

FAMILY TIMES

A Home-school Newsletter for New Testament Christians
Edited by Bev & Dave Hewitt and Karen & Dave Pratte
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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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March-May, 2000

PRAIRIE PRIMER

Written by Margie Gray
Reviewed by Bonnie Forsythe

If text books and work books leave you feeling a little burnt out at the end of the school day (not to mention the year!) and you like the idea of doing a unit study but think it would be too time consuming and necessitate too much preparation on your part, you might want to look at *The Prairie Primer*. It is a unit study utilizing the Little House series. It has made our school days much more enjoyable. In fact, my boys, ages 11 and 13 do not really consider it "school." They ask "are we doing school or Little House?" We had read though the Little House books several years ago during the school year and loved them, so even though the Primer is divided into nine units, with each one corresponding to one of the Little House books, we have stretched it out for two years and still have not completed it. There are just numerous suggestions for activities so you can make it take as long as you want.

It is designed for children grades third through sixth, but is easily adapted to other ages, which we have done. It covers U.S. History in the 1800's, U.S. geography, science, language, practical living, health and safety, nutrition, music, and art. I felt we needed some additional science so we occasionally worked on our *Considering God's Creation* by Eagle's Wings notebook, or sometimes read in the *Handbook of Nature Study* by Anna Botsford Comstock. Both of these books fit very well into our style of learning. We also have a family garden, which is a super science project.

Above all, *The Prairie Primer* is full of scripture references and is a wonderful study on Christian character. I do not remember any doctrine taught but if there was, it was very easy to skip or explain the error of.

As for the preparation on my part, it has been no problem at all. Each unit is divided into four weeks. At the beginning of each week is a Planning Guide that lists the information and items that need to be gathered for the week's activities. For me, this consisted of making a list of a few books to gather from the library. If the books suggested were not available I was able to get another one on the same subject with no problem.

We especially enjoy the short biographies of famous people. For many suggested studies I used our encyclopedias or a textbook. There were some days, however, that the only other book I needed other than the Primer and whichever Little House book we were reading, was the Bible. I assure you, finding additional resources is not a problem. Since we were spreading our "weeks" out, I did not have to gather materials up as often as I would have otherwise. Also, there is so much to pick and choose from that you do not dare try to do all that is suggested. Just pick a few that you think would interest your children or that you feel you need to cover. We made a timeline, which is a great thing to do with your kids. We even took advantage of the situation and found out the names of some of our ancestors who lived in that time period and put them on our time line. It made it much more meaningful.

Mrs. Gray suggests purchasing a few other books to make the most of the study. If I had it to do over, I would try to get the *Laura Ingalls Wilder Songbook* by E. Garson and *Laura Ingalls Wilder Country* by

William Anderson. You might want to get *The Little House Cookbook* by Barbara M. Walker also, if you want to incorporate some of the cooking suggestions.

Well, I do hope I have aptly expressed the passion I have for this home school adventure. It is certainly the best thing that we have found in our five years of home schooling.

DIESTELKAMP FAMILY PROFILE

by Andy & Karen Diestelkamp

Andy & Karen (Ellsworth) Diestelkamp live in Pontiac, Illinois. They met at Florida College in 1980 and both graduated in 1982. They married on July 17, 1982, in Bellevue, Washington. Andy went on to get his A.A. degree in Graphic Arts. In 1984 they left Washington for the Midwest. In 1985 Andy entered a "preacher training program" in Zion, Illinois. In 1986 they moved to Pontiac to work with the congregation in that town of 10,000. Located in north central Illinois 100 miles southwest of Chicago on Interstate 55, Pontiac is the county seat of Livingston County. The area is flat and dominated by farming.

In 1987 Jennifer was born, followed by Adam in 1989 and Emily in 1991. In December of '91 this family of five went to Prague for six months to help in spreading the gospel there. In 1993 Jessica was born and then Noah in 1995.

Karen is and has been the primary teacher in this homeschool. Homeschooling was the method of education Andy and Karen had discussed and agreed upon for their family even before they were married. This homeschool averages four days of school per week, leaving a day free each week for travel, field trips, shopping, appointments, etc. This family schools forty-two weeks a year, taking vacations when desired and schooling through part of each summer so that the students do not have too many consecutive weeks of vacation during which to forget their multiplication facts!

There is only one other family (The Bill Copes family) in the congregation that homeschools, and both families are very active in a local homeschool support group made up of 50 families. Both families have also been a part of the leadership of that group for several years. There is a monthly enrichment program that provides some special classes and opportunities. Andy and Karen are in their third year of teaching drama. They have also taught speech, P.E. and science.

The church in Pontiac is small (low 50s) but in recent years has had some growth and is now able to fully support Andy. It has just begun to help men in other places with some nominal support. This congregation does not yet have a plurality of qualified men to oversee the work as elders, but hopefully this will change in the next decade. As a conservative community Pontiac is a wonderful place to raise a family, but finding contacts willing to study is rare.

The Diestelkamp family has also been very involved in the Chicagoland FC Booster Club and summer camp. Andy and Karen have also sponsored a couple of series on the subject of purity geared toward young people. Andy writes for *Think*, a small quarterly paper begun by his grandfather and edited by his father.

Being right off I-55 between Chicago and St. Louis makes visiting the Diestelkamps easy, and they invite you to do just that.

A PENNY SAVED AND A STITCH IN TIME

by Janet Metzger

****Do you have an answering machine? Let it do it's job to keep you from being interrupted during your school time or during mealtime. If the call is important, you can always call back at a more convenient time.**

****If you would like to cut back on those annoying telemarketer calls, you may write to: Telephone Preference Service, P.O. Box 9008 Farmdale, NY 11735-9008. Send them your name, address and phone along with a request that your name be removed from the telemarketers' list. It could take up to 2 months, but you should notice a decrease in the amount of calls you receive. A second option is to call 1-800-671-7701. This is a similar service and there is no charge.**

****I love baking with buttermilk, but the extra almost always spoils and has to be tossed. You can use either one tablespoon of white vinegar or lemon juice, fill with milk to measure 1 cup, let set for 5 minutes, and you have a buttermilk substitute that flavors the same.**

****Limit choices, especially for meals. On weekends when I have more time to spend on breakfast, I may take special requests, but on weekdays I have learned it is much simpler to prepare breakfast and serve it.**

GEORGE W. BUSH ON HOME SCHOOLING

"We view home schooling as something to be respected and something to be protected. Respected for the energy and commitment of loving mothers and loving fathers. Protected — protected from the interference of government" (George W. Bush).

--via *HEADSUP* monthly newsletter, December, 1999; Vol. 2, No. 5, edited by Wayne S. Walker, 310 Haynes St., Dayton, OH 45410; e-mail: <wswalker310@juno.com>

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

by Glenn Conjurske

Originally printed in *The Old Paths and Ancient Landmarks* 3540 Hwy 47 N. Rhinelander, WI 54501

Submitted by Cara Belknap:

It takes a village (so we're told), to raise a child today.
It takes a village (we reply), to steal his heart away.
To purge old-fashioned do's and don't from his enlightened mind
To leave old-fashioned Ma and Pa, a hundred years behind.

It takes a village, verily, to teach some mother's son
To steal and gamble, smoke and swear, and vandalize for fun.
His mother didn't teach him that! His father? No, not he!
It takes a village to corrupt, a village verily.

It takes a village, this we know, to teach the maidens sweet,
To dress and act, to look and talk, like women of the street.
It takes a village, not a doubt, to teach a maiden mild,
To save the monkeys, owls, and whales, yet kill her unborn child.

It takes a village public school, some subtle classroom chats,
To teach the little boys and girls to act like alley cats.
To teach them of the birds and bees, without morality,
To teach them what to do and how, and tell them they are free.

It takes a village, yes indeed, to brainwash all our youth,
With notions and with fallacies, in place of sense and truth.
Abortion rights! The right to die! The rights of animals!
Creative spelling! Unisex! The rights of criminals!

It takes a village, well we know, to turn their minds awry.
To stand for fancied "Children's rights," and parents' rights deny.
To honor human nature less, and trees and rivers more.
To sacrifice to Mother Earth, and Father God ignore.

"It takes a village," so they say, but something more they mean.
United Nations, Washington, The Liberal machine.
Society, the "Brave New World," the Socialist scheme.
The global ideology; It's here... The New World Order Dream!

EDITORIAL NOTES

Again we are deeply grateful to all who have submitted material. Our thanks to the Diestelkamps for their family profile and also to Bonnie Forsythe, Kelia Ballou, and Natalie Bishop for their reviews and insight. Thanks too for the material submitted by Wayne Walker, Cara Belknap, and Janet Metzger.

"Seven Keys for Raising Godly Children" once again was omitted to make room for the State Contact list. We hope to continue this series again soon. Those of you who signed up for the Hospitality List should also receive a copy of that list with this issue. Thanks again for all your help!

THOUGHTS FROM A “COMPLETED HOME SCHOOLER”

by Kelia Ballou

My husband Troxel and I home schooled our children all the way from birth through high school. Our son Kennon after attending Florida College is now at the University of Texas in Austin; our daughter Marla is a sophomore at Florida College. She hopes to also transfer to UT Austin after FC graduation. They both are doing well in college, for which we are thankful to Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having started home schooling so many years ago, we have seen the home-school movement grow from a few hardy pioneers to a burgeoning group. Whereas once in our local congregation fellow Christians looked askance at us for home schooling, now more and more preachers are doing it, giving home schooling clear credibility in the brotherhood. With the direction our society and public schools are going, home schooling will not go away soon. However, because of the commitment plus at least one parent available to do the schooling required, home schooling will never be a totally widespread phenomenon, even in the church.

But knowing what I know now, were I to be back at the point of choosing to home school or not, I would home school again in a heart beat, even if there were a “wonderful” school with godly teachers next door.

Home schooling allowed our family to have a lot of time together. In our hectic and godless world the importance of this cannot be overemphasized.

First and foremost, God told parents to regularly and diligently teach their children to love and to serve God, not to be sure that they could make a good living, nor that they develop their talents and skills. These latter items are important but will take care of themselves when godly character is emphasized in the home. This regularly and diligently teaching our children to love and serve God takes *time*.

We parents can delegate part of this teaching to others. Some have to because of their circumstance in life. But those of us with choice must take care to not delegate too much of this responsibility to others. We are the ones who will be held accountable for the teaching of our children. We will stand before God, not to accept the responsibility for how our children choose as adults to live, but for how they were *taught* to live.

Over the years we have had our share of stresses—family illnesses and deaths, church struggles, money problems, parent-child battles, and husband-wife conflicts, to name a few. Perhaps the biggest stresses have come from our own character flaws and inadequacies. Home schooling forced us to deal with these problems together.

Fortunately, our children did not have to be subjected to a secular school environment which encourages anything-goes and discourages honoring and obeying the Creator. In addition our children did not have a large set of peers with whom they could hide rather than stay emotionally connected to the family while dealing with problems.

Furthermore, I believe that God had a “hidden agenda” in this call to parents to teach their children about Him. By teaching our children, we learn to better love and serve God ourselves. In every area of godly character that we tried to teach our children we found that we ourselves needed teaching and correcting. Had we regularly sent our children away to be schooled, we would have missed out on countless opportunities to grow in the Lord ourselves.

When people assert that they could never home school because they just are not patient enough or know enough or have good enough control over their kids, I just laugh. Of course they aren’t and don’t! But they certainly will and can be if they diligently home school. At least to a much greater degree than had they not, I believe.

When asked how the ‘empty nest’ experience is going, I reply that yes, I miss my kids, but no, I don’t miss the day-to-day hassles of child rearing and home schooling. Home schooling was not easy. It was frustrating, time-consuming, intimidating, alienating, tiresome, and often baffling. But God gave us strength each step of the way. Praise to Him!

I am proud of Kennon and Marla, and I am confident that they know the right way to go in their lives. I frequently tell them that I have no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth.

My constant prayer is that they will continue to walk in the truth. Because of home schooling, I have little doubt that they know how to do that. But it is now up to them to make that choice.

ADVANCE PLACEMENT COURSES AND EXAMS

by Natalie Bishop

As homeschooling grows in popularity, more and more high-schoolaged students will be looking to establish a high school record before applying to colleges or employers. It will be helpful to have objective or impartial opinions of a student's abilities. The following article contains one suggested avenue for gaining an "objective" viewpoint of your high school student's capabilities and how to establish part of a high school record which is very acceptable and impressive to potential college admissions offices.

What are AP Courses and Exams?

An AP or Advance Placement exam score is based on a 2-3 hour exam designed for high school students, testing the knowledge covered in a full or half-year college course. Students are allowed to take the exams during any grade in high school. If students pass the tests, they usually get college credit, the chance to opt out of intro-level courses or advanced placement in higher level courses at their chosen college. A growing number of colleges offer students who have successfully passed 3 or more AP exams the option of entering as sophomores. AP exams are scored on a 1 to 5 scale with a 5 being the highest. A score of 2 will translate into "possibly qualified", a 3 will equal college credit at many colleges, a 4 "well-qualified" and a 5 is "exceptionally well qualified".

Developed in 1955 by the Educational Testing Service, the College Board of Princeton NJ who also offer the SAT and CLEP Exams, AP courses and exams are offered in the following subject areas: Art: Drawing or General Portfolio, Art History, Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Calculus (Intro. and more advanced), Economics: Micro or Macro, English: Language or Literature, Environmental Science, French: Language or Literature, Government and Politics: Comparative or US, History: European or US, Human Geography (beginning in year 2000), Latin: Vergil or Latin Literature, Literature, Music Theory, Physics (three levels offered), Psychology, Spanish: Language or Literature and Statistics.

Each exam consists of a multiple choice section and a "free-response" section where students either write essays or solve specific problems showing all steps. Students must take the exams at a school which offers that particular exam. Usually public school guidance offices have information and are familiar with the procedure. It is suggested to contact the school early in the school year, late September to October, and tell the guidance office or AP coordinator of your desire to participate in the exam process. Follow up with a call in January or February (when the tests are usually ordered) and take the test on the scheduled date (usually during May). The exam is proctored by an official who is not the AP teacher for that course. Exams are only given on specific days and at specific time periods. Each exam costs around \$75 to \$90, usually paid on the day of the exam.

How to prepare your student for the exam

There are excellent guidebooks available directly from the AP headquarters for a reasonable fee. Each book describes the course coverage expected, sample test questions and tips on preparing and designing a course. Write to Advanced Placement Program, PO Box 6670, Princeton NJ 08541-6670 for their free Guide to the Advance Placement Program and The AP Bulletin for Students. You may also visit the College Board's web site at <www.collegeboard.org>.

Other guidebooks, such as the Barron's AP Guides, are available at commercial bookstores. They offer a full length AP exam at the end of the book which students may take and score themselves, with full answers and explanations included. They also give a lot of help with learning how to construct a strong essay, a must for any student hoping to successfully complete an AP course. Any of these guidebooks would be very helpful as you and your student design an AP course.

Another way to prepare well for an AP exam is to take a course on-line. PA Homeschoolers have organized a number of Internet classes for homeschoolers preparing to take AP Exams. Their web site <www.pahomeschoolers.com> has information about their course program, as well as an order form for various AP guides and suggested textbooks. My daughter Meghan has taken three of their on-line AP courses and will be taking her 4th AP exam in May of 2000. She highly recommends them. This format is especially valuable for international homeschool students, who may not have access to quality libraries.

Because the exam and scoring are not only rigorous, but also completed by independent officials, they are an excellent vehicle to use when showing how well a student is prepared for college work. As homeschoolers look for ways to show college admission offices objective evaluations of their high school work, AP courses and exams will continue to be a valuable resource.