

*A Heart
for
the Future*

Devotions for Homeschoolers

Acknowledgments

CHEA thanks each person who contributed to this little volume.

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Joy Like a Fountain

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth (Ps. 100:1).

I like that old song, “I’ve got peace like a river . . . I’ve got joy like a fountain . . .” Maybe it’s because I want to have peace like a river, joy like a fountain, and love like an ocean, and especially joy like a fountain. That one’s hard for me.

Occasionally, I hear from my middle guy (the one God gave me as a personal mirror), “Mom, are you O.K.?” (pause) You seem mad.” Ouch. No, I’m not mad. I’m thinking. I prefer to think of it as “focused.”

I have a lot of things on my mind, you know. Important things, like that stack of computer work waiting to be done, the laundry piled in the back room, what we are going to have for dinner. I am a bit tired, too, since I found it necessary to carve out a little time in the middle of last night to mull over all the stupid things I said and did the day before. I’m very busy. Really.

Well, actually the problem is that I am trying to be the fountain and I haven’t been spending enough time at The Fountain. My joy has dried up. I’ve fallen into Martha-mode. It’s time to take a breath, step back, and get perspective. Is this how I want my children to remember me? More importantly, is this what my Lord has for me?

I read the words of David, “Restore to me the *joy* of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit” (Ps. 51:12, emphasis added). “The precepts of the LORD are right, *rejoicing* the heart” (Ps. 19:8, emphasis added). “I have inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the *joy* of my heart” (Ps. 119:111, emphasis added).

And the words of my Jesus, “Just as he Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My *joy* may be in you, and that your *joy* may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.” (John 15:9-12, emphasis added).

I rest in Him, I drink from His Word, and I am refreshed. Maybe today my son will say, “Mom, are you O.K.? Why are you smiling?”

--Dawn Bell

Faithful with This Day

For the word of the LORD is upright, and all His work is done in faithfulness (Ps. 33:4).

*I*n our hurried culture of instant everything, I have forgotten how to plod. I want to see perfect character in my children, now. After all, we just finished a whole semester of character curriculum.

Additionally I can become a bit concerned because we haven't mastered all the vocabulary that is sure to be on the SAT test; we all know that college is just a blink away. But wait. Do instant and hurried characterize faithfulness?

Faithfulness is a steady, unwavering, many times tedious and unnoticed plodding. There is a strength that comes from boring faithfulness that is never achieved in the anxious, the instant, and the hurried. God calls me simply to be faithful. He is faithful, and He will produce the fruit.

Let me not be impatient with the season of life I am in. Let me not be anxious about results. Let me not be frustrated with achievements not yet attained. Point my eyes toward the goal and let me follow Him faithfully, one day and one step at a time.

Let me adhere firmly and devotedly to Him, and someday I will rejoice at the mountain God has built out of the grain of sand I daily laid at His feet.

--Dawn Bell

A Heart for the Future

O God, You have taught me from my youth, and I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come. (Ps. 71:17-18).

We all have a heart to train up godly children, and to have a home “built by the Lord” (Ps. 127:1). Homeschooling is just one tool God has given us to use as He guides us in the building of our family.

We homeschool not to perpetuate homeschooling, but to take full advantage of the time God has placed His children in our home. Homeschooling is so much more than a school option or a personal preference of the medium by which knowledge will be passed to the next generation. More than curriculum, it is about character. More than character, it is about Christ.

We desire to instill a vision of the greatness and goodness and faithfulness of God. We desire to create a beautiful place for our children to thrive, in hopes of someday launching love and righteousness into an unlovely and unrighteous world. However, sometimes in the tedium of life, it is easy to forget the long-term.

Homeschooling is time consuming. It is so, well . . . daily. It is a moment by moment pouring of our lives into the next generation as we constantly weave and knead the Lord into the lives of our children by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, as we do that daily lesson, it’s not about insisting on good manners just to create a meaningless facade, but working into the heart what is needed for my son to be a good and godly father. It’s not just teaching English. It’s teaching English to a daughter who may someday translate God’s Word for a Bible-less people group. It’s not just teaching history, it’s relating to the next generation the awesomeness of God, purposefully training and leading that child to the foot of the cross.

Not just teaching a subject, but imparting tools that will not only equip them for kingdom work, but will cultivate in them a kingdom heart. That doesn’t happen in a lesson plan. That doesn’t happen in a one hour block of time. It happens slowly and subtly, with much prayer and perseverance.

Telling them about former times and giving them a future hope, we send something of real and eternal value to the next generation. So, as you remind your child for the umpteenth time not to yell at a sibling, or to get that math homework done, remember the Builder of your house. Take heart. Thank Him for the tools He has provided. Praise Him that He has allowed you to be part of His master plan.

Homeschool with a heart for the future. It’s a grand vision. It’s the baton of godly heritage that I want to pass on to my children. It’s overwhelming. Am I there yet? Not even close. Is God there? Already. Praise be to Him.

--Dawn Bell

I Cherish My Princess Pals

I used to feel guilty for the idle time I would spend at our weekly homeschool park day, until I realized the profound way that God uses that time and those relationships to refresh my soul. Hebrews 10:23-25 holds incredible wisdom for depleted moms:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

When we spend time with other Christians who are on the same path, we experience the faithfulness, the mercy, and the grace of our Lord Jesus in a whole new way. That's the essence of what I love about Princess Park.

I arrive weary, bringing my burdens of the week, along with my blanket, chair, lunch, and children; and there I find encouragement and true refreshment. Princess Park is a safe and supportive place, a place to experience the love of Jesus in a very real way.

It's a simple gathering of women with hearts for God, daughters of the King ... thus Princesses. It's a place where I experience the spirit of Jesus in a very unique way. At Princess Park I exchange:

- My fears for trust,
- My sorrows for comfort,
- My frustrations for peace,
- My struggles for strength,
- My insecurities for grace.

That's how I know Jesus is there.

God gently mixes together our chit-chat, our laughter, our tears, and our prayers as He transforms our hearts for Him into His arms of love for one another. I am truly grateful.

It is because of those tender, loving hearts for Jesus that my load is lightened and the joys of my life intensified. Each week I leave feeling encouraged, inspired, and empowered to enjoy the precious blessing in my life.

Are you feeling weary or frazzled? Put down your checklist, Martha, and join Mary at the park. Hug a Princess; you'll be glad you did.

--Debbie Hermosillo

Life Glass: Half Empty or Half Full?

Finally brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence, and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things (Phil. 4:8).

There are many times when we fail to see how fantastic our lives really are. Have you ever felt that ‘everything’ is going wrong, or that someone is ‘always’ messing up? I know I have felt this way.

Sometimes my focus becomes so negative that I only see the ‘bad things’ and I forget how totally blessed I am. There are countless times that I have taken my wonderful life for granted. This became very real to me at a recent party.

I was so busy talking to my friend that I over-poured my soda glass, and the fizzing, sticky drink spilled onto her beautiful tile. In discouragement I told my friend, “This is the summation of my life.” By this I had meant, sadly enough, that everything always goes wrong for me.

Without missing a beat my friend replied, “Yes, that is the summation of your life! A life where your cup runneth over with many blessings.” Ouch.

Like many people, I get stuck in a rut of seeing only the awful, which is temporary, instead of focusing on all the huge blessings I have, which are many. I find myself dwelling on the wrong things others have done instead of camping on all the promises and truths God has given to us.

--Denise Justiniano

Educating the Teacher

She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue (Prov. 31:26).

*T*his verse has been familiar to me for a long time, but I never understood how difficult it would be to flesh out until I became a mother who decided to homeschool her children.

Previous to making that decision I had falsely assumed that this was the way most Christian women lived. Such was the view of a young, naïve, idealistic, single woman who viewed marriage and family life from the outside looking in.

As real life set in (being a young married with small children), I began to understand the huge challenge of speaking wise words as well as having kindness on my tongue as I gave instructions.

My temper often got the best of me and my patience had a short fuse. Where was that woman Proverbs 31:26 spoke of? She didn't seem to reside at my house.

Soon it came to my realization that this homeschool experience was not just for my daughters; it was also the place where I would be taught. Lauren and Lindsay were being educated to read, write, and calculate, but their mother was being taught by the Holy Spirit how to depend on Him and bear fruit, evidence of His dwelling in me. My education was in learning how to crucify the flesh and allow the Holy Spirit to lead.

Though not His best or brightest student, I have learned He is a faithful teacher.

-- June Koukl

Runaway Thinking

When my anxious thoughts multiply within me, your consolations delight my soul (Ps. 94:19).

How amazing yet predictable it is that when I am anxious, in conflict with someone, offended, rejected, disappointed, forsaken, judged or just feeling blue, my first reaction is to allow my negative thoughts to snowball into an avalanche.

Sometimes the enemy of my soul may give my little snowball a little push-start but I definitely can make a pity party of my own without any invitation sent for him to join in. My fleshly way of thinking comes complete with self-incriminations and false judgments.

If I am discerning in the midst of my calamity and snowball building, I realize the downhill slide and can arrest the ever-mounting critique and negative thoughts. When I do, I can quiet the clamor around me and focus on hearing that still, small voice of the Lord. He brings to remembrance His word, the faithfulness He's shown in the past as well as the comfort and presence of His Holy Spirit. God reminds me of who I am but, more importantly, He reminds me of Who He is.

As I homeschool my daughter, life encroaches and distracts me from the task at hand. That is inevitable. But what I do with my anxious thoughts and how I let them overtake me is not. Disruptions will occur but the avalanche can be prevented by my quiet trust in my Heavenly Father. It is then that His consolations will delight my soul.

-- June Koukl

Drought

*O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly;
My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You,
In a dry and weary land where there is no water (Ps. 63:1).*

Can you believe drought has come to our lovely duckpond? Just take a look around. The once spacious, life-burgeoning pond is little more than a massive mud puddle.

The reeds and cattails that swayed in the breeze are brown and broken. When the lush vegetation disappeared, so did the wildlife. You seldom hear the croak of a tree frog or the call of a night heron. There's not enough water to support the life this pond once did.

Look what's become of our beloved little ducks. Where they once glided across the water, they now waddle in mud and mire. They used to plunge and dive for food at the bottom of the pond. Now there's nothing to eat but rotting fish on the shore.

And the ducklings, poor little things. They don't understand what's going on. The mama and the daddy ducks squabble with the neighbor ducks over land rights. No one used to worry about that before. There was plenty of room for everyone in the pond. Now there isn't plenty of anything. Nobody's satisfied. Everybody's hungry and thirsty and tired. That's what comes of living in a waterless land. It occurred so gradually they didn't see it happening. One day, it seemed, they opened their eyes to this.

Are you tired and dry? Heart weary and soul thirsty? Nothing seems quite right. You find yourself squabbling with those around you. You don't know how you got this way. You just know you're dry and weary. What happened?

Could it be while pouring yourself into homeschooling, you've totally exhausted your spiritual strength? Every child of God has been saved to serve; and you have been called to serve your family in quite a unique way. Your little ones depend on you to nourish them not only physically and spiritually, but educationally as well. With such a calling, it is necessary to serve to the point of exhaustion. Yet how can you continue to pour yourself out if your soul is an empty cup?

Remember your source and supply of strength. Fill your cup at the Spring of Living Water. Remember that your infilling is for outpouring. No fair hoarding what God gives you. His strength is not merely for your own edification, but for service to your family. Be filled so that you may be totally emptied. Then be filled again. Be continually renewed by the One who has an inexhaustible supply. Your little ones are depending on it.

Fill our cups, Lord; fill our empty cups.

To You we lift our bone dry hearts; To You we lift them up.

Thirsty souls depend upon us;

Thirsty minds that will not wait.

Fill us up - and pour us out, Lord;

Fill our empty cups.

-- Rebecca Kocsis

Fine Feathered Friends

Be still in the LORD and wait patiently for Him (Ps. 37:7)

So this is it, ducklings. This is the land of Homeschool. It's a lot bigger than it looks in the guide books. I had no idea there would be so many ponds to choose from. It's more crowded than I expected, too.

"Look at all the different kinds of ducks. I guess we better find ourselves a pond and get busy. That one over there looks about right; not too big ... not too crowded. The mama ducks look friendly. Hey, I see quite a few ducklings just your size. How's the water? It's perfect. Come on, ducklings, jump in. We should make some fine feathered friends here."

Fine feathered friends. Isn't that what every homeschool mom wants? A close knit support group or at least one person who truly feels as she does about home education.

As you stand at the water's edge you see all kinds of homeschoolers. Some seem so sure of themselves as they cruise across the water. They've probably been in the pond awhile—Old Timers. Others seem to be having a blast; splashing here, paddling there, immersed in all those fascinating homeschool activities you've read about (but can't find time to get to). They must have been made for this pond.

However, the ones you admire most are those who travel in two's and three's. You watch wistfully as they swim by, little ones in tow, discussing their daily activities. It's obvious they're birds of a feather.

They use much of the same curriculum. They share the same philosophies on duckrearing, dating, and early duckhood education. They fly to field trips together. They treat each other's ducklings like they were their own. Actually, they're more than fine feathered friends; you might call them kindred spirits.

Dear homeschool mom, is that what your heart is pining after—kindred spirits: other women much like yourself with whom you can share your homeschooling adventures? Perhaps you've just started homeschooling, and you've barely gotten your feet wet. Maybe you've only recently moved into the area or you're new to your homeschool group. You're missing your old friends, and you just know you'll never make new ones half as good.

Well, fear not. Your Heavenly Father knows what you need. He knows when you're lonely. He knows there are times when a fine feathered friend seems every bit as needful as food and clothing.

Still, even the most kindred of spirits will not satisfy our longing for intimacy if we neglect our relationship with the Lord. Could it be that while you've been pining for close friends, the Lord has been pining for more intimacy with you? Could it be He wants you to learn to look to Him first to meet your needs, rather than a friend? Seek the Lord with all your heart. Sit at His feet and become intimately acquainted with Him. Be filled by His Spirit. He's the Friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Then, "be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Ps. 37:7). I know He'll give you a kindred homeschool spirit. You'll know her when you meet her. You'll see something of your heart in hers. Then there'll be something else strangely familiar about her. Because she's been sent to you "as a good and perfect gift from above," most likely it's the fragrance of Christ.

Oh Father, I know that you didn't call us to this homeschool pond to swim alone. Just as you intend for us to have sweet fellowship with the family of saints, so you desire for us to have homeschooling sisters to encourage and inspire; to strengthen one another's hand in the Lord. We acknowledge You as our first and foremost Friend. We wait upon You for our fine feathered friends. Amen.

Gold?

Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance (Is. 55:2).

*M*ama! Mama!” chirped the duckling as he fluttered into the nest. “I found gold!”
“Gold? What on earth are you talking about?” asked Mrs. Mallard with a quizzical smile.

“Gold, Mama, a chest full. I found it under the oak tree. Come see!” Then away he waddled as fast as his little webbed feet could take him, back to his treasure.

Mrs. Mallard was highly doubtful that her baby duck had found a chest full of gold, but was curious to see what he had found. When she caught up with him, he had already reached his treasure under the tree, and was adorning himself with necklaces and bracelets and rings. Sure enough, it appeared he had found gold—a chest full. Not only was it brimming with riches, there was a note attached. It simply said, “Finders keepers.”

“Can we keep it?” queried the little duckling. “Please, Mama? It says finders keepers.”

“Finders keepers? I don’t think so.” Mrs. Mallard shook her head. “This must be a joke, Little One,” said Mrs. M. as she knelt by the box to get a better look at the booty.

“It’s not a joke.” insisted Little One. “We’re rich!”

“This isn’t gold.” she said gently.

“Isn’t gold?” echoed the duckling as he fingered the chain around his neck. “But it looks just like it, Mama.”

“It’s only brass. Brass all polished and shiny looks just like gold,” she explained patiently, “but it’s not nearly as valuable.” Tears of disappointment welled up in his eyes as she removed his phony finery.

“Can we still keep it?” he turned a questioning eye to his mother.

“No, Little One. It’s not worth it.”

Then hopefully, “We can pretend it’s gold.”

“That would be a waste of time.”

“But it’s pretty ...”

“No.”

“I thought I found gold,” he grumbled. “I thought we were rich.” he said as Mrs. Mallard took him by the wing to lead him beyond the pile of brass. She was hoping to get his mind off his disappointment. Then she halted. Out of the midst of that multitude of brass she spied one exquisite, golden crown. She picked it up, and carefully set it on her duckling’s head.

With a smile she said, “Now this is worth keeping.”

It really is possible to mistake brass for gold, you know. What’s the difference between the two? Brass is a manmade alloy of copper and zinc. Gold is a pure metal. Brass is relatively inexpensive. Gold costs.

Think of all the good and fun educational activities that come your way as brass; those pursuits of educational excellence as pure gold. When we over involve ourselves in good and fun activities leaving little or no time for the excellent, we are settling for brass when we could have had fine gold.

Let’s face it, ladies, as homeschool mothers we’re very busy. Time is of the essence. We need to decide what is, in the eternal scheme of things, excellent and what is less fruitful. Let go of unprofitable pursuits (even if they are fun). Hold out for the truly excellent and praiseworthy. By the way, these superior pursuits may require more time and effort, but they are worth it.

The next time a seemingly golden opportunity arises, take a closer look. Ask yourself, “Am I settling for brass instead of gold?” Who wants a brass ring when you can have a crown of pure gold?

--Rebecca Kocsis

How to Be a Fine Feathered Friend

But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13:13).

Now Mrs. Mallard has found herself a flock of fine-feathered friends. Within that flock, she even has a kindred spirit or two. The ducklings are getting along swimmingly. The mother ducks do indeed care for each other, but they seem to have forgotten something. All is not well in the land of homeschool.

While attending field trips and doing school projects, the mother ducks became fast friends. The problem arose when they began sharing their everyday lives. As they spent more time together, they couldn't help but notice something very unbecoming. Their fine-feathered friends had feet of clay. Most peculiar about their observations was none of them seemed to notice their own clay feet, only the feet of others.

The brilliance of their new found friendships began to tarnish. They realized those fine-feathered friends of theirs were not always so fine. In fact, they could be downright ugly ducks. In their excitement, these mama ducks forgot what the Lord of the Duckpond never does. "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust"(Ps. 103:14 NKJV). Just dust. For some reason, they expected their fine-feathered friends to have frames of gold. In their disillusioned state, they resented one another for being less than perfect. Sad to say, their warm and fuzzy feelings were replaced with a few "duckier than thou" attitudes.

Then one day the Lord of the Duckpond sent them a message. You see, He's never far from His ducks; He loves them so. He saw their "duckier-than-thou" attitudes, and His heart was grieved.

"Mama ducks," He wrote, "please be kind to one another, and tenderhearted. Forgive each other, as I have forgiven you. None of you can help the fact that you aren't perfect. You can't be fine feathered friends all the time, no matter how hard you try. Have mercy on one another. Then you, too, will be shown mercy.

"And above all, have fervent love for each other, for love will cover a multitude of sins. If you truly love one another, you will pay no attention to a suffered wrong. You will always believe the best of others, because love's hope is fadeless. Dear mama ducks, follow the way of love. Eagerly pursue this love, make it your aim. Make it your great quest."

Now all is well at the duckpond. The mother ducks have chosen to follow the way of love, so they have chosen not to see each other's faults. They just don't look so close anymore. Each one remembers that she, too, has feet of clay.

--Rebecca Kocsis

Let Not Your Feathers Be Ruffled

Trust in God; trust also in Me (John 14:1 NLT).

Have you ever heard your pastor say there's no such thing as a one-man show; it takes the whole body working together to run a church? "God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things." Well, that's fine if you're an ordinary person, isn't it ... but what if you're not?

I sometimes feel very unordinary; kind of like a lame duck in the pond of life, swimming around in circles while the other ducks seem to know where they're going. They're paddling with a purpose. They have destinations. They're heading south for the winter, and I can't figure out which way is south. Much less whether I should be going there, too. And when's winter? Can you relate?

Here's another thought. The Lord hasn't said anything at all to me about flying south. He specifically told me to break away from the flock and head west. A few well-meaning ducks have expressed their concern about my cockamamie notions. Still, I find myself bidding a rather sad farewell to my fair weather friends, putting my little ducklings in a row, and flying off into the sun. My destination? Some much read about, yet still unknown, duckpond in the land of ... Homeschool.

Perhaps you've always considered yourself one of the flock, but the Lord has called you to head west and homeschool, too. This new venture has caused a major restructuring of your life. As the other mama ducks send their little ones off to school, you keep yours at home. (And you're finding it's not easy keeping all your ducklings in a row.)

Some of you are trying to do on one income what you used to do on two. Others are having to make a whole new flock of friends. (To some, this sounds exciting. Not so, to God's timid creatures.) Add to that those self-perceived inadequacies. Perhaps you still aren't convinced you're "smart enough" or "organized enough." Maybe you're not quite sure your little ducklings are learning everything the "experts" say they should. "What if my little ducklings turn out to be bloomin' illiterates?" Could it be you've been paddling along in obedience, but you're still one scared duck?

Well, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32). If it pleases Him to give you the kingdom, then certainly He'll be more than pleased to give you what you need today. What is it you need? self-discipline? patience? courage? money? wisdom? There's nothing you lack that the Lord isn't able to supply.

Do you know God's prescription for fear? It's trust. "Trust in God; trust also in Me" (John 14:1 NLT). Dear ladies, trust in the One who called you to this homeschool pond. He didn't bring you here, only to leave you floundering around alone. "He'll never leave you nor forsake you." He won't even relax His hold on you. Our Father means what He says.

So kick up your heels (or your little webbed feet) and go for it. Go ahead and make a splash. (You're in the water anyway. You might as well have fun.) Ducks ... uh, people may stare. So what. "Let not your feathers be ruffled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27. sort of). Run with all your might ... or paddle. ... or fly. Only trust in the One who called you to this great big pond because, "The one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame" (Rom. 10:11 NIV).

--Rebecca Kocsis

Able to Teach

The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

Do you ever worry if you are truly “able to teach” as the wording of the California Department of Education requires all private homeschool teachers to be? Who is able to teach? Those with a teaching credential, someone who has earned a PhD, a person with plenty of experience?

A servant of the Lord is able to teach. God would not call us to something for which He didn't equip us. Who is able to teach? A pastor, Bible study leader, youth group minister?

A servant of the Lord is able to teach. As a servant of the Lord whom God has entrusted a child, *you* are able to teach. God will raise you up to be a gentle, patient, and humble teacher when you lay your desire to teach at the foot of the cross.

Everything you need is in God's Word and with the Holy Spirit's guidance you will have the true knowledge and understanding with which God commands you to disciple your children. What are the most important things the servant of God must teach her children? To repent of sin, know God's truth, and escape the snares of the devil. These are the kingdom of God and His righteousness, once they are accomplished God will add everything else they (and we) need to know to be prepared for the Lord's good works.

--JulieBeth Lamb

A Mother's Legacy

Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. As I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. (2 Tim. 1:2,4-5).

A mother's legacy of prayer and faithfulness is multigenerational. Paul's love for Timothy, as that of a father for a son, not only arises out of his dedication to Christ's ministry, but also from the genuine faith Paul saw lived out in the lives of Timothy's mother and grandmother.

As moms we know the many prayers these women raised, hours spent on their knees for their children, and the yet unborn generations to come. We understand that they taught their children God's Word diligently from the time they were small, they wrote them on the doorposts of their homes, and on their gates.

There are times when we may get discouraged not seeing God's hand clearly in our children's lives. But we must not grow weary doing good, for God's Word does not return empty, His faithfulness is to all generations. His plans for our children are for good and not evil, to give them a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11).

Dear mothers, continue training up your children in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not depart from it.

-- JulieBeth Lamb

Deliverance

But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Tim. 4:17-18).

Do you feel alone? Are you lacking support for your homeschooling and Christian convictions from your family and friends, even your church? You do not stand alone; if you do it is your own choice because God promises to stand with you and strengthen you.

When tough times come, persecution is all about you, that is when God's message is preached through your demeanor, your actions, and your words. Everyone will see Christ in you. They may feel convicted and out of shame be angry and persecute you more, but God will deliver you out of the mouth of that lion in His time.

You are too important to Him, His precious daughter, to let anything happen to you. The Lord will keep and preserve you for His heavenly kingdom. He has big plans for you to carry out that will bring Him glory. You are not alone. So be it! Amen!

-- JulieBeth Lamb

Holy Scriptures

From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

*M*aybe you were blessed to have known the Holy Scriptures since you were a child, or like me maybe 20 years, or maybe you are a new Christian still being filled with the milk of the Word, but God will guide you through the Scriptures starting where you are right now.

More importantly you know that you must train up these children God has given to you for a short time in the wisdom and knowledge of God's Word. The Holy Bible will lead us to salvation, but that is only the beginning. If we stop there we are shortchanging God and ourselves.

God inspired each Word that was written to prepare us to live a life set-apart in this world and victorious in the world to come. We must begin at the beginning. "In the beginning God . . ." He created everything and everyone, He always has been and always will be. He knows everything and can do everything.

We must understand and believe the doctrines of the Bible and teach them to our children. God is who He says He is. God's truth must fill us so that we will know when we have violated it, accept reproof, repent, and receive correction. Ultimately instruction in righteousness is our greatest delight and immersion in it can keep us from sin and equip us to be complete for whatever God has for each of us.

-- JulieBeth Lamb

Perilous Times

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth
(2 Timothy 3:1-7).

You know we live in perilous times. We see the selfish, ungodly, evil influences all around us and they threaten to overcome our children, and even us. The world holds up many sins such as pride, greed, self love (self esteem), headstrong spirit, and love of pleasure as positive traits.

Many churches aren't doing much better, esteeming a form of godliness that is fun, accepting, entertaining, and nonjudgmental. They deny God's power to kill the "old man" and raise up the "new man," to convict of sin and redeem from sin, to discipline and train in righteousness, and to cause fear and trembling in the true believer but even greater fear to those who persecute them.

As weaker vessels we women can get caught up in emotions—love, fear, desire, covetousness, discontent—and give the devil a foothold. It is easy to fall into lusts and sin, unable to help ourselves or the children we are called to train. Some of us see the need and spend endless hours in women's Bible studies, listening to Christian TV and radio, and talking about our problems with friends, never attaining the victory in God's knowledge and truth.

There is only one answer—Jesus. We need to spend more time in prayer, quiet times to listen, obeying the Holy Spirit, and feeding ourselves on God's Word. We must be filled with fear and trembling, quick to repent to God and man, with a soft heart that does God's will no matter what it is, who sees, what people say, or what the cost, to be able to stand firm in these perilous times.

-- JulieBeth Lamb

Sharing in the Sufferings

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day (2 Tim. 1:7-9, 12).

There are days when we feel like we are suffering under an unbearable burden. Often we then share our suffering with our husband and children. But instead of sharing with them, we should share in the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It takes the love of God and a sound mind able to understand what we committed to when we accepted the Lord as our Savior: a commitment to partake in the suffering of Christ. He was condemned without reason, tortured, and hung upon a cross in pain and agony. He was put down, shamed, and ridiculed for embodying God's Word, fully God and fully man. Do not be ashamed to partake in that suffering.

If we are going to suffer, let it not be for hiding our faith, yelling at our children, or not submitting to our husbands. We should suffer for God's purpose and grace, for boldly proclaiming Christ and Christ crucified, for focusing more on our children's godly character than schoolbooks, for lovingly serving our husbands without a word, no matter how they act. We must know that we know that we know that God will work out His good plans for us in every area that we have committed to Him and He will be faithful to us until the end.

-- JulieBeth Lamb

Like Lambs

Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes (Is. 40:11).

Like David in Ps. 61, I have often asked God to “lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.” Isaiah Chapter 40 reminds us Who the Rock is and just how high He really is—“It is He who sits above the circle of the earth” (vs 22). “He brings out the starry host one by one and calls them each by name” (vs 26). “The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired His understanding is inscrutable” (vs 28). He enables us to “soar on wings like eagles” (vs 29-31).

Yet in the midst of exalting God’s power and might, there is a tender scene that touches this mother’s heart, “He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.”

Adding homeschooling to the already demanding responsibility of raising spiritually, emotionally, and physically healthy children has often led me to curl up like a little lamb in the loving arms of my Gentle Shepherd, clinging to the promise that He gently leads those who have young. Truly I need to be led to the Rock that is higher than I, and there be pressed close against the heart that carries me.

-- Beth Lester

Mission Statement

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners (Is. 61:1).

In recent years, setting up a personal or organization's mission statement has become very popular. When Jesus returned to His hometown after spending 40 days in the wilderness undergoing intense testing, He announced His mission statement publicly for the first time (Lk. 4:17-21).

What an incredible mission statement—bringing good news, healing, and releasing captives to freedom. Any area of our life that allows Satan a base of operation, such as bitterness, pride, rebellion, moral failure, or hypocrisy prevents us from living in freedom. Unconfessed sin from the past also can cause us pain and conflict in relationships.

The good news is that we can renounce these sins and accept Christ's forgiveness and cleansing by faith—salvation and sanctification all working together.

Oh, how desperately we need Him to minister to us in these ways today. We need a healer who will wrap His specific healing bandage around each of our wounds. We need perfect love that can release us from the captivity of our fears and sin. This One even came to taste death for everyone, that we might be delivered from the fear of death (Heb. 2:9,15). Lord, heal us today and make us whole.

-- Beth Lester

Embrace the Season

There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven (Eccl. 3:1).

Four years ago we welcomed twin daughters into our family. Nothing could have prepared me for the many changes and rough waters that would be a part of our family life for some time after their birth.

We knew all about the love they would bring and the immeasurable blessing. These were not our first children, but our fourth and fifth. But two babies at once ... that was very unfamiliar ground for us.

It really started before the birth. At 31 weeks I went into pre-term labor and was ordered on bed rest. My older children, then 14, 11, and 7, were now making meals, cleaning house, and bringing Mom meals, snacks, and her 120 ounces of water every day.

They also played endless hours of board games with me as I lay on the couch on my side most of the summer waiting for our babies. I am convinced that my twin daughters were prayerfully kept in the womb until they were delivered at 36 weeks, two days. "Prayed to stay," thanks to my family and extended family and friends.

Our season of change had begun. Our summer did not go as planned. There were no beach days or summer excursions. Our twins were delivered by cesarean-section which meant mom was down for awhile longer after the birth. Our babies had NICU stays of six and nine days, which meant daily trips to Loma Linda, a 45-minute commute each way.

School started for most families a short month later. I resolved to start school in October instead of September to give me more time. October came and went. November came and went. The holidays were upon us. The days we attempted school left Mom in a heap of tears. Mom was only sleeping two to three scattered hours a night at best.

My older three children were in tenth, sixth, and second grade that year. Second grade ... we could miss second grade and she would be okay. How much school does a seven-year-old truly need anyway? Sixth grade ... a bit more serious. Tenth grade? Missing a high school year had to mean my child would be doomed to failure forever.

The truth is the Lord had a different plan for us in the way of school that year, different lessons to be learned. It was a God-ordained season.

Was He surprised that I wasn't sleeping at night? Was He surprised that it seemed to take all four of us to care for two babies all day? Was He surprised to see my oldest child and me holding babies together at midnight so that Dad, who commutes one-and-a-half to two hours each way to work, could get his much-needed sleep? Was He surprised that we didn't get any "school" (and I use that word loosely) done that year?

No, He wasn't. Nothing takes our Lord by surprise.

-- Nedra Patton

Celebrate with Ceremony

And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15).

What did Jesus do on his very last night on earth with his friends? He celebrated the Passover—a ceremonial re-enactment and foreshadowing of what He was about to do—be our Lamb. I always thought this was for the disciples and us—Jesus took time to instruct the disciples and pray for them, washed their feet, instituted communion. But could it be that Jesus needed to celebrate the Passover?

His prayers show He dreaded the coming events. Did Jesus gain strength by rehearsing through the Passover all the reasons God planned for the Lamb to die? Did he gain courage by singing the old familiar songs?

As He saw in the story the threads that God had woven from Abraham through Moses, could He picture Himself on the road to Emmaus, opening the Scriptures, and explaining how God had planned it all from the beginning? Whether Jesus needed the Passover or not, God intended His people to use symbols and ceremonies, joyful and solemn, to help them remember, take courage, and then obey (Exodus 13).

How can you use symbols and ceremonies throughout the school year? Just starting out, half-way through, finished short vowel words, first term paper ... and don't forget: turned a bad attitude around, persisted at a hard task, acted selflessly. A planned event for a big milestone, a special candle at dinner to signify good news from that day's school time. You can use ceremonies to remember, and encourage your family towards godliness in school and life.

-- Susan Smith

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