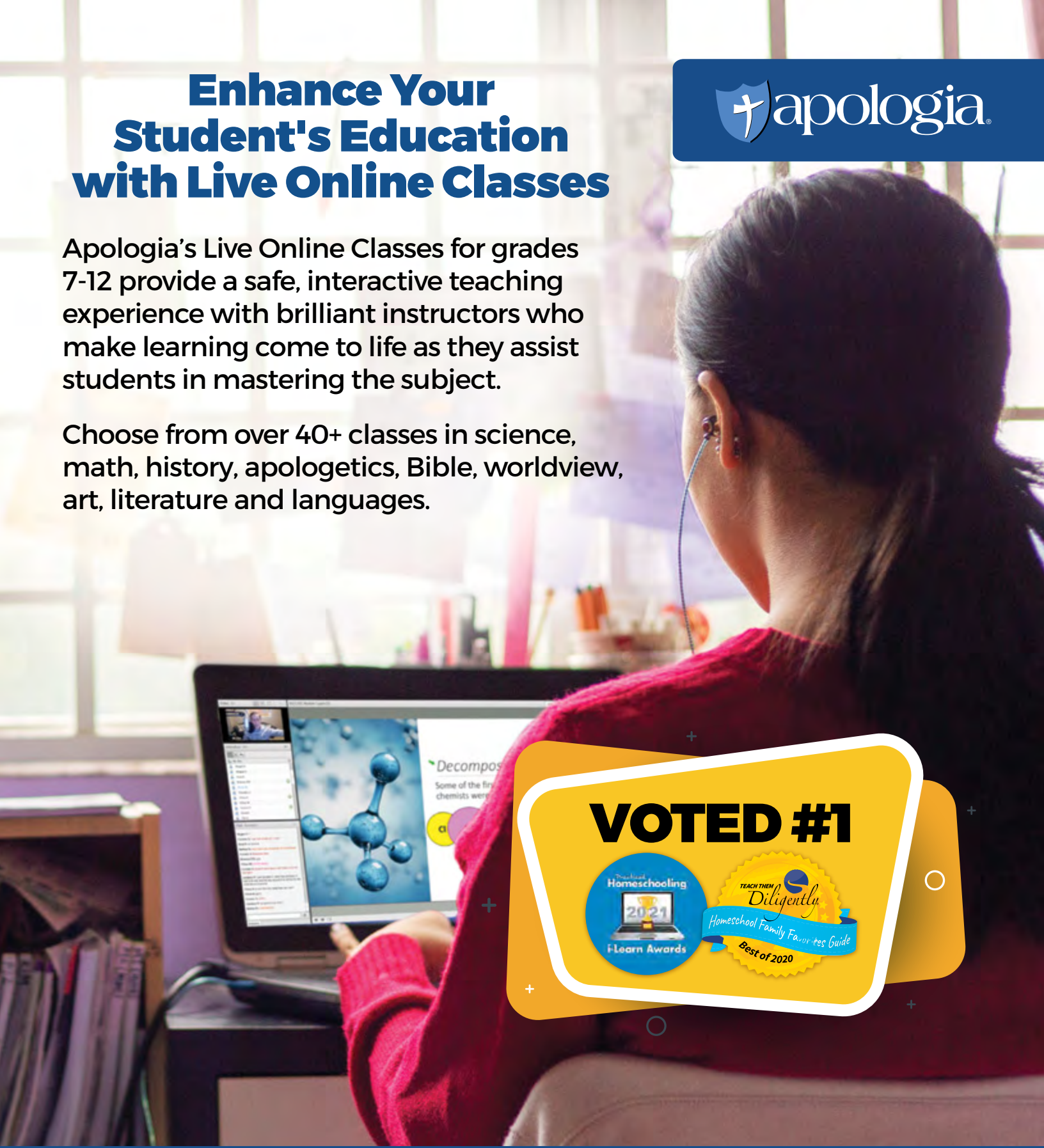


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# WHAT'S A DAD TO DO?

Several years back I received a phone call from my son when he was a student at a Christian college in New York City. We talked about classes, girls, and his lack of money. Then he got to the real point of his call. "Dad, I really miss our family times talking around the dinner table. Being away has caused me to realize just how much they had a positive impact on my education and prepared me to articulate my ideas effectively. I can't wait to be a husband and father just like you."

Wow! Those are words that make a dad's heart rejoice. In the past, I have often viewed the formal teaching times in our home as my most important worldview training opportunities—and those times are important, to be sure. But as I pondered my conversation with Charles over the ensuing weeks and months, the simple truth of Deuteronomy 6:7 struck me with new force. Some of our most profound instruction occurs while we are doing the mundane things of life—like sitting around the dinner table—*with* our kids. After all, we are to be teaching and modeling the Christian life to them when we rise up, when we walk along the way, when we sit at home, and when we lie down in the evenings.

## When You Rise Up

What do you usually do in the morning before you start your day? Maybe you check your calendar for appointments and review your to-do list for

the day. Help your kids do the same. I can hear you now as your son is slowly waking. "Rise and shine. God has great plans for you, and I would like to know all about them, too." Reviewing your son's schedule and assignments for the day and encouraging him before he gets started can set the stage for a productive day of learning.

### When You Walk Along the Way

Don't let a long, hard day at the office deter you from creating opportunities to take your family outside for a nice walk, hike, or bike ride. Observe God's creation first hand, commenting on the wonders of the plant or animal kingdom. When a colorful flower grabs your daughter's attention, show sincere interest and stop for a closer inspection. When you return home, investigate your findings on the Internet (with your girl close by) and write about your discoveries in a nature journal.

### When You Sit at Home

How many times has your kitchen island been turned into a mini laboratory? Dad, this is a chance for your mad scientist alter ego to make a guest appearance. I know you love pouring vinegar into a soap-and-baking-soda mixture and causing a handmade volcano to erupt and overflow with lava. Science experiments are always more fun with dad's help.

### Dad: The Project Engineer

Often I will read an article like this and wish the author provided a longer list of ideas that I can actually do with my kids. So I'm going to take an extended tangent to give you three real-life examples of relationship-building (and fun) projects. If you're already the creative type, then feel free to skip ahead.

### Project #1 - Paper Airplanes

Several years ago, my two youngest sons wanted to make paper airplanes so often that my wife and I realized we had to incorporate this newfound interest into the homeschool schedule. Being a mechanical engineer by education, and having tested military fighter jets in my first job, this dad was just as eager as the boys to do more. I promised to come up with a new paper airplane design every weekday for a year if my boys promised to be satisfied with making no more than one airplane a day. One other rule instituted by mom: We couldn't make the planes until after three o'clock in the afternoon, otherwise the boys had trouble completing their morning schoolwork and responsibilities.

This went pretty well the first few weeks. It isn't that hard to find ten to fifteen original paper airplane designs. These were the tougher weeks for my boys, as they would come into my home office in the morning and I would have to remind them they had to wait until the afternoon. Promptly at three o'clock, they would come rushing in, and we had a great time working together on a new airplane. Of course, they would often ask if we could make another one after dinner, and I would gently remind them of the one-plane-a-day rule.

Now after the first month, they had a box full of gliders to fly. However, my job got harder at this point, and I found myself searching longer on the Internet for new designs and buying cool books with miniature, large, and amazingly creative paper airplane projects. One of our favorites was making one out of a two-feet-by-four-feet piece of poster board. You did not want to get hit by that monster as we took turns sending it aloft from our second-floor patio.

We made it through the year, and the boys would occasionally go to the five or so boxes that housed the well-used paper fliers. We recently stumbled upon a few of these old relics in the attic. The boxes caused us to recall many fond memories of days gone by.

### Project #2 - Forts

I have built three different man-size forts with my kids over the last twenty years. The first one was when my oldest boys were four and two years old. I was the sentimental dad who imagined them actually remembering this moment at their very young ages. One short year later, my company relocated us, and I was not about to leave that construction project behind. I cut a few pieces off so that it would fit in the moving truck, and we lugged that thing with us in several moves until we finally landed in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Then my boys were older, and I included the girls in a family project to build a large addition to the children's playhouse. It was one of those mega-forts that most engineering-type dads would be proud to show off. The kids put a full decade of good wear and tear on that fort before we moved to our current residence.

And what was one of the first father-child projects at the new place? You guessed it. This new fort was based on

some rather inventive designs. More than a decade and one deluxe treehouse later, the well-used fort still gets plenty of attention, by my grandkids.

### Project #3 - Corn-hole Boards

The final idea I would like to share is when I made some corn-hole boards with my kids. Now I thought this was going to be a three-weekend experience, at most. My main motivation was to bond with my kids with a relatively easy project that everyone could enjoy. I still joke about it with friends, but this "easy" project turned into a whole summer of cutting, nailing, and painting. I still don't know exactly what happened, but the project took on a life of its own. In the end, I did achieve my main goal: plenty of quality bonding time with my kids during the construction phase. And we still enjoy playing together as a family using these custom game boards.

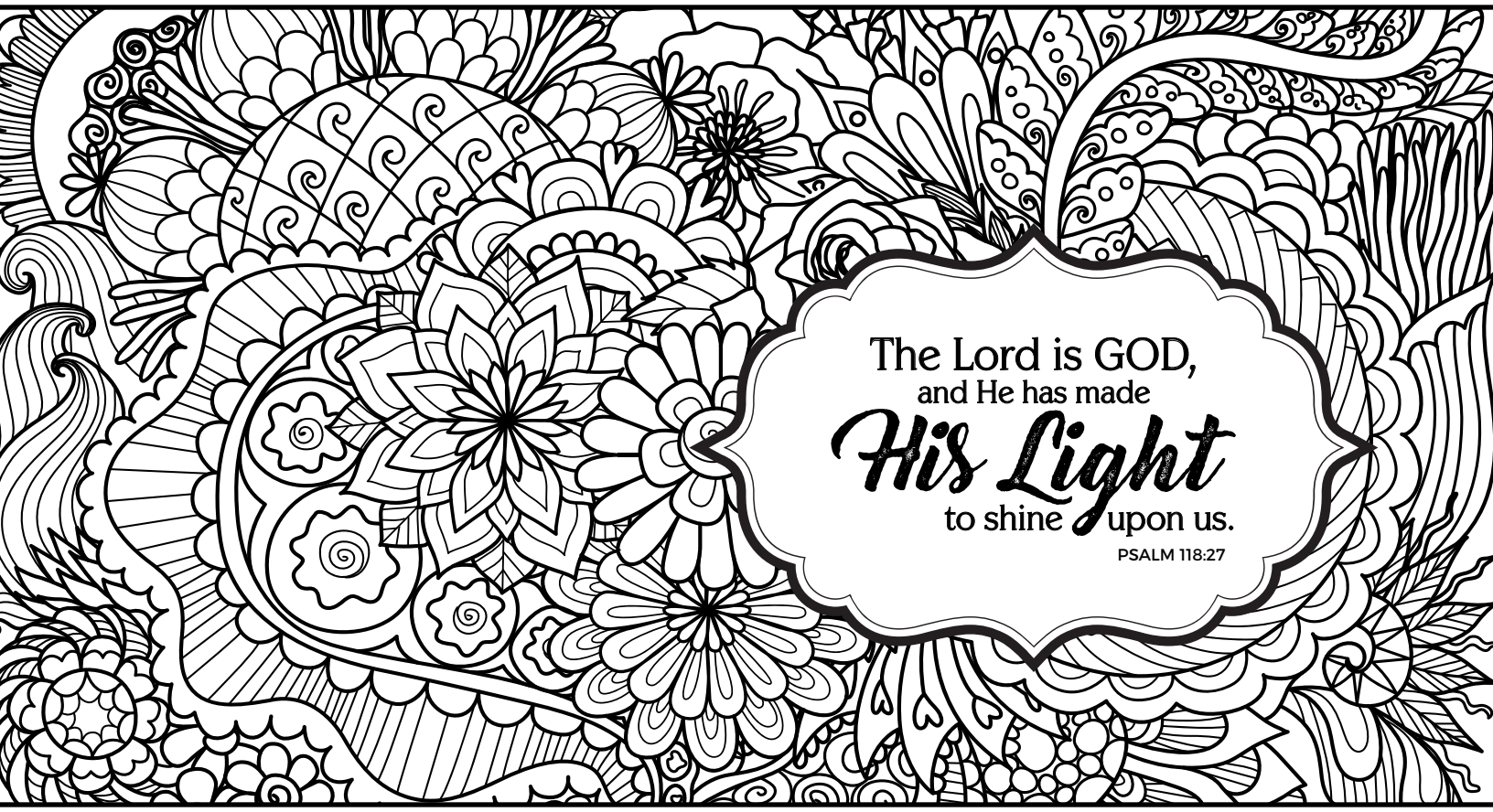
### When You Lie Down

Okay Dads, here's the obvious tip of the day: Read a bedtime story to your kids. It doesn't matter if they are young or old, children love to hear their dad read aloud. Choose good literature and demonstrate your own love for reading. Here's a key: Read with enthusiasm in your voice and make the characters come alive. Feel the freedom to be creative and dramatic. Your kids will love it!

Being a little more intentional about using the ordinary occurrences of family life, as well as making opportunities to teach and to train your kids, can transform good relationships into powerful, thriving ones. You and your children will reap the benefits of your efforts from now through eternity.

Walking by faith and enjoying the homeschooling adventure of a lifetime!

***Davis Carman*** *is the president of Apologia Educational Ministries, the #1 publisher of Creation-based science and Bible curriculum. He believes that if there was ever a time to homeschool, it is now! He is also the author of five illustrated children's books designed to help kids learn a biblical worldview.* Good Morning, God *is based on Deuteronomy 6,* A Light for My Path *is an ABC book based on Psalm 119,* In the Beginning*, is based on the Creation account in Genesis, and* Psalms to Know Early*, and* Truths to Know Early.



# Unleash THE LAUGHTER

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# ATTENTION:

## OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE, PERFECTIONIST, CONTROL-FREAKS

## C.H.I.L.L. O.U.T. – Unleash Your Laughter

"*…a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.*" Ecclesiastes 3:4

**Quick – give me your mad mom face. Yeah, that one.**

**The one that says, "You've really done it now,"**

**"You're in big trouble,"**

**"You've done it again."**

The one that evokes shame in some of your kids, fear in others, and repentance in still others. That face. You wouldn't want to receive the look, but you have developed it over the years and yeah, it's pretty effective.

Every mom has one. We think we have to. We think that it is just part of our repertoire of tools in our mom tool boxes. We know how to pull out a glance, a nod, a tap, an eyebrow and use it like a professional carpenter. We've got it going on.

But would you like a secret? Our mad mom face is probably over used. Terrifying isn't it? To think that you might be without it. But before you think I am going to jump off into the abyss that is the current rage, that of being a 'yes' mom, I am not. I will not. I cannot advocate for that. (Commentary on that is forth coming-stay tuned to my blog. Title: Say 'No' to Being a Yes Mom.)

I am just suggesting that smiling at your kids, at 'that' kid might very well do more good that your best mean mom look. Yep. Don't believe me? Here's my reason: your kids, especially 'that' kid, needs to know that you are on their side, that you've got their back, that you love them. Yes, that's it, that you love them. That's what the smile on mom's face communicates, "I love you!"

My mean face is really good at shaming my kids, at making them feel like all they can do is what I've asked them not to do, at making them feel like all I care about are their actions. It is really good at communicating that I've got it all together, that I don't ever mess up, that I'm perfect. But none of that is true. I don't have it all together. I mess up daily. And I am far from perfect.

The fact is that when I dare to smile at my kids-often-I am communicating to them that I do get it. I get that it's hard to do the right thing all the time. I get that it is hard to sit still. I get that it's hard to pay attention. I get that it's easy to get distracted. I get that sometimes I don't know why I'm sad or mad or frustrated or grumpy. I get it.

Smiling communicates to my kids that we are on the same team. We are all living in a fallen world and we need each other to fight temptation, to encourage each other, to celebrate victories.

Similarly, laughing with your kids is like glue. My Dad has a great laugh, very distinctive and frankly, loud. I love my Dad's laugh. To me it represents security, acceptance and comfort. I know that when Dad laughs everything might not be alright, but we are going to make it through together.

Laughter is like a safety valve for stress. When you don't have it in place, stress can be overwhelming, even debilitating. But when the valve exists and is characteristically wide open, stress dissipates even when circumstances don't change.

Our guiding verse for this point is Ecclesiastes 3:4, "a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance…." And in Proverbs 17:22 it says "a cheerful heart is good medicine."

As I study the life of Jesus, the only people He became angry with were the one who should have known better. With the Pharisees He responded with righteous anger and frustration. We are not Jesus. And generally, even though we might want them to know better, they are in process. They forget. They don't learn the first time. They don't understand. And they, like me, like you, mess up.

Our kids need to see our smiles. They need to hear our laughter. They can spot a fake from a mile off. But as we cultivate our own joy, the joy of our salvation, we can "laugh at the days to come" (Proverbs 31:25). How is that possible? Because we know that God is on the throne. We can live with confident hope knowing that He's got this!

***Rachael Carman*** *is an author and speaker for Apologia Educational Ministries. The wife of Davis and the mother of seven children, Rachael challenges parents to live by reckless, obedient faith. As a direct reflection of her heart's desire to encourage, inspire, and celebrate motherhood, Rachael leads the Real Refreshment Retreat's weekend events that energize and invigorate homeschooling mothers with plus practical encouragement for the homeschool journey. She is the author of* How To Have A H.E.A.R.T. For Your Kids, How Many Times Do I Have to Tell You?*, and co-author of* How to Homeschool with Stunning Confidence, Contagious Joy, and Amazing Focus*. Enjoy more encouragement and inspiration from Rachael by visiting her blog at RachaelCarman.com.*

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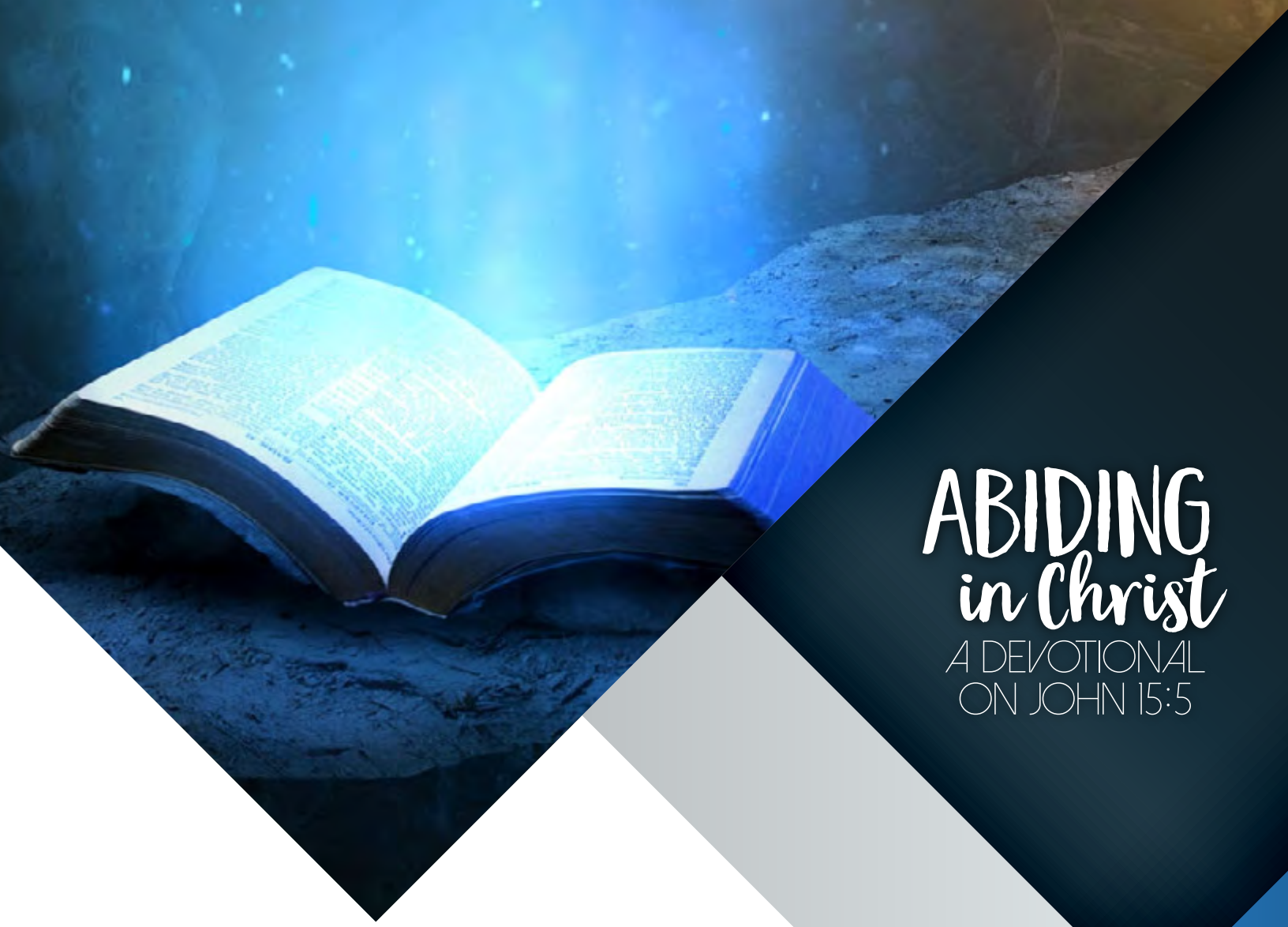


# ABIDING in Christ

## A DEVOTIONAL ON JOHN 15:5

*The devotional below was written by Davis Carman, president of Apologia and a long-time homeschooling dad. We pray it brings you an encouraging time of meditating on His Word, finding rest, and being confident in your role He gifted you as a homeschool parent.*

"*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:5)

Jesus never said the Christian life would be all potlucks and mountaintop experiences. As a matter of fact, you will often find yourself in the middle of a tough situation—say, stretching the budget late in the month to pay for both a week's groceries and required materials for the kids' science co-op that meets tomorrow.

As you step up to the plate in this instance, you're feeling the pressure to perform. It's already been a long week. You're exhausted, and the bat feels leaden in your hands. In that moment, you're just praying that God will send someone to pinch-hit for you. And that's when life throws you a nasty curveball in the form of an emergency car repair bill.

Meanwhile, the enemy of your soul is heckling you from the opposing dugout, yelling, "Hey, batter, you don't stand a chance! Life is just too

long and too hard. And homeschooling? Are you kidding me? There's no way one person can do it all, but you're the worst! Those kids are being ruined by your pathetic attempts to teach them at home. You may as well drop the bat and hit the showers!"

Now, when you're rested and fresh from a great time of fellowship or morning devotions, it's easy to spot the lies in the devil's taunts. But what about late in the winter afternoon of a particularly challenging day when you're tired and testy and running on fumes?

That's where the power of abiding in Christ comes into play. In John 15, we read that Jesus is the True Vine, and we are His branches. Here we learn the importance of staying connected to the Vine and drawing life and strength from His infinite resources.

What does "abiding" in Christ look like? Praying about everything, feeding on His Word daily, and obediently following His lead throughout the week. It's listening to and singing worship music that helps you to focus your whole being on praising and believing and trusting Him.

Okay, maybe you're not feeling all that spiritual right now. But abiding is not really a position you ever fully attain; it's more about striving to remain. Indeed, desiring to abide in Christ is half the battle.

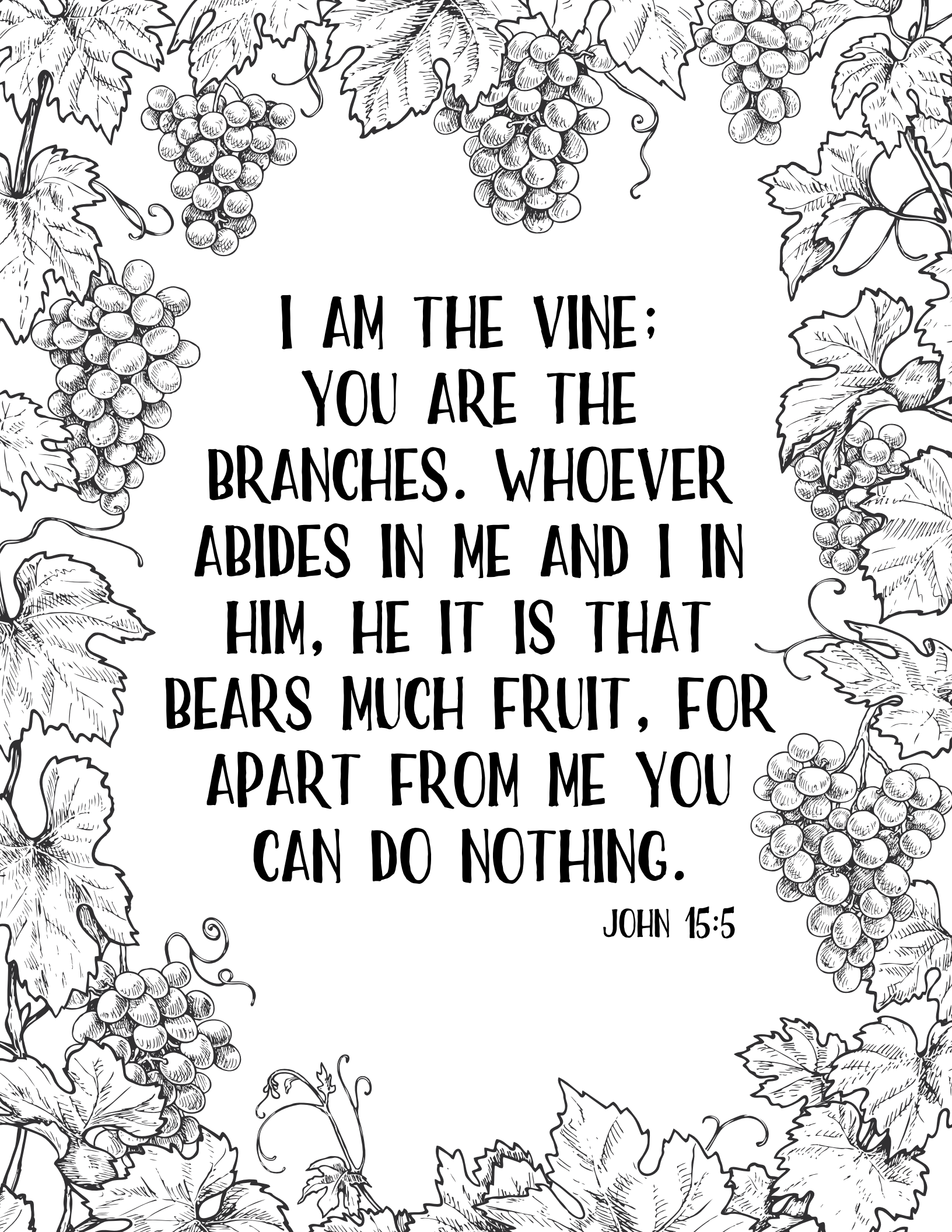
Keep in mind that there will be seasons when the divine Gardener chooses to prune you, and let's face it, pruning can be painful. But His loving trimming has a purpose: to enable you to bear more fruit. So yield to His tender touch and thank Him in every circumstance. Then hold tight to Jesus and prepare to reap a harvest of peace and righteousness in His perfect timing.

With regard to the challenges of homeschooling, allow me to encourage you: You're doing a great job! You are being faithful to God's call, taking on the work of both parent and teacher. You are also making memories that will last a lifetime. I promise that years from now, you will look back and rejoice that you were obedient to take this road less traveled. Rest assured that your children and your children's children will rise up and call you blessed!

So stand firm at the plate and take your swings with confidence, for it is the Lord God who trains your hands for battle and equips you with strength (Psalm 18:32-34). And with the almighty King of the universe as your captain, how can you lose?

***Father in heaven, I want to abide in You. I choose to persevere, whatever my circumstances. Increase my desire to seek You, know You, and remain close to you. Help me to be faithful and not give up when I am tired and weary. Help me to endure Your pruning with grace and strength. Help me to stay fully connected to you, the True Vine, and receive all that You are and all that You desire for me. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.***

***Davis Carman*** *is the president of Apologia Educational Ministries, the #1 publisher of Creation-based science and Bible curriculum. He believes that if there was ever a time to homeschool, it is now! He is also the author of five illustrated children's books designed to help kids learn a biblical worldview.* Good Morning, God *is based on Deuteronomy 6,* A Light for My Path *is an ABC book based on Psalm 119,* In the Beginning*, is based on the Creation account in Genesis, and* Psalms to Know Early*, and Truths to Know Early.*


I AM THE VINE;
YOU ARE THE
BRANCHES. WHOEVER
ABIDES IN ME AND I IN
HIM, HE IT IS THAT
BEARS MUCH FRUIT, FOR
APART FROM ME YOU
CAN DO NOTHING.
JOHN 15:5

# The Glory OF GOD Leads Us TO WORSHIP

DEVOTIONAL

*When Solomon had finished praying . . . the glory of the LORD filled the temple . . . and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD.* (2 Chronicles 7:1-3)

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son of God (John 16:14). Jesus deserves that glory, and indeed, at the final meal with His disciples, Jesus prayed, "Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you" (John 17:1).

**But what does this glory look like?**

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for *glory* comes from the same root word for "weighty" or "heavy." In the New Testament, the meaning of the original Greek is more about radiance and brightness. Ultimately, to *glorify* means "to make much of something."

We see the glory of God depicted throughout Scripture:

On Mount Sinai, the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire (Exodus 24:16)

God said that the tabernacle would be sanctified by His glory (Exodus 29:43)

As God's glory passed by Moses, God covered him with His hand such that Moses could only see His back (Exodus 33:18-23)

The priests could not stand up because of the glory of the Lord filled the house of God (2 Chronicles 5:14)

The Holy Spirit points us back to Jesus with good reason. Too often, other "good" things and the not-so-good things of this world compete with Christ for our affections. Cheap glory substitutes are offered to us every day. And when we allow someone or something to edge Christ out of His rightful place at the center of our lives, we have entered into idolatry.

As we see in 2 Chronicles 7:1-3, glory first awakens awe and awe then unleashes worship. But our awe should always be driven by our relationship with God (vertical) and never by the relationships we have with His creation (horizontal).

Here are just a few ways we can glorify Jesus. These activities stir us to wonder and, ultimately, to give praise to the one and only God who is worthy of our adoration:

Our salvation. Don't be ashamed to tell your redemption story to anyone who will listen!

Our sanctification. Life is hard, but you will grow in Christ as you persevere through trials and learn to rely on Him through it all.

Bearing fruit. Jesus tells us in John 15:8 that the Father is glorified when you are fruitful.

Our good deeds. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus encourages you to shine your light before men so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father.

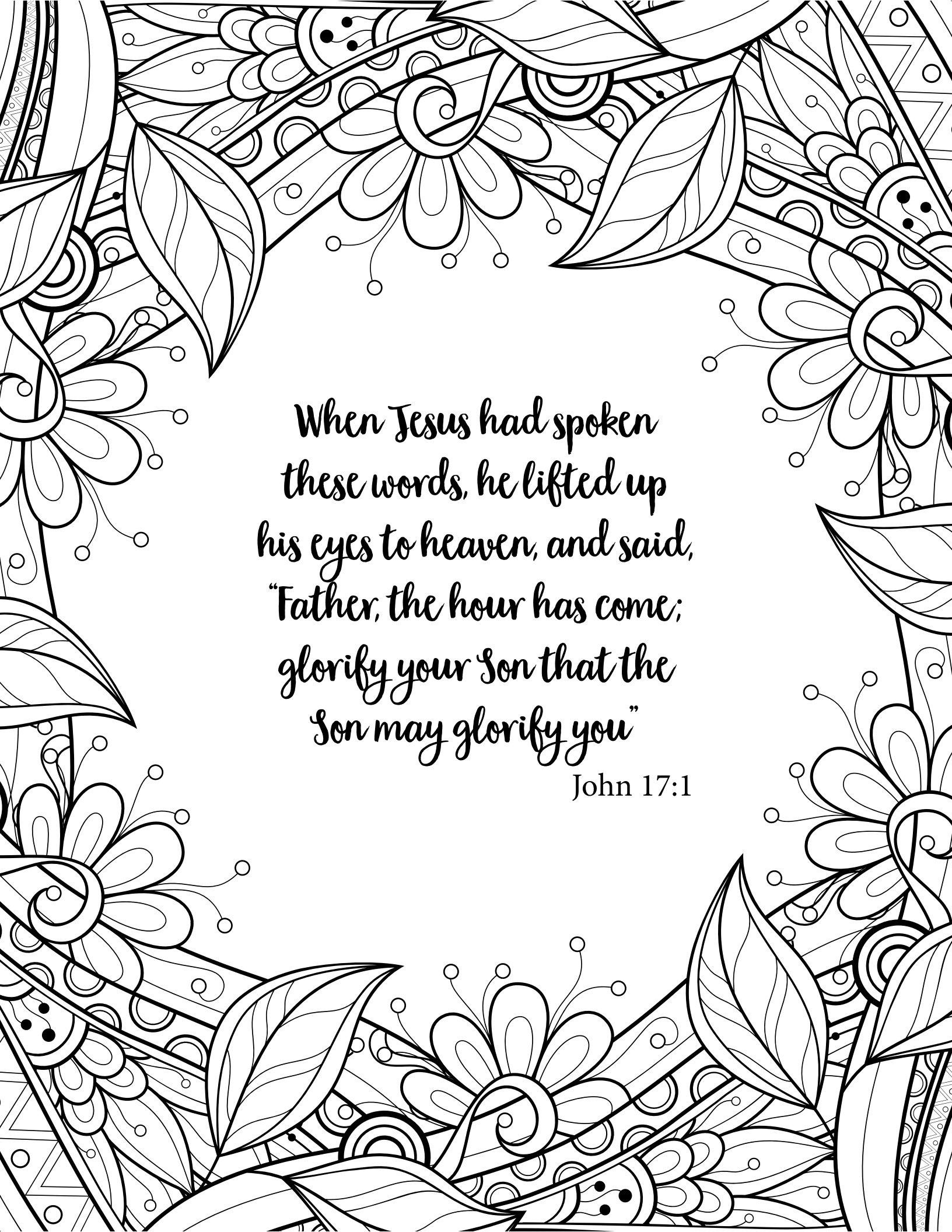
So when was the last time you stopped and considered the glory of God? What other persons or things compete for the affection of your heart? Can you think of a time when glory led you to experience awe, which led you to worship God?

*Father, thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to point me to the person and work of your Son. Too often, my attention and affection and even my worship are focused on the things of this world. Jesus, I praise you for your perfect sacrifice that allows me to live at peace with the Father. I am in awe of your amazing love for me. Spirit, guide me to worship you in spirit and truth and help me make much of Jesus in everything I say and do this week.*

Walking by faith and enjoying the homeschooling adventure of a lifetime!

**If you enjoyed this devotional by Davis Carman, then you might also like reading his devotional entitled Rooted In Christ.**

***Davis Carman*** *is the president of Apologia Educational Ministries, the #1 publisher of Creation-based science and Bible curriculum. He believes that if there was ever a time to homeschool, it is now! He is also the author of five illustrated children's books designed to help kids learn a biblical worldview.* Good Morning, God *is based on Deuteronomy 6,* A Light for My Path *is an ABC book based on Psalm 119,* In the Beginning*, is based on the Creation account in Genesis, and* Psalms to Know Early*, and Truths to Know Early.*


When Jesus had spoken
these words, he lifted up
his eyes to heaven, and said,
"Father, the hour has come;
glorify your Son that the
Son may glorify you"
John 17:1

# Psalm 37
## DEVOTIONAL

*Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.* (Psalm 37:4)

Psalm 37 is perhaps best known for this promise: "Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." But there's a lot more going on here, all of which expands on the theme of delighting in the Lord.

Let's take a closer look at this psalm and glean some valuable wisdom.

*Do not fret* (verse 1). Evil and those who carry it out will be with us until the end. But this is no reason to worry, because God is sovereign and has supreme authority over all things.

*Trust in the Lord* (verse 3). The Lord is in control of your future and the destiny of all men, good and evil. You can trust in Him.

*Take delight in the Lord* (verse 4). Be sure your desires are in line with God's. Find delight in Him, and He will give you what your heart longs for.

*Commit your way to the Lord* (verse 5). Instead of feeling troubled and wringing your hands anxiously, dedicate your day and life to Him. Give

the Holy Spirit control over your words and actions and choose to keep the commandments of God.

*Be still before the Lord* (verse 7). Be quiet and listen patiently for Him to speak to your heart. Wait for Him to act on your behalf.

*Refrain from anger and wrath* (verse 8). Avoid evil. "Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19). Otherwise you will be doomed to the same horrible fate as those whom God will condemn.

*Turn from evil and do good* (verse 27). God loves you so much that He endured the humiliation of the cross rather than live without you, and He wants you to be with Him forever.

*Wait for the Lord* (verse 34). Walk in His ways, and He will lift you up. Eventually you will see the demise of the wicked.

*Consider the blameless* (verse 37). See how He rewards those who love righteousness. You have a bright future filled with God's provision, peace, and presence. The Lord is truly your salvation!

*Father, I trust in you. Help me to wait patiently for you to deal with the evil that surrounds me. Make my desires the same as yours. Help me to stay far away from anger and worry. Help me to live blameless and upright for your name's sake and my good.*

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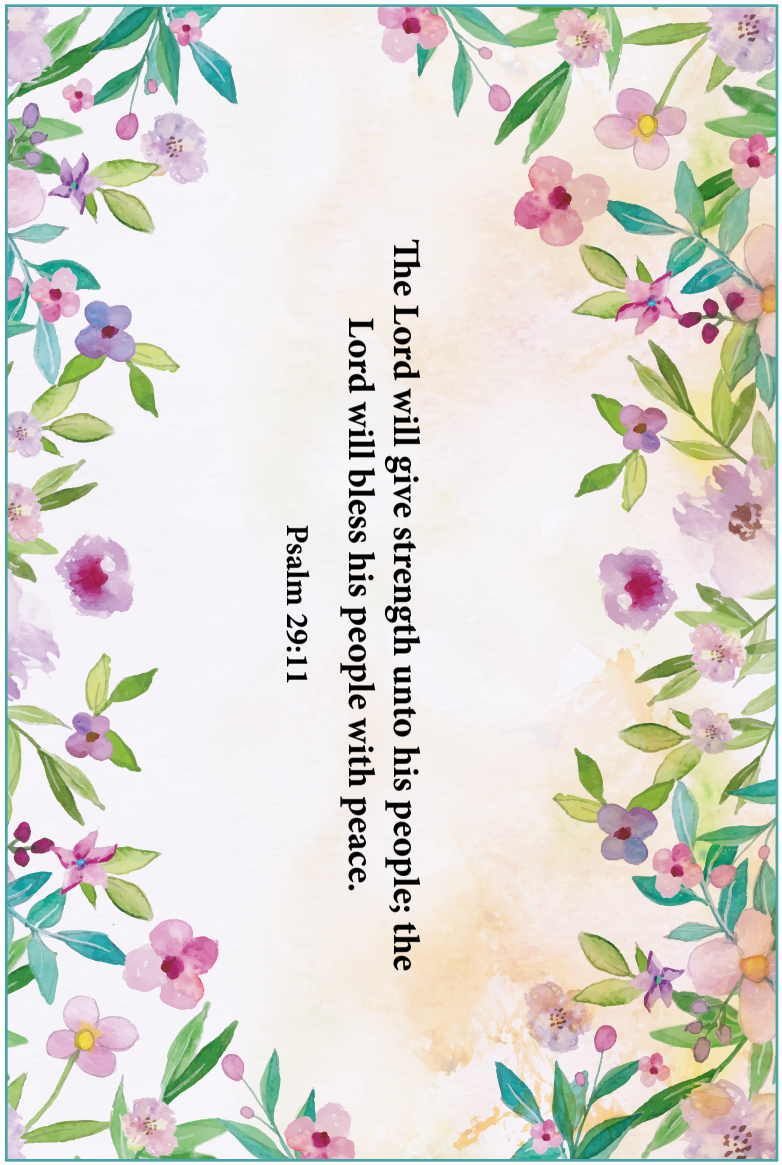
Take delight in the
Lord, and He will
give you the desires
of your heart.
Psalm 37:4

# Scripture Cards

Here you will find scripture cards to brighten your home or make someone's day! There are many ways to enjoy and share these cards. Here are just a few ideas.

Print the scripture cards on heavy paper or card stock. Then:

- Laminate and display it on your refrigerator or tuck it into your Bible.
- Place it in an unused frame or repurpose a frame from a yard sale.
- Laminate and share it with a friend.
- Make a wall hanging. Glue the printed card to a piece of wood that is slightly larger than the card. Brush on Modge Podge® to seal. Attach a wire hanger to the back or use a decorative easel to display!




May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

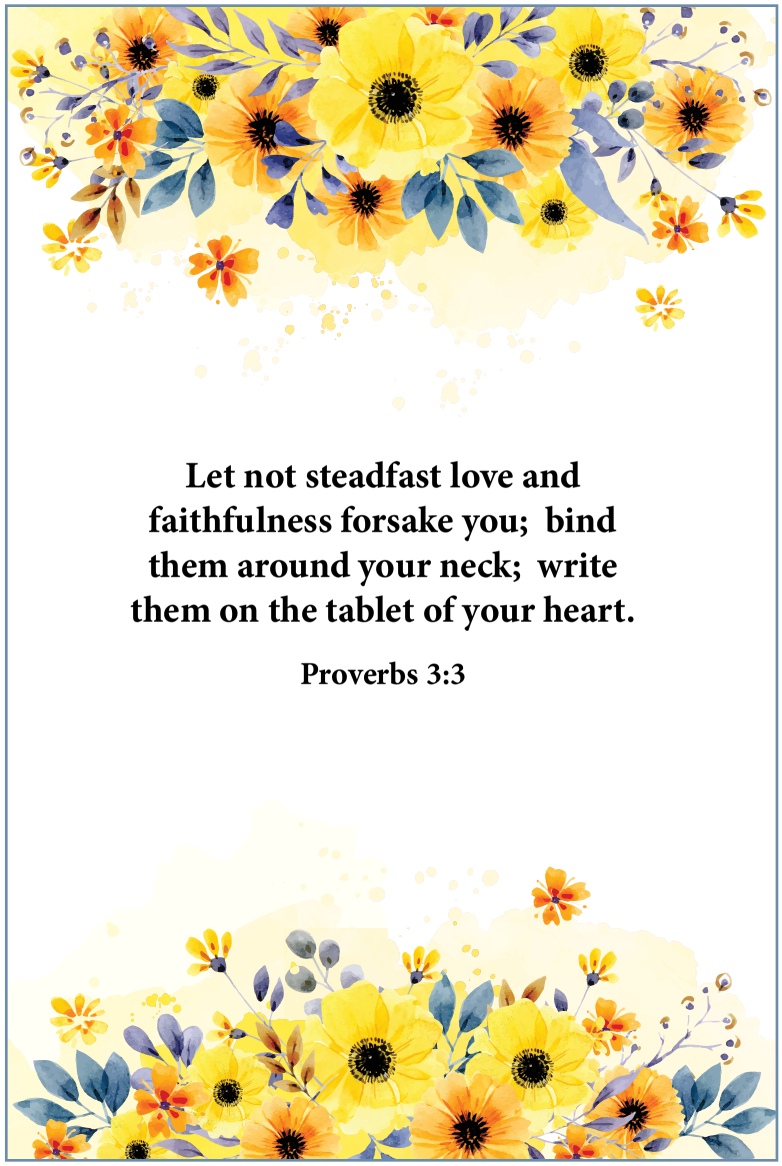
Romans 15:13

And he said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”
Exodus 33:14

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
Lamentation 3:22-23

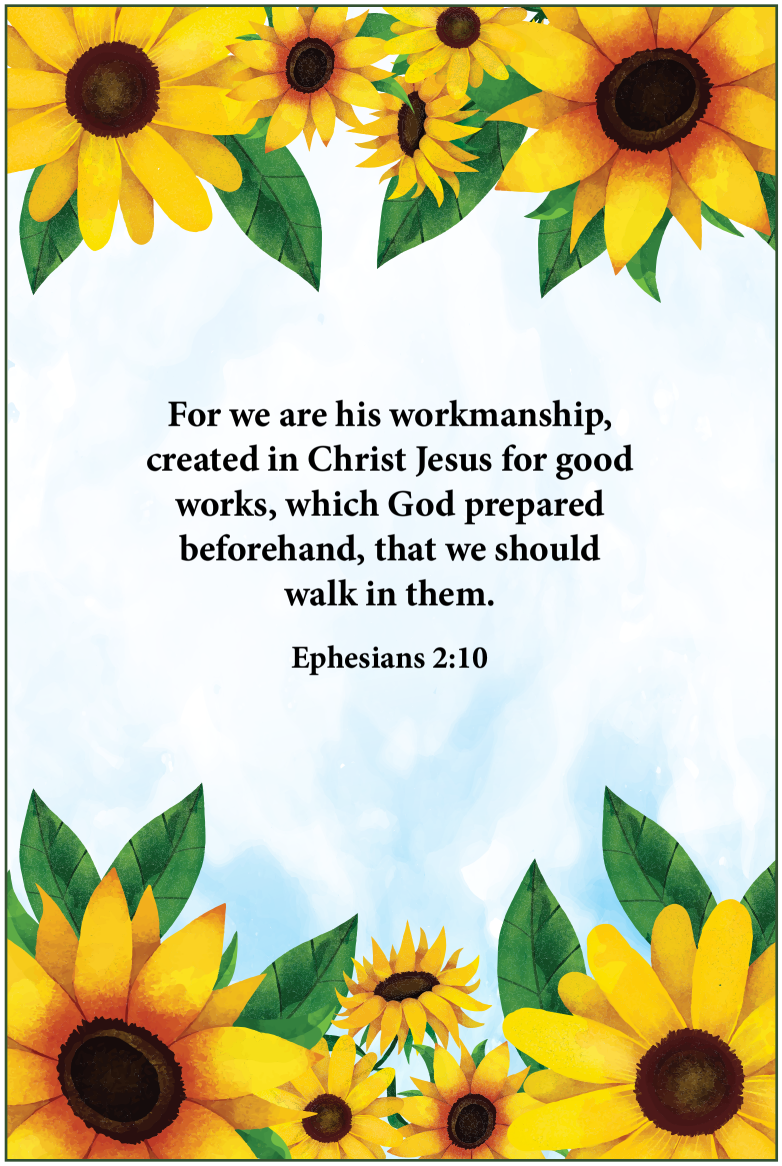
We remember before our God
and Father your work produced
by faith, your labor prompted
by love, and your endurance
inspired by hope in our Lord
Jesus Christ.
1 Thessalonians 1:3

As each has received a gift, use it to
serve one another, as good stewards
of God's varied grace
1 Peter 4:10



Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.

Proverbs 3:3



For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10