GREENHOUSE Nurturing Home Education in North Carolina and Beyond





How to Write a Transformational Vision Statement

20 Simple Ways to Pursue Joy in 2020

Thank You, Ernie Hodges!

Casting a Vision Using Biographies

You've Got to Go [Back] to the NCHE Thrive! Conference

Teaching Your Children to Be Mindful

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I am always doing what I cannot do yet, in order to learn how to do it.

Vincent van Gogh

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COVER IMAGE courtesy Mereda Hart Ferynyk.

Connect with Mereda on Instagram @brit.at.hart



GREENHOUSE grace notes

Dear friends,

We've been working on this issue since July, and I just love seeing it all come together. From the words that God gives our talented contributors to the images that inspire our layout, it's amazing to watch Him build each issue. When I receive your emails or you pull me aside at meetings, I am amazed at the stories of how God uses the GREENHOUSE to equip and encourage each of you!

Right away you'll notice that this issue is devoted to vision. There is an encouraging letter from our executive director on why you need to write a personal vision statement (p.10) and a special section devoted to the Thrive! Conference (p. 3-9). As you read about the speakers and the topics of their workshops, I just know you'll begin circling all the ones you don't want to miss when you attend this years conference. There's no better place than the Thrive! Conference to be still and think on God's vision for your homeschool!

Spring break is coming up for many of us, and special needs families will enjoy an article devoted to making travel plans when you have special circumstances to consider (p. 30). There are two articles devoted to your health, including an interview with a homeschool mom/health coach (p. 24) and an article focusing on mindfulness in the homeschool classroom (p. 32). As parents, you spend so much time focusing on the well-being of others. I hope these health articles inspire you to take care of your *own* well-being too!

We can be confident that He Who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6) A vision without a plan is just wishful thinking, so I pray that we imitate God in carrying out the vision that He gives us!

Sarah

Connect with Sarah at media@nche.com



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EQUIPPING, ENCOURAGING and CONNECTING May 28-30, 2020

Thirty-Sixth NCHE Annual Conference BENTON CONVENTION CENTER • WINSTON-SALEM, NC

The Thrive! Conference is a life changing experience where you will find the encouragement and resources you need to homeschool with confidence.

Our conference will help you *thrive* by providing: Nationally recognized speakers Knowledgeable and experienced NC speakers Inspiring workshops • Huge vendor hall • Fun teen activities Entertaining talent showcase • Engaging children's program Informative college fair

"I love the conference! It refocuses, motivates, encourages and inspires me every year!" — Christy

For details about the conference go to nche.com/thrive. Preregistration prices end May 21.



Keynotes and Workshops



Teen and Alumni Dance



Talent Showcase

Teen and Alumni Games 4/2

College Fair



4

Conference Speakers and Workshops Featured Speakers



Adam Andrews is the director of the Center for Literary Education and a homeschooling father of 6. Since 2003 he has traveled throughout the US and Canada presenting an innovative method for teaching the crucial skills of literary analysis. Adam's dynamic presentations enable students to enjoy great literature as never before, while his fresh insights inspire parents with new vision for their task as educators. Adam earned his B.A. from Hillsdale College in southern Michigan and his M.A. from the University of Washington in Seattle, where he is currently a candidate for the Ph.D. He is a Henry Salvatori Fellow of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute and a founding board member of Westover Academy in Colville, Washington. He and his wife, Missy, who holds degrees from Hillsdale College and Harrison Middleton University, taught all of their children at home in Rice, Washington.

- Living Books: Implementing the Ultimate Box-Set Curriculum
- Building the Perfect Reading List: How to Find Great Books for Students of All Ages
- Piece of (Thunder) Cake: A Solution to Homeschooling's Crucial Dilemma
- Education in an Hour: Teaching Life's Most Crucial Lesson in One Sitting
- Designing Your Own Lit Program: A Scope and Sequence Workshop
- The 7 Laws of Teaching and Other Myths
- Teaching with Grace: An Unlikely Path to Success in Your Homeschool



Rachael Carman invites moms to join her in loving God passionately and worshiping him fully while sweeping up Cheerios, doing laundry, and planning dinner. You will be affirmed in your role as a mother as Rachael speaks of her struggles with perfectionism and impatience and shares her challenges, failures, and victories amid the ever-changing seasons of life. Her honesty will surprise you and her humor will put you at ease. Rachael is a respected author and a sought-after speaker. In her books, *How Many Times Do I Have to Tell You?* and *How to Have a HEART for Your Kids*, Rachael challenges mothers to surrender their will and draw closer to their heavenly Father. She has spoken across the United States as well as in Europe, Asia and Africa. She has been married to her husband, Davis, since 1986, and they have 7 kids. She and Davis are the owners of Apologia Educational Ministries.

- Teaching Your Children to BLESS
- Remember and Do Not Forget
- What about That Child?
- Counter Culture Character
- 7 Simple Steps to Sanity



Steve Demme is an adopted child of God. He and Sandra have been married since 1979 and have been blessed with 4 sons, 3 daughters-in-law, and 5 grandchildren. Their fourth son, John, has Down syndrome and lives with them in Lititz, PA. Steve is the creator of Math-U-See and the founder of Building Faith Families.

- Raising a Special Needs Child and Finding Support for the Journey
- Parents Are Uniquely Qualified to Teach and Disciple Their Children
- Fear Not! You and Your Children Can Learn Math Together
- Successful Family Communication Hands-on Workshop
- Slaying Lions
- Tips for Being a Faithful Dad and Supportive Husband



Andrea Hall, M.Ed., is a certified educator, executive director, and mom of 3, with over 17 years of homeschooling experience. As an educator, she designs online courses and teaches through The Study Hall Education Consulting Company, LLC. She was motivated to start the In Real Life Math Community, www.irlmath.org, by her love of math. Her goal is to create in her students a love for mathematics, one equation at a time. She is also the founder and executive director of EPIC Homeschool Network, Inc., a nonprofit homeschool organization that seeks to enrich, enhance, and empower home education in the community (www.epichsn.org). When she is not working, she likes to blog at www.nomommyleftbehind.com where she shares her journey as a busy, working, homeschooling mom.

- Start Strong: How to Start the Homeschool Year Right
- Real World Math for Homeschoolers
- How to Create Your Own Homeschool Curriculum
- Working Homeschool Moms: How You Can Be a Working Mom Pro
- 10 Principles of True Education

"This conference is my favorite vacation of our year. I just love it! I learned and gained insight from almost every presenter. I came home so energized and with pages of notes and all of my supplies for the next year. I love it!"

— Caroline —



Dr. Jeff Myers is president of Summit Ministries. As an educator and entrepreneur, Dr. Myers has become one of America's most respected authorities on youth leadership development. Focus on the Family founder James Dobson referred to him as "a very gifted and inspirational leader." Evangelist Josh McDowell called him "a man who is 100% sold out to preparing the next generation to reflect the character of Christ in the culture." Through his speaking engagements and media appearances, Dr. Myers has become a fresh voice offering humor and insight from a Christian worldview. He is the author of 14 books, including *Understanding the Faith, Understanding the Times*, and Understanding the Culture. Dr. Myers holds a doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Denver. He serves as a trustee of Colorado Christian University. Jeff, his wife, Stephanie, and their family live in Colorado.

- How to Stand for Truth and Be Nice at the Same Time
- Growing Wiser: Being Wise in the Age of "Duh"
- Rescuing Your Children from the Culture of Irresponsibility
- Truth Changes Everything
- Reality, Truth, and Jesus
- Breakthrough Leadership: 4 Steps to Cultivating Your Child's Leadership Ability
- Hearing and Understanding God's Call on Your Life



Rebecca Spooner is a second generation homeschool mom of 5, author of *More than Words* Bible curriculum and Gather *'Round Homeschool*, international speaker, and popular blogger at homeschoolon.com. She is married to an RCMP (Canadian police) officer and lives in a frozen tundra (okay, it only snows half the year) in Northern BC, Canada. She is passionate about sharing real life and the message that this homeschooling life is messy, and wonderful, and challenging, and most importantly—possible. Come join her in the midst of her chaos. She doesn't promise to have it all together; she promises to give you hope, laughter, and permission to make mistakes and know you are not alone, and this is worth the cost.

- Confessions of a Recovering Type A Homeschool Mom
- The Ultimate Homeschool Organization Workshop
- Teaching the Child You Have, Not the Child You Want
- Coping Strategies for the Introverted Homeschooler
- Working + Homeschooling (3 Full-Time Jobs vs. 1 You)
- Homeschooling the "Nothing Works" Child

Additional Conference Speakers

Diane Allen

Productive Struggle: The Pathway to Growth and Ultimate Success

Homeschooling Effectively through **High School**

Missy Andrews

Lit for Littles: Making **Reading Magical**

After Apple Picking: Conclusions, Confessions, and Callings

The Wardrobe Door: A Way into Worlds

Clifton Bennett

Building Champions

Dads Proudly Supporting Homeschooling Moms

Francie Black

Online Privacy: Tools, **Tips & Tricks to Keep** Your Children Safe Online

Doreen Browning Self-Directed Education: Can This Work?

Integrated Learning: Why It Makes Sense





Jeremy and Kylie Cochran

Living the Homeschool Dream: Practical Strategies for the Homeschool Lifestyle

Hope during Trauma

Andrea Daley High School Smorgasbord: The Practical

High School Smorgasbord: The Emotional

Katie Dugdale What's in Your Hand? Starting a Microbusiness for Teens and Adults

Getting Started with Preschool and Kindergarten

Middle Schoolers Are Weird, and I Love Them!

Dr. Tisha Duncan **Bringing Books to** Life: Connecting through Read-

10 Reasons You Shouldn't Homeschool: Silencing the Inner Voice

Eckenwiler Teaching Reading May Not Be as Easy as You Think

What if Your Child Is the Fish that Can't Climb the Tree?

Learning Challenges? Dyslexia? Delays? Uncovering What's Going on and **Reasons for Formal Testing**







Jolene Erlacher Tech-Smart Parenting

Dr. Jeff

Co-Ops

Ertzberger

Google Tools for

Using Augmented

Reality and Virtual

Reality as Teaching Tools





Jessica Frierson Homeschool How-Tos



Amanda Garner Through Deep Waters

Homeschooling: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly, and Why It's Worth It

Tom Gurganus What Is the Gameschooling Thing Anyway?







Alouds of Doubt

Kristen





Debra Haagen Homeschooling in the Military



Lindsay Leiviska Outside-the-Box Teaching

Vanessa Lopez Homeschooling in Crisis



Ronda Marshall Secrets of Endurance: Successful Co-ops and Tutorials

Teaching More than One (or Multi-level Teaching)

Debbie Mason

Homeschooling High School

Top 11 Passions from a Homeschool Veteran

Penny Mayes Goodness, Truth, and Beauty in Art and in Your Homeschool



Dana McDill Choosing Rest in the Midst of Homeschooling



Matthew McDill How to Help Your Children Discover God's Plan for Their Lives

Equip Children for Life with 3 Critical Skills

Marji McIlvaine What's in Your Hand? Starting a Microbusiness for Teens and Adults

Staying *Home* to Homeschool—

What a Concept! Do I Really Have to Outsource?

Taking the Mystery Out of Achievement Testing

Julia Nalle Is History Flatlining in Your Home? 50+ CPR Strategies to Bring It Back to Life



Danielle Papageorgiou Getting Started (or Continuing) Lifeschooling without Feeling Terrified!



Craig Seibert Christian Citizenship 1: The 4 Structures of a Healthy Society

Christian Citizenship 2: The Keys to Understanding the Declaration and Cons



Declaration and Constitution

Christian Citizenship 3: Engaging the Culture with Salt, Light & Courage

Amanda Wares Help! I'm New! Now What Do I Do?

The Girlfriend's Guide to Choosing Curriculum

Patricia

Wesolowski

Preparing Your

Might Think

Teen for College:

It's Easier than You





Durenda Wilson Creating a Family Schedule

Homeschooling Boys: What They Really Need

Nurturing Sibling Relationships









How to Write a Transformational Vision Statement

by Matthew McDill

"What do you want people to say about you at your funeral?"

This is the question I was asking myself at the beginning of 2019. I was not asking it because I had a life-threatening illness or had lost someone close to me. I was asking this because I was reading a book about how to create a vision statement.* I would like to suggest to you that asking this simple question is a quick and powerful way to develop a vision for your life. As homeschool parents, this vision will include our relationships with our children and our hopes for educating and preparing them for life.

I was carefully following each step of the process in the book. In order to create a vision statement, the authors advised me to imagine my own funeral. Who will be there? What will they say? Imagining my funeral was to be done in two steps. First, imagine what people would say about me if my funeral were today. Next, imagine what I would like people to say at my funeral, assuming I had lived the life to which I aspire.

Now let me stop and tell you what I thought when I first encountered this idea: "That's silly; I'm not doing that." As if reading my mind, the author countered, "Don't miss this step... Be open and vulnerable with yourself. You want to capture your true values." So I did it. To my surprise, I found myself in tears completing this silly exercise. I was really torn up as I faced the realities of my life and my relationship with those I love the most.

Steve Jobs summed up well why taking hold of this perspective is so powerful when he said, "All external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important." Trying to see the computer screen through my tears, I wrote what I hope people will say about me at my funeral. I thought about each of the most important people in my life. The most moving part was when I thought about what I wanted my children to say.

The authors then explained that the way you create a vision statement is to take what you want people to say about you and write it in the present tense, as if it were true today. After thinking through what I want my children to say about me, I put it into the present tense to form this vision for my relationship with my children:

> I show my children what it means to follow Jesus by living it in front of them and teaching them from God's Word every day. I give them biblical wisdom for life. I love them and enjoy life with them, spending time and having fun with them. I am one of their closest friends. They can tell me anything, and I listen carefully and compassionately.

I wrote a vision statement like this for all the important relationships and responsibilities in my life. I reviewed this vision document every day for months. I still review it every week and it always provides me with clarity and motivation. Most importantly, I can report that in 2019 I made huge strides toward having this kind of relationship with my children.

I want to encourage you to go through this same process. You will want to include your family relationships and home education. Once again, here are the instructions.

- 1. Write down who would be at your funeral and what they would say if it happened today.
- 2. Write down who would be at your funeral and what they would say if it happened at the end of your life assuming you had become the person you hope to be.
- 3. Take what you wrote for number two and write it in the present tense.
- 4. Review it every day for a while. Then review it every week.

You may be tempted to respond the way that I did: "This is silly. I don't really need to do that." Or maybe you immediately realize that you do not want to think about your funeral. "It would be too depressing. I don't want to take such a deep look at life." Or maybe you think this a good idea, but you will probably forget if you plan to do it later. Whatever your response might be, please consider setting some time aside on your calendar in the next couple of days to think through this. I believe it will help you to develop a transformational vision for your life.

* Living Forward: A Proven Plan to Stop Drifting and Get the Life You Want by Michael Hyatt and Daniel Harkavy



Matthew McDill and his wife, Dana, homeschool their nine children in Creston. Matthew is the executive director for North Carolinians for Home Education and continues to serve as president of the board. Through his ministry, Truth to Freedom (truthtofreedom.org), he

teaches and writes about discipleship, marriage, family, parenting, home education, and church. Matthew holds a bachelor's degree in communication along with two master's degrees and a doctorate in biblical studies.

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20 Simple Ways to Pursue Joy in 2020

by Amy Sloan

The New Year is often the time we make big plans and goals. We decide this is the year we'll read aloud every day to the kids. We'll cut out caffeine completely. We'll read quality literature after the kids are asleep instead of binge-watching Parks and Rec episodes. We'll run a marathon. We'll make every homeschool moment one to remember, and we'll never yell at our kids. It's going to be epic.

Only, is it just me? I don't find much success with setting crazy-big-important goals in January. They usually make me cry before we even get to February. And no homeschool mom needs something else to feel dejected about in February. Shame, fear, and discouragement are not really the way we want to start fresh in a new year.

What if there are some simple ways to bring joy to the new year instead? What if we don't try to change the whole world or the whole year or our whole homeschool this time? What if we choose to do one simple thing each day that brings joy to our own lives and the lives of our friends and family?

Maybe 2020 can be a year of humble choices, simple decisions, and "little drops of water and little grains of sand" that (by the grace of God alone) nurture love, peace, and joy in our hearts and homes!

Here are 20 simple suggestions for bringing joy to 2020:

- 1. Save at least one strand of Christmas lights when you're packing up the holiday decorations, and hang them somewhere in your bedroom. Turn them on at night while you're reading or getting ready for bed to add coziness to your day.
- 2. Send an actual snail mail letter to a friend. It doesn't have to be long or profound. Bonus: include a pre-stamped and addressed envelope in this snail mail letter, and you might get a letter back!

- 3. Speak to the manager. The next time you're at a restaurant or store and have good service, tell the manager how much you appreciated the kindness of their employee. Everyone likes to complain to the manager. Be the person who gives an encouraging word.
- 4. Read an unread book from your own collection. Is there a book sitting on your bookshelf that you've always intended to read?
- Go outside on a sunny day. Stand still in the sunlight with your eyes closed for five minutes, breathing deeply. Five minutes will suddenly feel really long. Go on. Keep breathing and soaking in the sun. Be still.
- 6. Memorize all the stanzas of a favorite hymn. Sing it during your quiet time, in the shower, during morning time with the children, at the dinner table, or while driving in the car! You might be surprised how quickly you can learn it!
- Set the timer for fifteen minutes. Fill a garbage bag with as many things as you can to declutter in fifteen minutes. Set it in your vehicle immediately and drop it off at your local thrift store next time you're out.
- 8. Slip a note under your child's door or under your spouse's pillow listing the things you're thankful for about them.
- 9. Gather your journal (or a piece of scrap paper) and your favorite writing implement. Set the timer for ten minutes. Write whatever comes to mind. This might be things you need to do, feelings, ideas, or even "this feels really hard and dumb" comments. Some people call this a "brain dump" or "freewriting." Notice the parts that make you feel uncomfortable. Why do you think you feel that way?
- 10. Write a favorite Bible verse in pencil on your bathroom wall beside the mirror or above your kitchen sink. If that seems too scandalous, write it on a 3×5 card and tape it to the wall instead. I have written Philippians 4:8 (in very normal, imperfect handwriting) on the wall above my pantry door and the phrase "sanctification happens here" on the wall above my kitchen sink!
- 11. Learn something new and outside of your comfort zone. You can read a book, listen to a podcast, watch a documentary, or attend a lecture—but stretch your mind and your interests! We say we homeschool to encourage our children to be life-long learners, but are we modeling that for them in our own lives?
- 12. Go to the produce section of your grocery store. Buy at least one item you've never tried. Learn how to prepare it, and then eat it! Maybe each family member can take turns

choosing as you try something new each week!

- 13. Bake chocolate chip cookies. Take half to a neighbor.
- 14. Walk briskly, breathing deeply, for fifteen minutes. If at all possible, walk outside. If weather or small children do not permit, walk up and down the stairs. If even this is not possible, walk in place. You can do this.
- 15. Spend quality time praying for another homeschool mom you know who is struggling, and then send her a text or email to let them know you love them and are praying for them. We all need to know we're not alone.
- Crank up and belt out some of your favorite songs from high school! Host a family dance party in the living room. (Embarrassing your children is good for them.)
- 17. Fill eight glasses full of water in the morning. Drink them all before you go to bed.
- 18. Practice exhortation (or positive gossiping.) The next time you're with your homeschool mom friends, speak kindness and truth about others. We all know how destructive backbiting can be. But what if we were the people sharing words that built others up, even behind their backs? Talk about how great other people are, even if they aren't around! (Never participate in negative gossip that tears others down!)
- 19. Set a repeating alarm right now on your phone. For example, it might be every Tuesday at 9 am. When that alarm goes off, go find all your children and give them a big smile and a huge hug!
- 20. Write a short email to your pastor thanking him for his service. Share something from last week's sermon that especially encouraged or challenged you. Let them know you appreciate them and are praying for them.

I hope you are inspired to try some of these simple, humble, joy-filled goals this new year. They're one-time goals, but you may find you want to keep repeating them. Head to HumilityandDoxology.com/greenhouse and let me know how it goes! May God bless you abundantly in 2020. Standfast!



Amy Sloan is a second-generation homeschooler by grace alone to five children ages four to fourteen. The Sloan family adventures in Holly Springs, NC. Follow @HumilityandDoxology on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and at HumilityandDoxology.com.



Thank You, Ernie Hodges! The NCHEAC Story

As home educators, ours is a rich history filled with God's providence. We have heard how the early homeschoolers were grilled in the middle of the day by people at the supermarket about why their children were not "in school." We have listened as they told us the obscure ways and lengths to which they had to go to get textbooks and materials. They had no computers, no Internet, and no athletic programs. They were visionaries. They were the Moses generation who, by faith, obeyed and left everything familiar because they believed God was calling them home.

So many of you may feel a certain stewardship for what they have given us: good laws, access to resources, their wisdom, and our freedom. As the next generation of home educators, we have the privilege of telling our children and our neighbors their story—which is our story. It is the homeschool story.

Ernie Hodges had a vision. Having grown up playing sports, he believed in the values and character that kids learn when they play on a team. While Ernie was coaching his son's basketball team, God gave him a dream of seeing homeschooled children competing in the same types of leagues and tournaments as their peers who were educated in brick and mortar schools. In 1995, Ernie wrote a letter to North Carolinians for Home Education. That letter was published in the Greenhouse Report newsletter (that has now become the GREENHOUSE magazine.) In the article, Ernie told homeschool families about his vision and asked if anyone was interested in joining him.

Homeschool sports began informally in the Triad when homeschool basketball teams were formed in Winston-Salem during the 1995-96 season, and in Greensboro the next year. These were the only two homeschool sports teams in our state until a third boys team was formed in Weddington, NC in 1999-2000, followed by another in Fayetteville in the winter of 2001. By January 2001, there were four boys teams and two girls teams (Winston-Salem and Fayetteville). Their coaches agreed that starting a basketball tournament would be a good idea, and the first tournament was held in February of 2001. The first boys varsity championship was won by Weddington and the girls varsity championship was won by Winston-Salem (known today as Forsyth Home Educators).

The growth of basketball was slow over the next few years, but JV boys/girls and middle school boys/girls were added in 2003-2005. A girls volleyball tournament was started with teams from Fayetteville, Wake Forest, and Winston-Salem in the fall of 2004. The number of basketball teams that had formed between the Triad and the Triangle and down east had grown enough that teams wanted to play each other in an actual league with required regular season play. So, in the summer of 2006, the North Carolinians for Home Education Athletic Commission (NCHEAC) was formed under the authority of North Carolinians for Home Education (NCHE).

Over the next several years, we saw the formation of boys soccer (2006) and girls soccer (2008). Golf and baseball tournaments followed. More recently, state tournaments in cross country (2011), swimming (2012), and fencing (2014) were added. Through the success of these NCHEAC teams, the opportunities to begin playing private and public school teams was opened to home schooled athletes. Homeschool teams have won at regional, state, and national level sports. With nearly 150 teams, and nearly 2000 athletes state-wide, the NCHE Athletic Commission has grown to have one of the largest state-wide homeschool sports leagues in the nation.

After twenty years of faithful service, Ernie organized and led a dedicated NCHEAC board of directors. Through its many programs, NCHEAC has enabled homeschool athletes to receive coveted athletic scholarships and be recruited into athletic programs at colleges and universities. These students have the chance to set a Christ-like example on the court, on the field, on the course, in the classroom, and in their communities. Your membership supports the continued work of the NCHE Athletic Commission and makes possible its extensive network of homeschool sports teams across our state.

In August 2019, Ernie and Iris Hodges notified the NCHE board that Ernie would be retiring from serving as the NCHEAC director in the spring of 2020. At that time, Dale Brown will begin serving as director of the NCHE Athletic Commission. Thank you, Ernie, for your vision, leadership, hard work, and faithfulness!

If we are steadfast, future generations will continue to tell our story. If you have a dream for the future of homeschooling in North Carolina, as Ernie Hodges did, please contact the NCHE board to learn more about serving with NCHE. You may email Matthew McDill, our NCHE executive director, at matthew.mcdill@nche.com.

This article was written by NCHE and NCHEAC board members, with love and gratitude to Ernie and Iris Hodges.

"I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Psalm 27:13

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Hodges Tribute

How can you say enough or thank Ernie Hodges enough for what he has accomplished over years of sacrificing his time and energy serving as athletic commissioner for NCHEAC sports? He pioneered this program to a top-class sports conference for homeschoolers across the state of North Carolina, offering basketball, baseball, soccer, volleyball, cross country, fencing, golf, softball, and swimming. My son played in the basketball league for five years. I served as athletic director for four years and for two years as president for the South Wake Sabres. For two of those years, I also served on the NCHEAC board with Ernie. During those six years, I had the pleasure of interacting regularly with Ernie. He was always easy to work with, efficient and effective as a leader, and he always made decisions with integrity—focusing on the individuals and the bigger picture of the NCHEAC organization. Most importantly, through his actions and his written expectations, Ernie set the standard for Christian principles, and he expected them to be followed by all participants throughout the program. This benefited every family. Ernie's countless contributions to

NCHEAC and his relationship to our family, personally, have truly been a blessing. Thank you, Ernie! – Ray Thornton

I am so very thankful for Ernie's and Iris's love and time so long dedicated, not only to NCHE on the board, but in this fantastic role as head of the sports organization. Only Heaven will show what a huge gift it has been to families who are homeschooling in NC.

I know that for our family, participating in the sports league provided many of our children (and us!) with some of our closest, life-long friends! Our grown kids still have close, enduring friendships with teammates from long ago; they were forged on athletic teams provided through NCHE athletics. We will be eternally grateful to Ernie for the untold hours, dedication, and



love that he poured into forming and maintaining this enduring organization. -Mike and Ronda Marshall

Thank you, Ernie, for all you have done to bring competitive high school sports to homeschool families in North Carolina. Your vision, commitment, sacrifice, and time are greatly appreciated. You are a true pioneer. – Dale R. Brown



The Stepping-Stone Approach to College and Career

by Keith Shearon

As a community college professor, I frequently speak with students who have multiple interests, gifts, and talents. When a parent comes to me for advice about helping their student choose a single major from their many interests, I reassure the parent that their student does not have to know exactly what she wants to do before she enters college. I have come to believe that if we can help our students narrow their interests down to a few, then they probably have the focus that they need for a successful and happy career. I also remind parents that their children may have more than one career—after all, Paul was an apostle, a scholar, and a tent maker.

To parents of children who are approaching leaving the nest, success is often defined fairly simply: we want our children to be happy in their work, and we want them to be able to pay their bills. Toward the end of the high school years or post-secondary education, I would propose that parents and teachers should not only focus on their students' happiness and fiscal aptitude, but that they also keep an eye open for two attributes that are often overlooked in helping their children select a career path: critical thinking and an affinity toward manual dexterity.

First, how do your students think—especially how do they approach problems and think their way through them? Do they easily give up? Do they approach situations simply looking for the correct answer? Do they believe that if they work at a problem long enough that they could find a solution—or perhaps even make a new discovery? Perseverance is a trait that will help students be more likely to succeed in college, in family, and in life, regardless of what comes their way. Too often, parents err on the side of complaisance, robbing their children of opportunities to develop perseverance. Two simple ways to build this character trait are to encourage your child to persevere the next time she or he is ready to throw in the towel, and to include your child in your own problem solving. The next time you are planning the logistics of a hectic day, balancing a checkbook, or fixing something around the house, ask them to pitch in. Afterward, celebrate your victory with ice cream!

Second, do your students enjoy working with their hands? In college, students are often shocked to discover that they enjoy working with their hands. When it comes to making things, our culture doesn't really champion jobs that include manual labor. For some reason, people think that working with your hands means working your fingers to the bone. Our culture, especially public schools in the last thirty years, has tended to move away from encouraging children to work with their hands. Working with our hands is often natural, enjoyable, and brings a special kind of enjoyment that should not be overlooked. Even if we are not the craftiest of folk, making something useful means much to us, whether it's a meal or a piece of furniture. It can also be financially advantageous to be able to fix things yourself instead of paying someone else.

How do parents recognize and encourage thinking minds and working hands in their children's education? Many people think that one good way is to have their children pursue engineering. The sad truth is that some engineers work with their hands early on, but I would say most engineers move away from working with their hands soon after college, and some find engineering jobs where they rarely lift a finger. Engineering alone often isn't the answer. In 2020, a technologist degree with a transfer path to a four-year college degree may be the better way.

A technologist is what we used to call a technician. He is not the engineer that makes \$100,000 designing cars, but the BMW technician that makes \$100,000 *fixing* BMWs. Completing a two-year A.A.S degree in welding might provide a very lucrative, if slightly dirty, \$60,000 income for your student while he or she continues to study mechanical or civil engineering at a university. This stepping stone approach to career configuration allows a person to fully use their brain to fix other people's designs before they become designers, and in the long run, it makes them twice as valuable to a company than an engineer who never served first as a technician.

You can apply this stepping-stone approach to education in any discipline. My youngest daughter began community college at age thirty-one and will have an A.A.S. and an RN degree through Vance-Granville Community College. The A.A.S. degree will allow her to work making money as a technician while she continues her education and studies for her master's degree in midwifery. Community college gave her the training and experience that she needed to begin her journey into medicine. Trade students can have two trades, such as electrical technology and plumbing, that equip them to operate one larger successful business.

My parents used to call this approach a "fall back." By that,

they meant that a trade was employment that I could retreat to if things didn't go my way as a professional engineer. Instead, if you think of your child's educational investment as you would think of a financial investment, you might consider the steppingstone approach to be like portfolio diversity. This diversity can be a growth strategy, but it is most often a guard against loss. If you spread your investments across different kinds of companies, some will be performing well even when others aren't. This spread of assets across a diverse portfolio is a good way of thinking about being prepared on two job fronts so that you can earn a living and put something back for old age even when your chosen field is underperforming. Just as in financial investing, this stepping-stone approach to education can pay dividends in your child's career.

I have a technical trade and I have a professional career. I started my adult life as an electronics technician, trained by the United States Air Force. That two years of training and two years of practice as a journeyman RADAR repairman prepared me to start as a technician in civilian life. I parlayed that into six figures before going back to get a four-year degree as a product designer. Now I make a living as a consultant to businesses that are training the next generations of technicians, engineers, and managers. But I routinely fix electronics, weld, assemble engines, and do all sorts of other mechanical and electrical things using my experience as a technician.

As a community college educator, I would urge home educators to seriously consider your students' futures in skilled labor. Pray and think about how they will serve God over the span of their entire career. Watch your children to see what their thinking and physical activities indicate about their career joy. Professionals can have a trade as a fallback, a side income, or a practical and enjoyable hobby.

Lastly, remember that a good plumber is hard to find—even in the best of times—and should easily stay busy when the economy isn't rolling along. Trades are practical, and you might be surprised that your plumber could become wealthy, too. Paul's trade was one that was in high demand, and that gave him the flexibility and opportunities to serve and share the gospel with all sorts of people. In that regard, an education in a trade can also prepare our students for missions.



Keith Shearon is the director of customized training, and former department chair of applied technologies at Vance-Granville Community College in Henderson, NC. He enjoys a variety of hobbies with his homeschooled grandchildren.



Casting a Vision Using Biographies

by Diane Helfrich

A young man born in Ohio grew up with an enormous sense of curiosity. He became deaf at a young age, was hyperactive by today's standards, and the school kicked him out after only twelve weeks, saying he was uneducable. His mother chose to homeschool him for a time, and he received very little formal education. As a child, he turned his kitchen into a chemistry lab, experimenting, playing, and learning. He sold vegetables and newspapers to earn money, and at thirteen, he saved a three-year-old from being hit by a train. At that same age, he decided to publish a newspaper that became quite popular with local customers. During his life, he obtained 1093 patents, the most famous taking over 1000 tries to get it right. Do you have any idea who he was? This amazing person was Thomas Edison.

A young girl was studying dance in Belgium at a major conservatory when World War II began. She had dreams of being a prima ballerina and was exceedingly talented. Her family, however, had to go into hiding as Hitler occupied their country. At one point, food was so scarce that she resorted to eating grass to survive. During this time, this young woman lost a significant amount of weight. As the war ended and she tried to return to dance, her teachers informed her that her body was too damaged; she could continue to dance, but she would never reach her dream. She turned instead to acting and, within five years, won her first academy award for best actress in a motion picture. She went on to become one of the most famous actresses of her era. Very accomplished in her field, she also had a heart for missions. She spent much of her later life working in Africa through UNICEF to help impoverished children. One of her famous quotes was something she said to her son. "As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others." Her war experiences shaped her, and she had a deep desire to help others, especially children. Her name was Audrey Hepburn.

Why have I told you these stories? One of the joys we homeschool parents share, indeed, one of the opportunities and responsibilities we have, is helping our children find their passion and visions for their lives. Biographies of great people are a fantastic way for them to associate with achievers of all kinds of things. As they read about these people, your children unlock their passions and start to see themselves in a life-role. I see many students go to college with no idea of who they are and what they want to be, yet they need to declare a major and hone-in on a course of study early—before most of them are ready. I know several college students who graduated, still not knowing who they are. The best way to counteract that is to help our children discover who they are before they leave us to go into the world. Encourage your children to read about many great people. The stories of those who have gone before will teach them how to survive in difficult times, how to solve enormous problems, how to follow dreams. These stories will tell of overcoming failures and disabilities, rising out of poverty and family difficulties. They will create ideas of possibilities and cast visions within your child. Without a vision, we tend to wander through life rather than focusing our direction. We need the next generation to go boldly into the world to solve challenging problems and create new opportunities. Besides that, it is incredible as a parent to watch your children grow into their giftedness and feel like they can conquer the world. There is no greater joy than watching our children cast their vision and live into it!



Diane Helfrich is a fourteen-year veteran of homeschooling. She currently serves NCHE as a regional liaison and as the newly appointed development director. Her husband, David, serves the Department of the Army in support of Special Forces. They have two children: Ian is working on a PhD

in economics at Georgia Tech, and Anna is a case manager for abused and trafficked children in Yakima, Washington.

"Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you." Psalm 33:22





Cassondra in Raleigh asks:

Is there an age or grade when children become more independent and take responsibility for pacing themselves, studying, and managing their own assignments? Am I being impatient? Is this a personality issue that I should give up on, or did I miss the instructions on how to motivate my middle schooler?

Diane says:

Independence comes at different times to different children. I would say middle school might be a tad early to expect them to take such responsibility. I eased my kids into independence by putting increasingly less structure into their week. Instead of being involved throughout their day, they had a list of things to accomplish by the end of the day, and they had free time once their work was completed. Then, we stretched it out to a couple of days, and then a week. I can point to a time with each of my kids when ownership clearly shifted from me to them because they strongly took charge of their studies - and for both of my children, that came in high school, especially as they became very focused on getting into college.

Briggs says:

We have done an incremental introduction to independent learning. Middle school does seem a bit young to expect totally independent work, but it is certainly a good time to start. Maybe choose one subject and give a weekly plan and ask your student to keep a log of her progress. You could then have a brief meeting on Fridays and check her work. Our kids have usually participated in at least one enrichment class away from home. Those have been good situations for us to introduce personal accountability, because they need to turn work into another mom. There tend to be more real consequences in those situations-at least in the minds of my sons!

Evelyn says:

While each child will mature differently in terms of their ability to handle independent work, independence also may depend on the subject. For example, my oldest, who is guite an accomplished self-trained herpetologist, researched and studied those animals starting in later elementary school simply because he was so fascinated with the subject-a subject that I would not have wanted to teach or explore! In general, though, beginning somewhere around eighth grade, my kids know where the lesson assignment book is and start checking to see what they can work on independently. They want to get done as soon as possible with the assignments so they can get on to other things of their own choosing. This behavior increases through the high school years so that by eleventh or twelfth grade, I am more of an "assigner and checker" than a teacher.

Got a question? Ask the board at greenhouse@nche.com

Look What We Did! SHARE YOUR HOMESCHOOL HINTS AND HACKS

"To encourage healthy snacking, purchase fruit and veggies and go ahead and wash and cut them up.

Alpaca Field Trip

My kids are far more likely to eat a carrot that has already been washed and peeled than to pull it out and do it themselves. Even grapes that are already rinsed and in a colander are more likely to get eaten."

@ncboysmom via Instagram

"We tried the graham cracker nativity! Mine was somewhere between a shepherd and a jedi!" @erinbaileybroadway via Facebook



Have a hint? Tell us about it!

email greenhouse@nche.com



"Simplify family meals with disposable plates and silverware!" @bethanie.guthrie via Instagram

"Having freezer meals means we will still have hot, healthy meals from the crock pot every night. It makes it so much easier on weekdays if school lasted longer than expected - dinner still happens on time!" @taraminman via Instagram



"I meal plan for the whole month so I don't have to think about it every week-it's already done!" @heatherlanaej via Instagram

NCHE Day at the Hornets

Name: Sara Number of Kids: 2 Region: 5 Style: Morn of TWins

NCHE: Sara, you are a mom to twin sons—so two of everything! What's that like?

Like other parents, parents of twins rely on the Holy Spirit to give them wisdom to know what's best for each kid. Not to be overly spiritual, but we have always told the boys that they have to place more importance on their identity in Christ than in their identity as a twin. Our kids are in sync for the most part. They think differently, but the way we go about our daily work isn't so different. We do use the same curriculum for each of them, and they're competitive in the good way- trying to see who can finish first or do a better job. When I have bought a different book here or there, we explained that it was because that book would be the best way for them and not remedial. And if one of them is faster than his brother, I also remind him, "This may be easier for you today, but something else will be easier for him next week."



A Closer Look: Health and Physical Education Interview with Deborah Liter

NCHE: Deborah, you're a pastor's wife, a homeschooling mom to four, and you work from home. Tell us a little about yourself.

I love my family. They are my favorite people! I'm a certified coach for an online health and wellness program called *FASTer Way to Fat Loss*. Currently I'm working toward a certification to become an integrative health practitioner. I also make small batch coconut/soy wax candles under my brand name, Nook & Sash. Once a month, I serve alongside my husband on our church worship team. I have a heart for missions. I love reading, traveling, art, coffee, fitness, good food, and dogs.

NCHE: So, have you just always been a health and fitness guru? Is there really hope for people to be healthy and in shape even if they were never athletic or active earlier in life?

I have always been interested in maintaining my health and finding ways to optimize the health of my family. Up until about five years ago, my focus on fitness was very on again, off again, jumping from one thing to another. I was not very consistent, although desired to be fit. I just didn't know how to get there. Absolutely there is hope! At forty-eight, I'm in the best shape

of my life and I'm not talking about being thin. I mean that I have energy and strength that I didn't have when I was in my thirties. It is never too late to start incorporating healthy habits. I *have* clients in their sixties and seventies doing so well! You start where you are and do what you can. Having a clearly laid out plan is helpful, but even just making it your goal to sit less throughout your day, or to drink more water will move you in the right direction.

NCHE: What are the staples in your pantry and fridge?

Low sugar nut butters, quinoa, brown rice pasta, monkfruit sweetener, coconut aminos, coconut milk, olive/avocado/ coconut oils, oat milk, fresh green beans, broccoli, sweet potatoes, salmon/mahi, chicken, Lily's chocolate, Maldon salt flakes, good coffee!

NCHE: How can parents help set positive examples for their children in treating their bodies like temples of the Holy Spirit?

Parents can model healthy habits. Prioritize moving your body and getting outside in nature as much as possible. Prepare meals based on whole foods (food that comes from the ground or had a mother). Try to minimize junk food, but it's okay to enjoy treats. It is not a good idea to demonize any food or glorify physical esthetics. Choosing a healthy lifestyle allows you to show up in your life with energy and allows you to do all that you've been called to do in the best way possible. Our bodies are a gift and are meant to be used to bring glory to the Lord. Many things regarding our health are out of our control, but things like what we choose to eat and how we take care of our bodies is well within our control. Taking care of our health is one way we honor the Lord.

NCHE: Why is paying attention to diet and exercise so hard for parents?

There is so much info out there, and it's often hard to know where to begin. We all lead busy lives, and it's easy to do what's convenient in the moment to get bellies filled. Drive-thru windows are cheap, quick and require no thought. It takes some planning and focus to prioritize a healthy lifestyle. We should view our health and the health of our family as an investment, not an expense.

NCHE: Do teenagers really need to eat more?

I think teens need to be eating better quality food. Because they are growing and active, they will have times of being hungrier. Providing good food options at home is important so that they are not always having to drive-thru. Of course, by the time they are teens, they should know how to make basic healthy recipes. Teach your kids to cook from a young age! Most kids really enjoy that time in the kitchen with a parent.

NCHE: How can a parent help a child who is struggling with weight, exercise, or dietary habits?

I think children pick up on the poor body image attitudes that we might carry around as adults, so sorting out our own issues is the place to start. Then modeling healthy food choices, involving your children in cooking, having a good attitude about exercise by viewing it as a privilege, not a chore, finding whole food options that your kids enjoy eating and getting them outside as much as possible are all good ways to help establish healthier habits.

NCHE: What are the big three things to avoid and the big three things to practice in order to make health a priority?

Avoid: Processed foods, restricting calories, and focusing only on cardio exercise.

Practice: Eating mostly whole foods a majority of the time, strength training, having a 'progress over perfection" mindset toward your health goals.

NCHE: Is taking care of our bodies just as important as feeding our minds or spirit? How can homeschooling parents incorporate this idea into daily life the way we'd focus on daily quiet time for our mind and spirit?

We are whole people with our body, mind, and spirit connected. I believe we can't really separate them. If you are struggling mentally or even spiritually, you often manifest signs in your body. A well-ordered day would include time to care for all of these aspects. When my kids were younger, we would try to spend some time outside every day. Going for a walk, going to a park to let the kids run around, and letting them workout alongside of you are all ways to get some movement in each day.

NCHE: What is the advice that you find yourself most often giving to people?

Focus on progress over perfection—meaning whatever health or wellness goal you set for yourself, focus on doing your best each day to move forward. Change doesn't happen in a linear fashion; it's often two steps forward, three steps back, but you can keep going. Don't heap crazy expectations on yourself. It often takes us years to gain weight and lose strength. Many people unreasonably expect to have a whole new body in three months. Keep a long-term vision and celebrate your victories.

NCHE: Many people are sure to have getting in shape as a New Year's resolution. What makes a person more likely to turn that resolution into a reality?

Having a clear, reasonable plan to follow. Also, a major predictor of success in reaching fitness goals is having a support system. We do better when someone else is holding us accountable, plus, it's so much more fun to get healthy with your spouse or friends! Being around like-minded people who can share in your struggle and encourage you helps you to keep going when you are feeling discouraged and want to give up. NCHE: Many of our members say that cooking and meal prep are exhausting and hard. Freezer meal recipes make life easier, but they are usually loaded in creamy sauces, canned vegetables, sugars, and hidden calories. Can eating fresh and healthy *really* be made simple—and not boring?

It does take some pre-planning, but healthy meals can be simple and delicious. There are tons of resources in the way of cookbooks, blogs, Pinterest, etc. It's now easier than ever to pick up more convenient whole foods like pre-cut veggies, salad mixes, etc., in places like Trader Joe's and most grocery stores. Find about ten meals that your family enjoys, that are made with mostly whole food ingredients, and put them into your rotation. You don't have to re-invent the wheel each night. I really love *Cook Once, Eat All Week* by Cassy Joy Garcia.

Find Deborah on Facebook @FitLifeDeborahLiter and on Instagram @deborah_fitlife and @nookandsashcandles

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You've Got to Go [Back] to the NCHE Thrive! Conference

by Beth Herbert

For the twenty-three years that I called myself a homeschool mom, the end of our school year was marked by the NCHE conference.

I went to my first NCHE homeschool conference in 1994, a few months before we actually started homeschooling. I had read the books and magazines, talked with the few homeschool moms I had met, and was eager to start teaching my nine-year-old and six-year-old, confident that I could make it work even with a four-year-old and one-year-old in the mix. To say my husband was hesitant would be an understatement. Attending that first homeschool conference, seeing all those families and their kids (in 1994 it was a fraction of the number that now attend), looking over all that was available in the vendor hall, and hearing words of encouragement from the many speakers gave my husband the confidence to give the green light. He agreed that we should try homeschooling for at least a year.

For the next twenty-three years, the NCHE conference was a must do on our calendar. Homeschooling was my career during that season, and attending those three days of workshops was part of my *professional development*.

Some years we went as a couple for a weekend getaway. Many years we all went as a family—with strollers, backpacks, snacks, Adventures in Odyssey tapes (yes—cassette tapes!) and coloring books. When the children's program was introduced at the Thrive! conference, it was something that my youngest got to enjoy. When my children grew older, we counted the teen-track workshops (which often focused on spiritual growth and navigating the culture) as part of their school requirement for the year. Occasionally, the NCHE conference was a mom's getaway. It was a wonderful treat to share a hotel room with my homeschool

friends, talking late into the night about curriculum, homeschool philosophies, and parenting challenges after long days at the book fair and workshops.

Some years, it was like drinking from a fire hose as I frantically took notes and bought all the CDs to listen to in the car! Other years were less intense, but I always I felt that the wisdom, encouragement and insight gained made me a better teacher and homeschool mama. It brought motivation to stay the course. It was my conviction to make a change. It provided affirmation of my current direction and encouragement for my doubts.

Even today, now that all five of my children are graduated and in their 20s and 30s, I get a thrill of excitement as I read through the list of workshop titles, and I am tempted to make the drive to Winston-Salem for at least one day (or maybe all three!) to sit in on some workshops and soak in all those good homeschool vibes. I might browse the vendor hall, and with great restraint choose one or two books to take home for myself. (And maybe find one or two to tuck away for that perfect grandbaby of mine.)

Do it. Go to Thrive! Invest in yourself and your decision to

educate your children. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you and direct you. You have so many resources available to help you be the best possible teacher for your children. Believe that you have what it takes to teach, to guide, to mentor, and to facilitate an excellent education for your children!



Beth Herbert, who has been married to husband, Mark, for thirty-seven years, lives in Wake Forest where she homeschooled for twenty-three years and co-founded Lighthouse Christian Homeschool Association. Now that her five children are grown, she remains active in Lighthouse as a mentor and

advisor and loves spending time with her first grandchild! In addition to encouraging homeschool moms in person and online, she chairs the Carolina Capital Homeschool Prom and enjoys baking, reading, spending time with her family, and a variety of creative and artistic activities. She does not enjoy housework.



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Five Tips for Traveling with Kids Who Have Special Needs

by Sandra Peoples

There are times that I let my son's autism hold us back. We make decisions based not only on what would be easier for him, but also what we want to avoid (like stares and unhelpful advice from others). But last year I turned forty. One of the blessings of that milestone was that it moved us to decide to be more adventurous as a family. Becoming forty also helped me care less about other people's reactions to us. So, we decided to hit the road as a family!

During 2019, we went from coast to coast—visiting the Grand Canyon, Joshua Tree National Park, and Florida beaches. Logging all those miles helped me figure out how to make traveling easier for James and for all of us!

- 1. Stay in homes instead of hotels when possible. James doesn't always sleep well, and when he's awake, everyone who shares walls with him is also awake. So renting a home is easier if we're spending multiple nights in one place. Not only do we not worry about waking up the neighbors, we also have a kitchen where we can cook to meet his diet needs and a washer and dryer so I can wash clothes and not have to pack as many. Rates are often comparable to hotel rates, so look into renting a home next time you plan a trip.
- 2. Prepare ahead of time for how you will travel. If you're flying, you can make arrangements ahead of time with the airline, the airport, and even TSA. We've had good experiences at every level with people understanding our challenges and being as accommodating as possible. Driving is

still easier overall, so we log more miles in the car than in the air. We plan ahead by downloading movies on the boys' devices and packaging snacks in small baggies so they are ready to hand out.

- Shop when you get there. I often have to remind myself that if I can buy it here, I can buy it there. I don't need to load us down with everything we might possibly need.
- 4. Make it educational. You knew that I would say that, right? When we planned our trip to places that look so different from home, we studied the trees and animals we might see there! We learned new vocabulary words. We read books. So when we saw a cactus for the first time, we knew not to touch it!
- 5. Lower your expectations and stay flexible. Even with all the planning I did for our trip, I couldn't have planned for the boys getting the flu while we were there! I was so thankful we were in a house where I could cook and do laundry. I was thankful for a drugstore nearby. And I was thankful I hadn't overscheduled every day with so many to dos that the boys couldn't get the rest they needed to recover. Reminding

yourself that no one's vacation is as perfect as it looks on Instagram is a helpful way to manage your expectations.

I know traveling with kids with disabilities can be challenging, but that doesn't mean we have to stay home and miss out on all the fun! My fortieth birthday made me brave enough to try new adventures, and I'm so glad we did. Hit the road for spring break! Or start planning now for a summer getaway. Don't let the what-ifs keep you home!



Sandra Peoples is a special-needs mom and sibling. She is the author of Unexpected Blessings: The Joys and Possibilities of Life in a Special-Needs Family and the host of the podcast Self Care and Soul Care for the Caregiver. You can connect with her at sandrapeoples.com.

"Knowing who you are in Christ is the first step in better self-care." Sandra Peoples

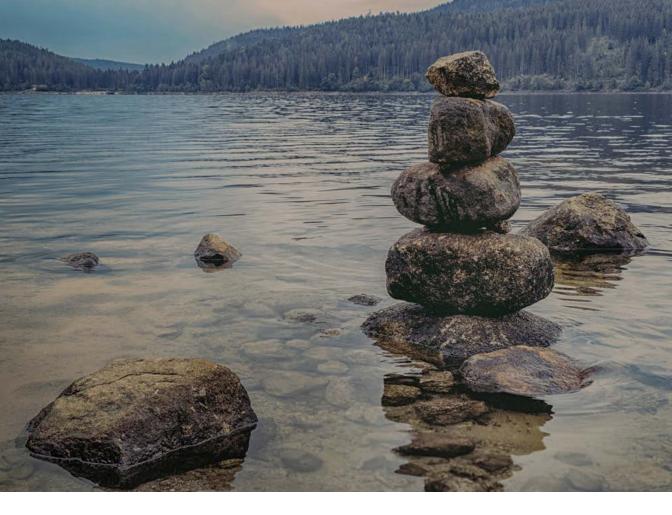
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*denotes programs containing Career and College Promise Pathways (high school dual enrollment)





Teaching Your Children to Be Mindful

by Sarah Hicks

Mindfulness is being fully aware of the present. It is the opposite of being distracted. Like yoga and many other eastern-based philosophies, it is rooted in the idea of *being* instead of doing. Although often exploited, the idea of placing a greater focus on the spiritual than the physical is not erroneous. Is it possible to find Christian truth in the teachings of mindfulness, and should mindfulness be incorporated into the homeschool classroom? Judge for yourself as we look at two of the disciplines of mindfulness: meditation and order.

One of the core teachings of mindfulness is meditation. There are many references to meditation in the Bible. In Genesis 24, we learn that Isaac meditated. After Moses died, God spoke to Joshua and commanded him to meditate (Joshua 1:8). David mentions meditating sixteen times in the book of Psalms. So what were our fathers meditating *on*? God's word says that they were meditating on the Law, God's unfailing love, God's works, His wonderful and mighty deeds, God's decrees, God's precepts, His statutes, what His hands have done, and His promises. It seems very clear that God has said that His people are to meditate on *Him*. If we are meditating on Him and His promises to us, then we are not in danger of turning from Him.

Another teaching in the practice of mindfulness is order specifically, the ordering of our thoughts. Whether it's washing dishes, paying bills, or reading aloud: focus. Be all there. The ability to multi-task is something that people proudly display on everything from coffee mugs to professional resumés, but is multi-tasking a good thing? In recent years, many studies have shown that multi-tasking makes people less productive.* The mental stress that it takes to think about multiple things at once also takes a toll on our health.

David prayed, "Teach us to number our days, that we might get a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 95:10) David asked God to instruct him in how to order his days. To order your day is to ask God to align everything (all your comings and goings, your plans, your cares, your anxieties, your work, and your home) with His way. In Genesis, we read that God created all living creatures "according to their kind." He had a systematic order. Paul also tells us in his first letter to the church at Corinth to be mature in our thinking, which he describes as *orderly* in our worship.

So how does the Christian home educator become more mindful? A mindful believer is diligent in the practice of ordering his mind to stay focused on God. The Bible says we should keep our mind's eye fixed on Christ. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind. We are to take every *thought* captive. Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy—we are to think on such things. In essence, the God who is mindful of His children is pleased when His children are mindful of Him. (Psalm 8)

Here are three ways that you can help your children grow in mindfulness:

 Begin meditating. You probably want to begin meditating as a family. Sit and be still. Be quiet. Breathe deep. Experience God's peace. Breathe deep. Take turns thanking Him for different things, with everyone taking a deep breath in between turns. As meditating becomes a habit, everyone will be able to practice it on their own. Focusing on our breathing can lower our blood pressure. It sends oxygen to your entire body. Whether you are experiencing mental fog, frustration, or a lack of focus, pausing to take a deep breath is useful in helping you order your thoughts. When we help our children learn the habit of being mindful of their thoughts and feelings at an early age, they may be better able to manage their stress and emotions for the rest of their life.

- 2. Continue meditating through Scripture memorization. When you have memorized a verse or passage, sit quietly, close your eyes, and take a deep breath. Personalize the verses and tell them to yourself. "God knows the plan that He has for me. God has promised that His plans for me are for good and not evil all the days of my life." (Jeremiah 29:11-12) Take a deep breath. "God has loved me with an everlasting love, and He continues His faithfulness to me." (Jeremiah 31:3) As you are studying any passage of Scripture, underline the sections that God makes personal to you. Meditate on those for a few days before moving on to your next passage in Scripture. Other great virtues to meditate on are the fruits of the spirit, the beatitudes, and proverbs or psalms that you cherish. There are also mindfulness cards, activities, and workbooks for families at most of your favorite online retailers.
- 3. Order your steps. At the beginning of your day, pray together, and ask God to order your steps. As you go about your day, pay attention to what you are doing. Pay attention to encourage your children to focus on the single task that they are doing. And when your chores and schoolwork are finished, spend time focused on being. Read. Play. Knit. Whittle. Sketch birds. Watch clouds. Collect mushrooms. Delight yourselves in the Lord!

* forbes.com/sites/lisaquast/2017/02/06/want-to-be-more-productivestop-multi-tasking

* apa.org/monitor/oct01/multitask



Sarah Hicks serves as media manager at North Carolinians for Home Education. She and her husband, Peter-John, homeschool their four children in region five. Sarah is a fan of hiking, yoga, chocolate, and art.

"You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself." George MacDonald

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The NCHE Talent Showcase will be held Friday, May 29, 2020, at 7:45 pm at the NCHE Thrive! Homeschool Conference. If you know a talented homeschooled student, encourage them to audition to be a part of this very entertaining show. The deadline to submit an audition is March 31, 2020. See more details on the NCHE website.

NCHE Graduate Offerings. NCHE offers several different opportunities for graduating seniors of NCHE members: the NCHE graduation ceremony, the GREENHOUSE graduate issue, a distinctive diploma, and a scholarship program. More information is available on the NCHE website at nche.com/graduate/central/.

NCHE Graduation Junior Marshal. Calling all homeschooled high school sophomores and juniors! As we are making plans for our graduation ceremonies, we would love for you to consider applying to be a junior marshal for the NCHE graduation. We will be choosing up to eight per ceremony. The deadline to apply to be a junior marshal is April 1. Fill out your application at nche.com/graduate/central/ **Save the Date!** The Summit conference for educating children with learning differences will be October 3, 2020 in the Hickory area. More details to come this summer!

NCHE Scholarship Program — NCHE anticipates awarding five scholarships to NC homeschooled seniors in 2020 in the categories of Academics, Arts, Scholar-Athlete, Community Service, and Missions & Ministry. Submission deadline is March 31, 2020. Fill out your application at nche.com/graduate/central

NCHE Field Trip to Marbles Kids Museum — Thursday, April 16, in Raleigh. Admission includes IMAX presentation of "Oceans: Our Blue Planet." Details and registration are on our website at nche.com.

NCHE Field Trip to Sylvan Heights Bird Park — Thursday, April 30, 2020, in Scotland Neck. Details and registration are on our website at nche.com.

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NCHE Regions

About NCHE

In 1984, North Carolinians for Home Education was organized by homeschool parents to support and encourage home educators and to achieve the right to freely home educate in North Carolina. Since that time, NCHE has endeavored to serve the homeschoolers in NC. NCHE continues to work to promote the excellence of home education, provide support for those who choose to do so and protect the right to homeschool. Our name was selected so as to include all who are for home education, not just those who are currently homeschooling. NCHE is governed by a working board of directors who volunteer their time and efforts to serve homeschoolers. A non-profit organization, NCHE operates on the basis of biblical principles and welcomes members of all races and religions.

GREENHOUSE Information

The GREENHOUSE is the periodical of North Carolinians for Home Education. It is published twice a year, spring and fall. There is also a special graduate publication in May. It is mailed to all members and posted online. The name GREENHOUSE was chosen to represent the type of care homeschooling parents are able to give to their children. Children are lovingly "tended" in a protected and nurturing environment until they are sufficiently mature to go out and take a place of service in the world. Letters and articles addressed to the GREENHOUSE become property of NCHE with full right to publication without further permission required. Ideas and opinions expressed in articles do not necessarily represent those of NCHE.

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Membership in NCHE is available to anyone who supports home education. NC residents who are homeschooling must be in compliance with the NC homeschool law. Membership is obtained by donating any amount to NCHE (suggested donation is \$35). The service of NCHE is made possible by the generous and consistent contributions of its members and supporters.

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