

FAMILY TIMES

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

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September-November, 1998

ELECTION TIME

by Dave Pratte

Election time is almost on us. I believe it is especially important now for Christians (especially home schoolers) to be well-informed about the issues and the stands of the candidates. I am writing now to tell you some good sources of useful information.

Christian Coalition

The Christian Coalition provides a number of helpful resources. It is operated, of course, by evangelical, fundamental denominationalists, so there are doubtless areas in which we may disagree with their views, and some may even question their tactics. Nevertheless, they can provide very helpful information.

Their web site can be contacted at <http://www.cc.org>. It provides a very helpful scorecard showing how members of Congress voted on specific issues of interest to Christians. This includes issues like abortion, homosexuality, pornography, and various family issues. They describe what specific votes were about, then they show how the candidates voted. This information is available for every incumbent Senator and Congressman for every state. I have received their scorecards for years and have found them to be very helpful. I am very glad to see them available on the Internet.

In addition, they provide up-to-date descriptions of various legislative action items currently before Congress.

They also have a directory that provides names, addresses, and email addresses (when available) so citizens can write to members of Congress. They even provide detailed information about representatives in the various state legislatures, with addresses and phone numbers, so we can contact our state representatives.

This information is helpful anytime, but especially so at election time. I urge all of you with Internet access to visit their web site.

You can also contact them by regular mail to receive free printed copies of their Scorecard and other information. Although the material is free, you will be put on their mail list to receive solicitations for contributions. Their address is:

Christian Coalition, PO Box 1990, Chesapeake, VA 23327.

Eagle Forum

If you have never had contact with Eagle Forum, it would be worth your time to do so. The WWW address is <http://www.eagleforum.org>, or you can write them at PO Box 618, Alton, IL 62002, email eagle@eagleforum.org.

Eagle Forum is, of course, an active group involved in many conservative political causes. It is headed by Phyllis Schlafly. They worked hard to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment years ago, and have worked on other similar causes since. You may not agree with them about everything, but you will find them very

informative. They are strongly opposed to the modern feminist movement, are strongly pro-life, and are very conservative on education issues.

Their projects include publication of *The Phyllis Schlafly Report* and *Education Reporter*. The latter contains many articles describing problems in the public schools and documenting the views of the National Education Association. Both publications are worth subscribing to, but you can access the articles for free on their web site.

Their web site has several interesting features including the following:

- * Past issues of PS Reports and Education Reporter.

- * A very helpful scorecard on all Senators and Representatives in the US Congress (similar to Christian Coalition's). You can look up each representative for each state and see how each one voted on issues of concern to Eagle Forum. This is especially important in this election year. You may want to visit their site and pass information on to others in your state.

- * Email addresses for each Senator and each Representative in Congress (for those who have email).

- * Booklists giving name and author for many good books for children and young people.

- * In addition you can sign up to receive issues of PS Reports and/or Education Reporter by email for free.

Even if you have no web access, it is worth contacting them to subscribe to their publications.

Closing notes

In addition to national groups, such as those listed above, there are also state and local home-school groups that offer very helpful information. Many provide information about the views of candidates for local and state elections. I strongly encourage all home schoolers to maintain connections of some kind with such groups, so you can cast informed votes.

Illinois residents can contact CHEC, PO Box 47322, Chicago, IL 60647, E-mail ILCHEC@aol.com, <http://members.aol.com/ilchec/>

One closing thought: If you are not registered to vote, please register soon. Deadline for registration in most states will come in just a few weeks. You can contact your local election board for more information, but most local libraries or other public institutions can register you.

THE PRATTE NEST IS EMPTY

by Karen Pratte

In June our youngest daughter Susan graduated from high school and is now a freshman at Florida College. After sixteen years, we have officially reached the end of our experience as home educators.

Our "incredible journey" began at a time when the Hewitts were the only other family we personally knew that even intended to home school. Back then, textbooks were extremely difficult to obtain, home schoolers often faced legal challenges, and we rarely met anyone else who even knew what home schooling was! As a mother, I began home schooling with fears and apprehensions.

Sixteen years later, we have seen incredible growth in the home-school movement. When we began, we could not possibly have imagined such growth. Home schoolers today face unlimited opportunities. We have watched with wonder and gratitude.

Yes, the last year of schooling does come. And yes, despite the frustration, fatigue, and hard work, when you arrive at the end and look back, you realize it was worth every day. And you realize even more what a rich blessing home schooling has been to you and your children.

While no longer officially home schooling, David and I plan to remain active in supporting the movement. We plan to continue to work with the Hewitts in publishing *Family Times*, and to work with Mark Mayberry as co-owners of Hslist, the e-mail list for Christians interested in home schooling. We hope to continue hosting seminars about home schooling at the Florida College lectures.

We are excited to see so many Christians throughout the nation and around the world who are interested in home schooling. We are thankful for the blessing of being part of the home-school movement.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Once again we want to express our sincere thanks to our contributors. We appreciate the articles by Diana Dow, Tom and Janice Parrish, and as always Mark and Sherelyn Mayberry.

Please continue to send in your reviews and family profiles. And don't forget to tell your friends about *Family Times*.

SING, SPELL, READ AND WRITE

Available through many catalogs and religious bookstores.

Reviewed by Diana Dow

Sing, Spell, Read and Write is a complete phonics program. When purchasing the home study kit you will receive: a video tape of a class of children singing all the songs; workbooks to practice writing and spelling; a set of readers; games to reinforce what has been learned; a raceway chart to track progress; and a treasure chest of trinkets to give as rewards.

My older son went through the whole program in Kindergarten. By the time he had finished, he was reading on a sixth grade level. Currently, my 6-year-old and 4-year-old are working their way “around the raceway chart” at slightly different speeds. They enjoy the readers and songs the most. Keeping track of progress is exciting.

As indicated by the name, Sing, Spell, Read and Write stresses spelling and writing. This is accomplished through the consumable workbooks. All three boys have found the workbooks to be too much work. Their ability to learn reading is much stronger than writing and spelling. I would rather get them reading well and concentrate on writing and spelling later. We use the workbook sparingly. I have found that when children have learned phonics well, spelling comes rather naturally.

Sing, Spell, Read and Write moves along at a pretty good clip. Be careful not to push a young child too soon. My 6-year-old started at age 5 but struggled. We put it aside and waited a few months. It was amazing what a difference a few months made. He is now over half way through and reading almost fluently. As with most things in life, reading can be learned easier if it is not pushed too soon.

My family enjoys SSRW. The songs have become part of our everyday life. It makes a good investment for a family. It is all non-consumable except for the workbooks.

THE PARRISH FAMILY

by Tom & Janice Parrish

Home schooling may not be for every family, but it is certainly a way of life that every *Christian* family should give serious consideration. We did several years ago after spending five years with the public school system. Our oldest was in fourth grade; the youngest had started kindergarten. We have now completed our fourth year of home schooling.

Our thirteen-year-old daughter Mariah has now completed ninth grade, her first year of high school. Our twelve-year-old son Luke has completed sixth grade, and our ten-year-old daughter Hannah has completed fourth grade.

The reason we chose to home school is strictly spiritual and can be summarized by sharing the words we penned as a mission statement for our school: “The purpose of our school is to prepare and enable ourselves as individuals and our family as a whole to be faithful servants of our Lord and Maker.” Exploring this statement a little further will pretty much explain why we are home schooling.

Notice that the statement involves both preparing and enabling ourselves to be His servants. It takes time, diligence, temperance, the appropriate environment and activities, and much more to adequately prepare to faithfully serve the Lord. It also takes all of these to be able to do what we’ve prepared ourselves to do. If our children’s time is consumed by the rigors of the typical public school child’s schedule of long school hours, after-school activities, late-night homework, and the like, where is the time for Bible study, instruction in the ways of righteousness, and abounding in the work of the Lord?

With our first day of home schooling, we introduced the statement above and explained to our children why we were taking this course in life. Two verses of scripture were used to summarize our goal: Colossians 3:17 and Colossians 3:23. These two verses teach that we need to be spending our time doing the things our Lord directs us to do (“do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”) and we need to do those things for Him (“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord”), not for any other reason.

Certainly, fulfilling the instruction of these two verses entails many different areas of life and a vast amount of knowledge and growth. Yes, it involves some very broad matters, such as learning right and wrong, respect for authority, becoming a Christian or disciple of Christ; it also involves many specifics, such as how to eventually be the wife or husband the Lord demands us to be, how to be a faithful father, mother, provider, church member, and much more.

Since the Lord places the responsibility of such nurturing or instructing in His ways on parents, we felt home schooling was a life style that would allow us to fulfill our duty. While the reading, writing, and arithmetic have to be covered, it only requires a few hours a day, five days a week, thirty-six weeks a year

to accomplish. This leaves plenty of time to spend with the spiritual. We do emphasize the formal schooling as a part of our service to Him in that we are obeying the laws of our government which are ordained of God, and we are preparing them to be able to provide for their families, which is also required of God.

We were not looking to reinvent the wheel in regards to how to educate, or go overboard in teaching what amounts to the wisdom of men. We simply wanted (and still want) to provide a sound education that will carry them through life in our current society. We did not want to overwhelm ourselves with constructing curricula, making daily lesson plans, or other potentially time-consuming activities. We did not want to battle the subtleties of religious oriented materials, choosing rather to combat any humanistic/evolutionist thoughts in secular materials.

We, therefore, chose to use Calvert materials for first through eighth grade. For high school, we are using the correspondence courses of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Our intention is to follow their diploma track and actually get a diploma from an accredited school. We are extremely pleased with both of these schools and their materials, and really feel that we could not improve on them. While they are secular, they are also very traditional and we find that there is not a strong emphasis or concentrated effort to promote evolution and the like. Granted their expense probably inhibits some from using them; but if one can work it into the budget, the child gets a sound and reputable education and it eliminates the worry of constructing ones own curriculum and lesson plans.

We start each school day with prayer and Bible reading, averaging about two chapters a day; each child reads aloud as all follow. We then go over the week's meditation verse or passage; the purpose of this is not just to memorize but to know so well what it says and means that one can quote it. Next come the actual school lessons. Afternoons provide some free time, activities with our support group, piano lessons and practice, chores, encouragement to do good works such as writing letters or making cards for the sick, and varied other activities. Each evening (except church nights), we have Bible study which involves studying through a book verse-by-verse.

Once again, while there are many varied reasons families home school, our reason is strictly spiritual; it is a life style that provides us the opportunity to fulfill our God-given duty to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It also shields our children from the evil communications of public school that can corrupt them. Hopefully we all can stand firm in our resolve to live this life style, and others around us can be encouraged to consider it.

OPENING CEREMONY

By Mark & Sherelyn Mayberry

The Mayberry family celebrated the start of the 1998-1999 school year with the following opening ceremony:

Today is the start of a new school year. Before commencing our studies, it would be proper for us to pause and reflect upon the importance of beginnings. The Book of Genesis opens with the following affirmation: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). This book of beginnings also tells of man's origin. It sets forth God's will concerning the relationship of man and woman, the marriage relationship, the nature of worship, the need for justice, etc. It reveals the problem of sin and foreshadows its ultimate solution. It provides a beginning for the story of redemption.

As we start a new school year, let us make a good beginning. How can this be accomplished? By remembering the words of the Psalmist who said, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments" (Psa 111:10). Solomon repeated this truth and added a warning when he said, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Pro 1:7).

As we start a new school year, let us work hard and be diligent. Let us be watchful and attentive. Let us grow in knowledge, wisdom, and discernment. Let us approach our studies with an eager spirit of discovery. If we follow this path, we will realize the truth that is recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes: "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit" (Ecc 7:8)

Nathan, you will turn 13 during this school year. You stand on the edge of manhood. We are very pleased with your mental and spiritual development. Keep up the good work.

Ryan, you will turn 7 in a few months. Last year you made excellent progress in kindergarten. This year you are starting first grade. Now that you have learned how to read, you can use that talent to open up exciting new worlds of knowledge.

Sherelyn and I will do our best to make this a good year. We will try to make it fun and enjoyable, but please remember that schooling also involves work. Our task is to challenge you according to your ability. We will not ask more of you than you are capable of accomplishing. However, we will ask that you do your best. You are both very bright. We will challenge you to live up to your God-given potential.

Hopefully this school year will be filled with new discoveries. Learning is an exciting and stimulating endeavor. A good education will open many doors. Yet, let us not forget our primary purpose: The main reason we homeschool is so you can learn about God, so that we can all be together in heaven. We are here for a purpose. We must come to know God, understand his will, reverence his name and keep his commandments. This is what life is all about. Therefore, schoolwork, along with all other activities in life, is ultimately to the glory of God.

NEW EMAIL AND WEB SITE ADDRESSES

Yes, once again we have changed addresses for our email and web site. We hope this will be the last change for a long time. Dave Pratte has obtained his own domain name on the Internet. This should guarantee that changes are no longer needed.

The new web site address is <http://www.gospelway.com/familytimes/> or email us at familytimes@gospelway.com. The old poboxes addresses still work, but are slow. If you have the old geocities address in your browser bookmarks or favorites, it will no longer work. Also any address with "concentric" in it will not work.

We hope you will feel free to explore the web site or contact us.

WALKER'S NEWSLETTER

I recently received a copy of a monthly newsletter put out by Wayne and Karen Walker. The Walkers are hslist members and *Family Times* subscribers who have helped start a support group in Dayton, Ohio. They say there are other support groups in the city, but for various reasons they chose not to remain part of any of them (religious conflicts, etc.).

Some of you, especially in Ohio, may want to correspond with the Walkers. Wayne and Karen Walker, 310 Haynes St., Dayton, OH 45410, wswalker310@juno.com

We would be glad to hear from any others of you who put out a newsletter or are actively involved in a support group that you believe is especially friendly to faithful Christians.

Seven Keys to Raising Godly Children: Key #4 Instruction (continued)

II. WHEN & WHERE SHOULD WE INSTRUCT CHILDREN?

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 — We should teach continually (walking, sitting, lying, etc.). Consider some specific applications:

A. BEGIN EARLY

A child's character is formed primarily in his early years, so we must begin early to instill God's word.

2 Timothy 3:15 — Timothy knew the Scriptures "from a babe."

Matthew 21:15,16 — Jesus valued praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. God and His will should be among the very first things a child learns. He should grow up talking about God from the time he starts talking.

It is easier to develop bad habits than good ones. Good habits must be started by diligent effort; bad ones seem to just come by themselves. We must start early to ingrain good habits in the child before the bad habits come.

Some people say, "It's not right to indoctrinate a little child. Let him grow up and decide for himself what he believes."

However:

You can't avoid indoctrinating a child. There is no way to be neutral about God (Matt. 12:30). If you serve God faithfully, then your child will see and hear you living and teaching God's word. If you

never do or say anything about God, then you will be teaching the child that God is unimportant. Either way you are teaching the child about religion.

Furthermore, Satan will attempt to indoctrinate your child. He will not wait till the child is grown to place temptations and false teachings before him. You must begin early to teach the truth, or Satan will win by default!

In a garden, good plants must be cultivated, but weeds grow by themselves. So we must teach children the truth early, or Satan will fill their lives with spiritual weeds.

So the fact is that the child will be indoctrinated regardless of what we do or don't do. **The only question is: WHAT values will he be taught?** To fail to teach truth is to guarantee that Satan will teach him lies and cause him to be lost eternally.

The only one who really gains if we don't teach our children early is Satan. And he is the ultimate source of the view that parents should not indoctrinate children. When you hear people say "don't indoctrinate children," you can be sure they either don't understand the Bible, or else they just don't want kids to know God's word at all. In any case, knowingly or unknowingly, they are tools of Satan.

God commands us to teach, and to begin early.

When children are small, anticipate later problems, and begin at early ages to instill habits that will prevent those problems.

It is a simple fact that most of the serious spiritual problems that teen-agers face, are problems which could have best been prevented by proper training while the child was much younger. If a child is going to have a problem, it usually begins to appear in early years. Then as the child grows older, the problem grows too. When the teen-age years come, it may be too late to change the child. We should continue to train children as long as we can, but the best way to avoid serious problems for our teens is to train them properly long before they become teens!

To illustrate, my parents refused to let me participate in dancing instruction when I was in the fourth grade in school. One might reason that a fourth-grader would not be likely to lust. But by starting at that early age, my parents instilled in me the principle that dancing is wrong. When I became a teen-ager, dancing was never a problem for me. But if you let a child dance when he is young, it becomes far more difficult to get him to quit when the lusts of adolescence come.

The same principle applies in many other areas.

B. ATTEND ALL CHURCH ASSEMBLIES & CLASSES

This too should begin early in a child's life.

Bring him from the age he is first able to go anywhere. He may not understand what is being said — that will come later. But meantime, your example will have permanently instilled the fact that these meetings are very important. (Parents are also learning an important lesson of commitment to God, that strengthens them and gives them the assurance they did their best.)

Your child should never be able to remember a time when he did **not** attend church meetings regularly.

Regular attendance should be such a routine that the whole family automatically knows that everyone will attend every meeting (Heb. 10:25; Acts 11:26).

There should never be any doubt in anyone's mind where they will be Sunday evening, mid-week classes, gospel meetings, etc. This should be viewed by all family members as a pre-determined appointment. Less important matters (school activities, sports, musical activities, etc.) should never be allowed to hinder (Matt. 6:33; Rom. 12:1,2).

Parents should make sure all family members have prepared their lessons ahead of time.

Parents must set the proper example in this. Also check with teachers from time to time to see how the children are doing. Church meetings and classes are only part of the teaching children need — there is much more for parents to do. But the least parents can do is to bring their children to meetings on time and well-prepared.

Many parents have been indifferent and irregular regarding attendance, only to find that their children, when grown, decide not to attend at all. But by then it is too late for the parents to change what has been done. What a shame!

How regular is your family in attending church meetings?

C. HAVE REGULAR, ORGANIZED STUDIES AT HOME

Every child should have daily Bible study at home.

The primary duty for teaching children rests on parents, not on the church. The importance of regular, frequent study is emphasized in the Scriptures. Consider:

Acts 17:11 — The Bereans were noble for searching the Scriptures **daily**.

Hebrews 3:13 — To avoid falling away, people need **daily** admonition.

Psalms 1:2; 119:97-99; Joshua 1:8 — We should meditate on God's word **day and night**. (Reread Deut. 6:6-9.)

1 Peter 2:2; Matthew 5:6 — We should hunger and thirst for God's word as a man thirsts for water and as a baby does for milk. Does this describe something to be done frequently, or something done a few times a week?

Parents should teach their children this kind of daily commitment to Bible study.

Much good material is available to help parents in teaching.

For younger children, many good books and recordings are available for teaching Bible stories.

Parents can review the children's church Bible class lessons with them at home. You can also order other Bible class material to study with the children at home.

A good way to memorize Bible verses is to write them on cards, place the cards on the table, and have everyone say them at meals till the whole family knows them.

For years our family read a chapter of the Bible every evening at the supper table. Then we would go around the table asking one another questions about the chapter.

Many good study methods are available. The point is that parents need to spend time on a regular basis, in an organized way, to make sure their children learn God's will.

What about your family — are they being thoroughly instructed in God's will?

D. TEACH INFORMALLY AS OCCASIONS PRESENT THEMSELVES

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 — Note the emphasis on teaching under all circumstances, not just in organized, pre-planned sessions. Watch for the "teachable" moment when circumstances make lessons especially appropriate.

There is a difference between **formal** and **informal** teaching. Formal teaching involves a pre-planned topic we agree to study, then we meet at a certain time and place to study it. Informal teaching is that which occurs unplanned on the "spur of the moment," yet gives a good teaching opportunity.

Formal and informal teaching each have their own advantages. We need formal studies planned by the church and formal studies planned by the parents with their children. We also need informal, unplanned discussions with children.

Here are some suggestions about informal teaching.

Teach in response to questions children ask.

Many of Jesus' most-remembered lessons came in informal settings when someone asked Him a question. Examples are the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29ff), teaching on divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:3ff), the discussion of the greatest command (Matt. 22:36ff), etc.

Likewise children often ask questions that give parents excellent opportunities to teach: questions about death, prayer, baptism, smoking, etc. When the child asks, he is obviously interested and receptive. Don't just pass the question off with a brief comment, discuss it.

Often the "generation gap" exists because parents fail to take the time to discuss children's concerns. If we spoke more freely with them, they would feel freer to discuss openly with us when they become adolescents.

Have religious discussions in the child's presence.

Discuss the sermon or Bible class on the way home from services or at a meal. If some religious question arises, discuss it openly, don't hide it from the children. Invite visiting preachers or other Christians into your home and have religious discussions.

Don't think kids won't learn because "it's over their heads." They will understand more than you think, and at least they will see that religion is an important topic to discuss freely.

And yes, I believe parents should discuss in the presence of the children about problems the church may be facing. Some judgment may be needed here, but I am convinced too many children grow up unprepared to deal with problems in the church, because their parents have overly protected them. I am

not talking here about subjecting children to temptation; I am talking about letting them observe people trying to solve problems. Children need to grow up knowing they will have to deal with problems in the church, but they should learn from their parents' example how to deal with the problems.

Discuss circumstances in life that present good moral lessons.

A circumstance in which someone faces temptation wisely may present a good example to hold up to children. Someone having a car wreck may make a good lesson about obeying the law. A Christian who has problems with a non-Christian spouse may teach the importance of marrying a Christian. Many other such examples will arise.

As a teen-ager I was watching a ball game on TV, when a fight broke out. The camera showed Minnie Minoso calmly sitting on second base, waiting for the game to continue. My mother stated simply that, like Minoso, Christians don't fight. Obviously, the lesson stuck with me.

Discuss Bible principles when the child faces spiritual decisions or when his conduct is spiritually unacceptable.

When you tell your children what your rules are, or when you punish him for disobeying rules, don't just inform him what he should or should not do. Tell them **why** you made the rule the way you did, especially if there are Bible principles involved.

Discuss the principles with the child. Get the Bible out and look up passages together. Instill the **reasons** in the child so that, when he grows up, he won't have to have you there to tell him right from wrong. He can make the right decisions himself, because he understands the principles involved.

Obviously not every decision can or should be explained. Sometimes there is no time to discuss a matter, or in some cases the child would never understand anyway. Sometimes children repeatedly demand to know "Why?", but it's just a way of rebelling against the rule. They may refuse to accept the explanation no matter how clearly we give it. We should not give in to such manipulation, but generally if we can explain our reasons, we should do so as a teaching tool.

Sometimes it may be useful to test our children's understanding of Bible principles by asking them to explain the principles and make the application to a certain situation. Let them reach the conclusion and explain it to you. Give guidance and additional information, if needed, of course. And never let him reach a wrong conclusion without giving the correct information. But let him learn to think things through for himself.

CONCLUSION

It is my sincere conclusion that the majority of Christians neglect to teach God's word to their children as they ought. Many of us let our children face serious temptations day after day at school, on TV, in their music, with their friends, etc. In many cases, we make mistakes just by the degree of temptation we let them face. But then we make matters worse by neglecting to give them the instruction they need to deal with those temptations. No wonder we are losing so many young people to the world.

God chose to send young people into this world by natural procreation. When we give birth to a child, God has given us the duty to instruct that child to do His will. That job belongs to parents, simply because they are parents. God will hold us accountable for how well we do the job.

Are we training our children in such a way that we are ready to give answer to God in judgment?

HSLDA DISCOUNT GROUP NOW "OFFICIAL"

As mentioned in our last issue, our HSLDA discount group has been accepted by HSLDA. However, we still were expected to achieve the minimum number of 25 families. I am happy to report that we have now met and exceeded that number. So, as long as we maintain a minimum required number of families in our group, all member families will continue to receive the HSLDA membership for \$85 per year, rather than the standard \$100 per year.

So please remember, when HSLDA bills you for your annual membership, list Family Times as your discount group (group #298288), and send HSLDA a check for \$85. But you must maintain your *Family Times* subscription.

Please contact us if you would like to join our discount group, or if you have any other questions.