

FAMILY TIMES

A Home-school Newsletter for New Testament Christians
Edited by Bev & Dave Hewitt and Karen & Dave Pratte

All subs run by school year. Subs sent after September receive back issues. Subscriptions are: 3 years by email for \$6.
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June - August, 1998

TIME TO RENEW!

CHECK OUT OUR NEW RENEWAL FEES

It is time for almost everyone to renew your *Family Times* subscription. Please check the codes above your name on your mailing label. If you do not see a "99" then you need to renew.

As discussed in an earlier issue, the editors have determined to change our subscription fees. Effective with the September, 1998, issue, you can receive *Family Times* in email form at a reduced rate. Email subscribers will receive everything that is included in the regular mail format (except pictures!). We will also begin offering 3-year subscriptions to *Family Times* by regular mail.

All subscriptions will continue to be on a school-year basis. This means that, whenever you subscribe during a school year, you receive all back issues for that year, and then your renewal will always come due at the end of a school year.

Here are our new rates, effective immediately for all new or renewal subscriptions:

Three-year email subscription — \$6 total for 3 years*
Three-year regular mail subscription (USA) — \$12
One-year regular mail subscription (USA) — \$5
Foreign subscriptions by regular mail are \$19 for 3 years or \$7 for one year.

* Please remember the following points about email subscriptions: (1) Some other subscribers may be able to see your name and email address in the heading when they receive their *Family Times*. This involves a slight loss of anonymity. (We try diligently to not allow access to any name or address on our mail list without permission. By subscribing by email, you are agreeing that other subscribers — no one else — may see your name and email address.) (2) If subscribers fail to notify us of changes in email address, we have no way to forward *Family Times*. We must simply drop the subscription, without a refund, until we hear from them.

We hope you will find our new fees are more convenient for you, as well as for us. In order to renew, please complete the renewal form at the end of this issue.

HSLDA DISCOUNT GROUP APPROVED

HSLDA has agreed to approve our *Family Times* discount group! This means that all of you, who have sent or will send application forms to join our group, will get your HSLDA membership this year for \$85, instead of \$100.

Actually, we have not yet obtained the required 25 families. However, the applications we have received, along with those who have promised to join, were enough that HSLDA went ahead and approved our group. So, we still need to obtain 25 families eventually, but those of you who have sent in your apps will have the discount this year. And if those who have promised to apply will follow through and do so, and if one or two others also apply, we will have permanent approval.

So, here's where we stand:

(1) Those of you who have promised to apply, please go ahead and send in your applications. When you do, you too will receive HSLDA membership for \$85 per year.

(2) Those of you who have already applied will be billed directly by HSLDA when your annual membership comes due. But you will be billed \$85, instead of \$100 per year. You will then send your check directly to HSLDA, as in the past.

Note: When you are billed, you should be billed for \$85. If you are billed for \$100, just send \$85 anyway. But in either case, be sure to note that you are a member of our discount group. Here is the information you may need about the group.

Group name: Family Times. Group number: 298288. Group address: 7846 St. Joe Road, Ft. Wayne, IN 46835. Group contacts: David Pratte or David Hewitt. Group phone #: (847)395-8937.

(3) EVERYONE who applies must remember to maintain your Family Times subscription. HSLDA requires that all members of our discount group must maintain active status with us. If your Family Times membership is not renewed, then we cannot keep you as a member of our discount group.

(4) If you have not yet applied, but would now like to join our existing discount group, please do so. If you are a current member of HSLDA, just fill out the form in the Sept. '97 Family Times and mail it to us. If you are not a member of HSLDA, but want to join or want information about why you should join, please contact us and we will send you the necessary information.

Thanks to all of you who cooperated to make this service possible. Because of you, everyone benefits.

Note: All communication is easier if we can communicate by email. Our email address is FamilyTimes@poboxes.com

GRAMMAR DISASTERS AND PUNCTUATION FAUX PAS WORKBOOKS

Reviewed by Beverly Mitchell

Published by Critical Thinking Books and Software, 1-800-458-4849.

A common question I hear among homeschoolers is "How (besides testing) do I know that my students are learning?" For myself, this question has often sprung out of my insecurities but often, because I do not use testing routinely, I simply want to know.

The area of language arts skills lends itself to various creative ways to find out what my homeschooled children have truly learned and can apply. We use different writing and reading comprehension activities, but one additional activity we have enjoyed for three years now has been the *Editor-In-Chief Grammar Disasters and Punctuation Faux Pas* workbooks from Critical Thinking Books and Software.

There are three levels in the series: A1 (grades 4-6), B1 (grades 6-8) and C1 (grades 8-adult). The premise of the series is for students to practice grammar, usage, and punctuation skills in context. Each book contains approximately 30 or so articles or letters and each lesson includes an illustration. The student must read the article or letter and find mistakes in the passage and/or discrepancies between the illustration and the text.

Each lesson has a detailed answer key that explains how the mistakes should be corrected and a corrected passage.

Each book also contains a "Guide to Grammar, Usage and Punctuation" which detail common errors and gives complete rules and explanations for grammar, usage and punctuation.

I first purchased Editor-In Chief Book A1 to use as a fun supplement for Learning Language Arts Through Literature but soon discovered there were definite "holes" in the grammatical skills of my then 6th grader. By being able to examine the errors she consistently made we could "brush up" on those areas.

The articles are challenging and interesting to read. Keep in mind that Critical Thinking Books and Software is a secular company and the books are not written from a Biblical perspective, although I have not found anything outstandingly objectionable.

I plan to use the books with my son in future years, and I recommend them as an excellent supplement to your language arts program.

Several home-school supply companies (Timberdoodle and Great Christian Books) carry these books but you can also request a catalog directly from the company.

TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT *Family Times!*

by Mark Mayberry,
315 Idaho Springs Road Clarksville, TN 37043

Television offers many educational choices, including PBS, the History Channel, and the Discovery Channel. The Internet can connect you to a world of information. However, in my opinion, the educational potential of television and the Internet is often overstated. Much of the educational information on television and the Internet is superficial in its depth, liberal in its bias, and disordered in its presentation.

Serious reading, whether of the Bible or substantive books of any kind, is a neglected virtue in this "information age." Movies, radio, television, videos, and now the Web, are providing so much mini-information and absorbing so much time that good books in general, and the Good Book in particular, are being forgotten.

Dr. Gertrude Himmelfarb recently wrote an article for the Spring 1997 edition of *The American Scholar* entitled "Revolution in the Library" in which she bemoaned the fact that computers were replacing books as the primary means of learning. In speaking of the Internet as an educational resource, Dr. Gertrude Himmelfarb said, "The medium itself is too fluid, too mobile and volatile, to encourage any sustained effort of thought. It makes us impatient, eager to get on to the next visual presentation."

I know exactly what she means. When accessing a web site, I often quickly skim the page, and then move on to the next interesting hypertext link. This is the way of the web. That's why they call Microsoft Internet Explorer and Netscape Communicator "Web Browsers." When used in the context of eating, the word "browse" means to nibble at or feed on something. In the context of shopping, it means to look leisurely at goods displayed for sale. In the context of reading, it means to glance at random through a book or magazine. While such an approach might be O.K. in certain contexts, like glancing at the latest news headlines, it does not contribute to a profound understanding of a given subject. Skimming does not equal studying.

To illustrate this point, Dr. Himmelfarb, made an incisive comment about Bible study: "If we want, for example, a concordance to the Bible, we can find no better medium than the Internet. But if we want to read the Bible, to study it, think about it, reflect upon it, we should have it in our hands, for that is the only way of getting it into our minds and hearts." Some books deserve slow, methodical contemplation. In this day of fast food and rapid communication, we want instant insights, slapdash sagacity, and winged wisdom. Expressed in modern slang, "It ain't gonna happen!"

Dr. Himmelfarb also laments the decline of humanities in modern thought. She argues that we should recognize that there are Great Authors and Great Books. Yet, the very concept of greatness is being attacked by the forces of multi-culturalism and feminism. Bella Abzug is heralded as the modern equivalent of Thomas Jefferson, and Maya Angelou is declared to be the feminine reincarnation of Shakespeare. Yet, names like Browning, Chaucer, Dante, Frost, Milton, and Poe are persons non-grata in many English departments simply because they are DWEMs (Dead White European Males).

Television and the Internet both contribute to this decline in appreciation for greatness. Both mediums act as great levelers. Everything is brought down (or up) to the same level. Wisdom is diminished and ignorance is exalted. The insipid opinions of an imbecile appear to carry the same weight as the reasoned thoughts of a sage. Thus, it is quite a chore, when doing a web search on a given topic, to separate the wheat from the chaff. Many people also have difficulty distinguishing fact from fiction on television.

Dr. Himmelfarb deplores the over-computerization of modern university libraries. While appreciative of obvious benefits that computers offer, she nevertheless was concerned with the fact that "workstations" were replacing reading carrels, and that students and faculty were consulting the Internet more than the books, especially the great books that reach both mind and heart. She concluded her study with these words: "These are the books that sustain our mind and inspire our imagination. It is there that we look for truth, for knowledge, for wisdom. And it is these ideals that we hope will survive our latest revolution."

While TV and the Internet do offer many educational choices, let us not forget the wonderful world of books. Use television and the Internet to supplement book learning, and not the other way around.

DON'T FORGET TO SEND IN YOUR RENEWAL!

See renewal form on last page.

MODERN CURRICULUM PRESS: PHONICS AND SPELLING

Reviewed by John and Rhonda Bosworth

Modern Curriculum Press (MCP) has been providing classroom materials to public schools for over 40 years. In addition to phonics and spelling materials, MCP also publishes mathematics, geography and science materials. This review will be limited to the phonics and spelling materials.

The MCP "Plaid" Phonics is a series of consumable workbooks for grades K-6 (Levels K-F). Levels K-C teach phonics skills and focus on learning to read; Levels D-F build vocabulary and focus on reading to learn. These are appealing workbooks which provide a very systematic and incremental approach to phonics, language development and reading. Once your child is reading, he will be able to progress independently through the work with only occasional assistance.

MCP's Spelling is available for 1st through 8th grades (Levels A-H) and are more of a "worktext" for language arts with each lesson spreading over four pages (and with a dictionary included in the back). Each lesson covers vocabulary, writing, and proofreading, with handwriting and dictionary skills added when age appropriate, so the "Spelling" name is misleading.

Each MCP workbook covers a complete year of instruction, is about \$10 and is available at local teachers' supply stores as well as through a variety of homeschool catalogs. You do not need to commit to the entire program to benefit from a year or two. "Teachers' editions" are available, but not necessary.

The phonics program is great, even if you think you don't like workbooks. This program, linked with an abundance of reading, was all that was necessary for my boys to learn to read well at an early age. And, as a new homeschooling parent, I appreciated the "traditional" school approach (and record of such) for this important subject.

The spelling program is more difficult to recommend because it cannot easily be used "as is" for independent students and some of the exercises are definitely busywork. However, if you are looking for the characteristics included in this spelling program, and you do not mind modifying the lessons, you will find it useful.

SPELLING POWER

Reviewed by Diana Dow

Published by Castlemoyle Books

I have finally found a spelling program I am willing to use. I have always kept an eye out for a good one. It just made no sense to me that we teach phonics so our kids can read any word they come across, and then we make them memorize spelling words. I really like and use individualized spelling lists such as Ruth Beechick suggests, but as my son was approaching the sixth grade I began to want to fill in any holes he had in the spelling area. I found it.

Spelling Power from Castlemoyle Books is it. Recommended for ages 8 to adult, spelling takes just 15 minutes a day. There are placement tests to ensure your child starts where he needs to be. Each level is given a letter instead of a number. An eighth grader can start at level C and not feel he is doing work below his level.

Each day the child takes a 5-minute test. After he writes down each word, the test giver spells the word aloud so the child can see if he got it right. If he did, go to the next word. If not, he writes the word correctly next to his misspelled word. At the end of 5 minutes he then writes the correct spelling of his misspelled words on the 10-step study sheet. He follows the directions on the page and then uses each word in a sentence. This activity takes 5 minutes. The last 5 minutes are used with an activity such as alphabetizing his misspelled words, cutting letters out of the newspaper to make his words, spelling the words on the telephone, etc. There are even dictionary activities.

Everything needed to use this program is in the book: reproducible study and test sheets, spelling lists, activities. Also available are inexpensive workbooks. These blank 10-step study sheets and daily test sheets simplify life by keeping things together. They come in 4 line sizes to accommodate your child's needs. Another extra you can purchase are the Activity Task Cards. Included in these cards are more activities than your child could ever want. He can do a different activity everyday. They are organized in order of difficulty. These are truly an extra, but it does help our day go smoother.

If you are interested in this program you may contact me at the Dow's Schoolroom, 4912 60th, Lubbock, TX 79414, (806)788-0862.

Seven Keys to Raising Godly Children (continued)

KEY #4: INSTRUCTION

Many Scriptures tell parents to provide their children with information and guidance so the child can know what is expected. The primary need is for children to be taught the word of God and its application in their lives. Children, in turn, should heed this instruction.

Proverbs 1:8 — Sons should hear the instruction of their fathers and not forsake the law of their mothers. [See also 1 Thess. 2:11.]

Psalm 34:11 — David determined to teach future generations the fear of the Lord.

Isaiah 38:19 — The father shall make known God's truth to the children.

2 Timothy 3:15 — From childhood Timothy had been taught the Scriptures because they could make him wise to salvation. [Cf. Eph. 6:4.]

Consider some principles involved in instructing children in God's will. As we do so, notice the many other passages that show the importance of instructing children.

I. HOW SHOULD WE INSTRUCT CHILDREN?

What methods should we use to instill God's word in our children?

A. WORD OF MOUTH

Genesis 18:19 — Abraham commanded his family after him. He told them what they should do to serve God.

Deuteronomy 4:9,10 — The things the parents know should be made known to the children.

Psalm 78:4-8 — God's will should be made known to the next generation by telling them.

Parents must take time to talk to children about God's word. Explain the teachings and the principles involved. Discuss with them, ask them questions, and answer their questions. [See also Deut. 6:6-9; Psa. 48:13; 71:18; etc.]

How often do you make it a point to explain God's word to your children? Do they have a thorough understanding of His will for their lives?

B. EXAMPLE

Children need to see the parents themselves living by Bible principles. All people learn by imitation. We learn new jobs by watching others do them, etc. Children especially learn by mimicking parents. When little, they want to wear our shoes, talk like us, dress like us, etc.

But remember that they imitate both good and bad characteristics.

2 Timothy 1:5 — Timothy possessed unfeigned faith, but it was first possessed by his mother and his grandmother. They did not just tell Timothy what to believe. They showed him by their own faith. "Actions speak louder than words."

Ezekiel 16:44 — As is the mother, so is the daughter. It is a rare child that grows up to be significantly better than its parents. It does happen, of course, but the general rule is that children are like their parents. If our children are no better than we are, what will they be like?

1 Kings 15:3 — Abijam walked in the sins of his father. Many similar statements can be found regarding kings of Israel and Judah. Children often imitate their parents' sins. In fact, they often go even further into sin than their parents did. This is why parental example is so important.

Nehemiah 13:23,24 — Jews married people of other nations, and their children spoke half in the language of Ashdod.

Both parents will influence the children. This is one reason why it is so important that a Christian marry another Christian to help in training the children. And it is likewise important for both parents to be faithful in setting a good example. Otherwise, the bad example may defeat the effect of the good example.

Genesis 27 and 37 — Isaac and Rebekah played favorites with their children. Rebekah influenced Jacob to deceive Isaac. When Jacob had children, he in turn played favorites, and his sons in turn deceived him. When you practice evil, you may as well expect your children to practice it too — and they will probably practice it in their conduct toward you.

If your children imitate you, what will they practice? Will it be lying, deceit, smoking, drinking, gambling, neglecting the work of the Lord and the church? Or will it be honesty, hard work, Bible study, prayer, teaching God's word to others, and diligent involvement in the work of the church?

You ought to expect your children to do as you do. Do you have things about your life that you don't want your children to imitate? If so, you need to change them, and do it now!

Woe to us if, by our example, our children are lost eternally. It would be better for us to be drowned than to suffer the fate we will suffer in such a case (Matt. 18:6,7).

C. PRACTICE

Sometimes people learn best, not just by being told what to do, nor just by watching others, but by actually practicing the activity guided by an instructor. This is the way most people learn to play the piano, drive a car, or do a job at the factory, etc. So children learn what is right by being made to practice it under guidance of their parents.

Hebrews 5:14 — Senses must be exercised by reason of use to discern good and evil. It is not enough just to speak truth to children, nor even to set a good example before them. We must also exercise discipline to insist they practice what is right. In this way, doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong become instilled in them as habit that continues throughout life.

Do you insist your children practice what you teach them till it becomes a way of life? Or do you just talk about what they should do, and then pay little attention to whether or not they practice it?

Note: later lessons will discuss **how** to get kids to practice what we teach them.

D. REPETITION

With all the methods of teaching we have discussed, continual repetition is needed. Humans are creatures of habit, and habits develop by repetition. The telling, the good example, and the practice all need to be repeated throughout the child's life, so good habits are thoroughly instilled in his character.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 — Parents should talk continually of God's commands. Write them down where you see them frequently. All this involves repetition.

Exodus 13:8,14-16 — In order for children to remember what happened when God led Israel out of Egypt, it was to be continually repeated at Passover.

2 Peter 1:12-15 — Peter intended to repeatedly remind people of what they already knew. Sometimes young people tire of hearing parents repeat things they already know. Peter took steps to insure reminders were made. He refused to neglect it. Parents should do the same.

When kids do something contrary to what their parents said, one of their most common excuses is, "I forgot." Every time a child uses that excuse, he is admitting that he needs to be reminded by frequent repetition!

Parents who diligently use these God-given teaching methods can be assured that God's word will be well instilled in their children. What about your children — have they been thoroughly instructed in these ways? (to be continued...)

CHANGES IN MORALITY

by David Pratte

The following oath was required to be taken by every employee of the Pony Express:

"I hereby swear before the great living God that during my engagement and while I am an employee of Russell, Majors and Waddell, I will under no circumstances use profane language; that I will drink no intoxicating liquors; that I will not quarrel or fight with other employees of the firm, and that I will conduct myself honestly, be faithful to my duties, and so direct my acts as to win the confidence of my employers, so help me God." (Quoted in *We Were There with the Pony Express*, by William O. Steele, p. 52.)

Aside from the issue of whether Christians should take oaths, imagine a company requiring all its employees to take such an oath in modern times! And this company hired the men of the old West, who are today reputed for wildness and lack of personal morality.

The Pony Express operated for 1 1/2 years in 1860/61. It was a separate business company, not a branch of the government, yet it did significant business with the federal government. Imagine the field day that the ACLU and the NEA would have if employees of any company today, especially school teachers, were required to take such an oath.

Some folks want us to believe that morals in this country are not declining and that people in every age have always acted about like folks today do. Sorry, I don't believe it.

OUR SPIRITUAL HERITAGE

Reviewed by Susan Treat

Written by Nancy Tumlinson and Jenelle Schoonover. Published by JCS Publications 3614 Broken Elm Drive, Spring, TX 77388 (281-355-1846) email jcs@flex.net.

This is a complete Bible study curriculum for families as well as Bible classes. The authors state the following as uses for this Bible Study:

1. To sort out and drill Bible history to make you more comfortable studying and teaching others;
2. To encourage your family by reading great faith-building stories together (victory stories, bread stories, light stories, etc.);
3. To learn to tell Bible Stories.
4. To develop theme studies for Bible classes;
5. To strengthen your faith in Jesus by connecting His great spiritual promises to God's actions in the physical world throughout Old Testament history.;
6. To show a friend or neighbor God's great plans for him or her in an unintimidating way.;
7. To comfort and encourage yourself as you see how God has been working on your behalf since before the world began.

This curriculum includes 9 purple cards to drill major periods of Bible History; white cards to practice putting bible heroes under correct historical headings; yellow cards to practice locating Books of the Old Testament in their proper chronological order ; 12 sets of 16 cards each covering "Great Themes of the Bible". Including: Families, Light, Great Victories, Prophets, Travelers, Bread, Dreams & Visions and Life; and a helpful historical hints packet (memory devices to help clear up confusion for good). All materials are laminated. There are thorough instructions and answer keys.

If you've ever studied the Old Testament and asked yourself 'how does this apply to me?' or 'how does this relate to the New Testament?' or 'what is talked about in 2nd Chronicles anyway?' this curriculum is for you. I grew up in the Church, but when it comes to 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles, I was confused. I think we sometimes just avoid those books. This curriculum will help make you comfortable with those books. It will also help you learn themes from the Bible, which can make Bible study really come alive! There is nothing unscriptural here. In fact, the "water" theme will help you in your study with those non-Christians who have a problem with baptism.

Editors' note: Pratte Publications is currently offering *Our Spiritual Heritage* at a significant discount. Contact David Pratte, 841 Hillandale, Antioch, IL, 60002; Phone (847)395-8937 or email depratte@poboxes.com

EDITORIAL NOTES

Again we express our appreciation to all who contributed material to this issue of *Family Times*. We especially thank Mark Mayberry for his article. We also appreciate the reviews submitted by Beverly Mitchell, the Bosworths, Diana Dow, and Susan Treat.

We hope all of you also appreciate the hard work our subscribers do in providing us with good material.