

# FAMILY TIMES

A Home-school Newsletter for New Testament Christians  
General Editors: Bev & Dave Hewitt, Karen & Dave Pratte  
Curricula review editor: Wayne Walker



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## Talking to our Children

by Sally Anne Perz

It comes as no shock to most parents that it is through our conversations with our children that we actually teach them, not only to speak, but the art of conversation. Though most parents talk to their children often, there is a marked difference in the types of conversations that are the norm. Studies have shown that the more parents talk to their child, the greater the child’s vocabulary. The more creative the parents’ speech, the more the child learns about our language and the more varied the child’s speech.

It is through this daily narration that parents, particularly stay-at-home mothers, teach their children a great deal about their surroundings. There is a marked difference in the IQ of children who are exposed to constant, creative narration and children who are raised without it. Homeschooling parents often take advantage of what are often referred to as teachable moments. Simply put, these are opportunities to talk to our children about various things in a relaxed manner—while we are going through the motions of everyday activities. Language is often best learned in a relaxed manner. Though small children have yet to study grammar, write essays, or engage in formal debates, they are capable of correct speech, able to dictate stories and, most certainly, can engage in informal debates! How do they learn all of this without books? They learn from listening to their parents and siblings on a day-to-day basis. Children are simply soaking up the daily narration of their lives.

How can we best make use of these facts as home schooling parents? This comes naturally to some parents, but to others it may take some suggestions. Here are some hopefully helpful ideas for various ages—in a nutshell: narrate, elaborate, and initiate!

### **Talk to your babies from the womb and up.**

Narrate your activities with creative language.

Pray with your baby and sing to your baby.

Talk about God and all He does for us.

Talk in “motherese,” better known as baby talk, but also speak correctly a good portion of the time.

Talk to babies and toddlers, narrating your activities continually throughout the day.

Engage babies in discussions, even before they can respond fully, assume they can understand you!

When babies begin to talk, repeat the words they try to say, pronouncing them correctly each time the baby voices them. *Example—child says, “me see lellow duck.” The parent smiles and responds, “Do you see a yellow duck. Mama sees the yellow duck, too. What does the yellow duck say?”Elaborate!!*

Respond to any babbling attempts and question what they are trying to say, based on the context, making suggestions about what they may be trying to get across. *Example—child is babbling and pointing at an animal. The parent says, “Do you see the pretty bird? What does the bird say? “CHIRP!!”*

Continue to repeat back their words and statements, using correct pronunciations and grammar throughout their childhood. This is the easiest way to teach correct grammar and to build your child’s vocabulary. As children reach adolescence and young adulthood, continue talking to them as you do chores together.

### **Initiate conversation with your children.**

Be available for any questions or just to chat. Make yourself fully approachable so your children come to you naturally with their questions.

No matter how disinterested you may be in various pursuits, try to listen to them when they talk about things they are interested in. Examples of this can be listening to countless strategies about video and computer games that you are not interested in nor do you understand. Try to be interested in it because it interests them. This is an effort, at times, but will reap rewards!

Read some of the same books your children and young adults read. Discussions about favorite books can provide hours of stimulating discussions. This can be said for listening to the same music they listen to and watching movies that interest them. These things can be the foundation of wonderful discussions.

Use discussions to teach various academic concepts. You can learn all about analyzing literature from simply discussing favorite books. Remember that the more you do in relaxed conversation, the less structured work will be required to “get the job done” academically.

Encourage your children to talk about various topics by questioning them about what they think and feel. Make sure that they feel free to tell you what is on their mind and that you are not always the one doing the talking.

Tell them that you love them and pray with them daily. As they get older listen to their prayers.

Eat together as a family, enjoying table conversation with your meals! Encourage deep discussions!

### **Editorial Notes**

Once again we thank all who submitted articles for this issue: Sally Anne Perz, Dawn Thompson, Brittany Gougar, Wayne Walker, Jeff Hamilton, and Brian Rukes. We look forward to hearing from more of you with material for future issues. We especially welcome articles written by our readers, but if you read other articles that you consider to be worthy of being reprinted for our readers, please forward it to me.

## Driver's ED Courses

Brittany Gougar submitted the following notes to the HomeSchoolers' List:

This last year I went through a very good drivers ed course that is specifically based for home schooled students. It is more of a parental teaching program. All of the tests and such can be taken online or you can purchase the workbook for home use. It has seemed to work pretty well. (at least....I haven't gotten into any accidents since I've had my license!). Here's the link to the website: <http://www.usdrivertraining.com/>

(I believe that this program was written by a Christian and was later sold out to someone else.)

## A Homeschooler's Guide to the Great Orchestral Music of the Western World

### Part 1

by Wayne Walker

(Originally published in Biblical Homeschooling, 9/2006.)

*[Editor's note: Wayne Walker has authored this curriculum guide for teaching children about classical orchestral music. He has graciously consented to allow us to reprint it in Family Times for the benefit of our readers. This guide was written by a Christian for the express benefit of homeschoolers. This issue of Family Times includes Wayne's comments about how to approach the study. Future issues of Family Times will include information about specific composers. We want to express our deep appreciation to Wayne for his hard work and his generosity in allowing us to offer this material to you without charge. Thanks, Wayne!]*

This homeschooler's guide to the great orchestral music of the western world, covering 72 composers, is an introduction designed to take four years, approximately grades 5-8, using two weeks per composer, one week studying the life of the composer and the next a piece of his music. Of course, the material can be studied in less time by moving through the material a little faster, or it could possibly be expanded by having additional sessions for listening to other works by each composer which will be suggested, if one is so inclined.

Since it is good for all people to become generally familiar with the aesthetic endeavors, including music, of our western culture, the curriculum is intended for use by those without a great deal of musical background. While it will obviously be necessary to use some musical terminology, we shall avoid being overly technical and seek to explain the language of music as much as possible. Through the elementary and middle school years, a formal study of music in public schools generally involves one period a week, unless a student is also taking lessons for an instrument or voice.

A four-year course of study will involve approximately 144 weeks, which will be divided into sets of two. The first week will entail researching the life of the composer for an essay about his life and music and beginning the essay. The essays for younger children may be just three or four sentences, whereas when the students are older, the assignment will likely require three or four paragraphs, perhaps even up to one page. The following week will involve finishing the essay, listening to a representative work by that composer, talking about it, and then recording some kind of response to the piece. The next week will move on to a different composer and repeat the process.

The aim is to make this course as inexpensive as possible. For the research portion, library books, including biographies of the composers, musical dictionaries, music textbooks, and other such works, and even general encyclopedia articles can be used. If a family wants to do so, there are a couple of good books that the author can recommend to purchase and which form the basis for this curriculum. They are *The Gift of Music* by Jane Stuart Smith and Betty Carlson (1995 by Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL) and *Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers* by Patrick Kavanaugh (1996 by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI). However, even if these are obtained,

not all the composers covered in the course will be detailed in the books, so some supplemental material will have to be used. Some other sources that we use include a couple of my college music textbooks, *Listening to Music Creatively* by Edwin John Stringham, and *The Enjoyment of Music* by Joseph Machlis, as well as the *Britannica*, *Compton's*, *Grolier's*, and the *New Standard Encyclopedias*. These are listed in the bibliography.

For the listening portion, a family could seek to build a musical library by purchasing the recordings of the pieces mentioned. Budget CD's can be obtained, sometimes for as little as around \$3.00 (I have bought some for 99c!). If one has access to a record player (sometimes a rarity these days), old LP's can be found cheaply at thrift stores. Again, however, any good library should have available almost all the works to be studied. Something else to take into consideration is that liner notes can often be an excellent source of information about the composer and the music.

A complete introduction to Western music would include more than great orchestral music. However, I have basically avoided opera for two reasons. First, I have found that the plots of far too many operas (not all, mind you, but a lot) contain various forms of immorality and other undesirable behaviors which are sometimes disgusting even for me as an adult trying to serve God, and which are simply beyond what is suitable for children ages 10-14. Second, my area of expertise is the symphony orchestra. Therefore, the only references to opera that occur will be to overtures and other orchestral excerpts.

For this same reason, I do not deal with music for solo instruments and chamber groups (not the same as chamber orchestra), as well as vocal and choral works. Therefore, if some of your favorite pieces of "classical" music, such as Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* or Handel's *Messiah*, are not included, this is the reason why. Also remember that this is only an introduction. There is just not time to consider all the great composers nor even all the works of the composers under consideration in a survey that is aimed at non-music majors and that will hopefully not put too much of a burden on the student.

Western music has its roots in ancient Hebrew, Greek, and Roman music and developed during the Middle Ages and Renaissance of Europe with both sacred and secular expressions. A complete study of music history would cover everything that we know about these sources, but that is not our purpose here. The modern orchestra as we know it basically began its development during what is called the Baroque period (c. A.D. 1600-1750). Therefore, that is where we shall begin.

Another word of caution is in order. Many composers of great music were not great men. Some were, in fact, bad men. Haydn and his wife were estranged. Mozart was reputed to be promiscuous before his marriage and unfaithful after it. Beethoven had many failed love affairs. Rossini had a mistress. Brahms was rumored to be carrying on with Schumann's wife. Chopin lived without marriage for several years with writer George Sand. Liszt was notoriously immoral in his early life (so much so that an X-rated movie was once made about it), although in his later years he changed and even became a priest in the Catholic Church. Both Johann Strauss Sr. and Jr. were known as ladies' men. Wagner left his first wife to move in with another woman whom he later married. Tchaikovsky and Mahler reportedly struggled with homosexual temptations, and Britten was openly homosexual.

We can enjoy and appreciate the music that these men wrote without necessarily approving or condoning their lifestyle. Most general encyclopedia articles will not dwell on these subjects, but deeper research will almost always reveal them. Yet, where they do arise, points can be made about choices which are violations of God's will and the consequences of them. Most of the more egregious problems, such as the homosexuality issue, fortunately have a greater likelihood to occur in the latter portion of the studies (grades 7-8) when the student is hopefully a little more mature and able to handle them. At the same time, many great composers were men of faith and good lessons can be learned from their beneficial examples.

Since this course of study is for grades 5-8, someone might ask if there is anything that one can do for students in grades 1-4 to prepare them for it. What I did was to use the music curriculum for grades 1-4 from Rod and Staff (P. O. Box 3, Crockett, KY 41413-0003) to introduce the basics of music, *Rudiments of Sight Singing and Song Directing* by R. J. Stevens (Guardian of Truth Foundation, P. O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102) for various exercises, and four Usborne music books to provide background in music literature, history, and theory. They are *The Usborne First Book of Music* by Emma Danes, *The Usborne Story of Music* by Eileen O'Brien, *Understanding Music: An Usborne Introduction* by Judy Tatchell, and *Usborne Music Theory for Beginners* by Emma Danes (one for each year; obviously I had to do more of the reading in first grade).

Each family will have to develop its own routine in studying this material. Since I want our children to have more than just a passing familiarity with the great orchestral music of the western world, I have more than one music session a week. The first week, on Monday we spend time studying music basics with the Rod and Staff music course. On Tuesday, the student he reads the sections of *The Gift of Music* and *Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers* that deal with the composer under consideration, taking notes for his essay. On Wednesday, he looks at other sources such as encyclopedia articles that deal with the same composer. On Thursday, he begins putting his essay together. Friday is devoted to other forms of art. The following Monday we again deal with music basics. On Tuesday, the student continues writing his essay. On Wednesday, he finishes and presents his essay. On Thursday, we listen to the suggested piece of music by the composer, after which we talk about it and he records his response to it. Friday is again devoted to other forms of art. This is only a suggested routine.

One further note should be made. There are several famous composers who are not listed here. The ones used were all mentioned in either the *The Gift of Music* or *The Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers* or both, and since I based this course upon these two books, I have limited the study to those composers. With this introduction, this course is sent forth with the hope that it will encourage homeschoolers to develop a love of truly good music and to remind us all that whatever we do, including listening to music, should be done to the praise and glory of God.

(to be continued)

## A Penny Saved and a Stitch in Time

by Dawn Thompson

### *Mortgage Prepayment*

Probably everyone has heard that prepaying your mortgage can cut years off the loan and save you thousands of dollars in interest. If you'd like to see just how much difference it can make in your own case, try an online prepayment calculator. There are many, but one can be found at <http://www.crown.org/tools/mortgage.asp>. Simply fill in the amount (principal) remaining on your mortgage, your interest rate, the loan length, and how much extra you'd like to pay each month. It takes just a few seconds to fill in the information and get the results.

I plugged in some numbers to give you an idea of the possible savings. For a 30-year, \$75,000 mortgage at 7% interest, paying an extra \$50 per month would knock 7 years and 1 month off the loan and save you \$29,158 in interest. Make that an extra \$100 per month, and the time saved goes to 11 years and 2 months, and the interest saved jumps to \$44,636. Even an extra \$25 per month saves 4 years and 2 months in paying off the mortgage and \$17,334 in interest.

Always check the fine print in your mortgage to see how extra payments are credited. In our case, the mortgage clearly states that as long as the loan is current, any extra payments are automatically credited as extra principal payments. On a previous mortgage, we had to fill in a blank on the payment stub to indicate what we wanted the extra money to go—principal, escrow, etc. Rules vary, though, so make sure your money is going where you intend it to go.

## Entertainment Books

Most people who buy entertainment (or other such) coupon books, buy them for their own hometown use, but there are some other good uses for them. We once bought one for a town where we were going to spend some vacation time. We got ours at a substantial discount because we bought it midway through the year, but even at full price we would have paid for the book in our savings. Then at the end of our vacation, we left the book with relatives who lived in the area, and they were able to use quite a few more coupons. Don't know anyone in the area? Leave it with someone you meet in the local congregation. Also, for a great bridal shower gift, buy a coupon book that the couple can use at their honeymoon destination. To find a book for your city of choice, go to <http://www.entertainment.com/discount/home.shtml>.

[Editorial note: This will be our last article from Dawn Thompson on the theme of budgeting our time and money. In future issues, she plans to submit articles about common mistakes in English grammar. This should help us as parents in training our children and in watching our own speech. I originally suggested that she title her column something like "Hows Come I Ain't No Good in Gramr?" But for some reason she preferred a different title. In any case, look for her articles in future issues. Thanks, Dawn, for your contribution to homeschooling!]

### Help with Attention Span, Concentration, Distractability

by Jeffrey W. Hamilton, (from the Homeschoolers' List)

For boys who are easily distracted, and I assume this will work for girls, especially if the child has difficulty staying still, one good strategy is to intersperse hard physical activity with mental activity. Tiring out the body helps them put more energy in the mind. One summer I was asked to teach a 12-year-old boy to read. He literally could not sit still. It was all I could do get him to focus on something for five minutes. So I took what I could get and then wrestled with him, had the boys play with him, and then I would have him come back for another session which might last a minute longer than the first one. His breaks were always "scheduled." When I started to lose him I would say, "OK, you have a ten-minute break and then it is back to work." I would make sure to watch the clock or he would let it slide. I only had him for 45 minutes a day and I was exhausted by the time he left, but after two months he was reading and he could sit still for almost fifteen minutes at a time.

I've also noticed that a lot of distracted children are tactile learners. Pick learning methods that require them to move things around. An example of this would be Math-U-See for math subjects.

One thing that John Rosemond, a decent-sounding child psychologist, advocates is removing TV, video games, and computers that feed a child's mind without physical activity. He has noted repeatedly that a distracted child without a steady diet of these things quickly settles down. Improvement is usually noted within two weeks.

Another thought: Being distracted has its own reward. Strangely enough in today's business section was an article by an executive bragging how he was able to get out of tasks that he didn't want by being unbearably incompetent at it. After a while someone else would be assigned the task, just so it would get done. While I was reading it I was thinking here was a child who learned to get his own way by pretending to be unable to do something.

Think about the built-in rewards that come from delaying an assignment. Someone else finishes them because they want it done now. (For example, by seeming to be unable to do word problems in math, a student gets his teacher to solve it for him, or at least break down the steps so he/she doesn't have to put any effort into remembering.) And meanwhile the child has time to do other things, even if it is only daydreaming. What I suspect is that such children are able to focus on things that they particularly like. Most children can.

So your duty is to make sure no benefits come from delaying. 1) He can't leave until the assigned task is done. 2) Use a ticket system. If a task isn't done in a reasonable time, he loses one

ticket. In order to gain something he would like (for me it would be an ice cream cone), he will have to have X number of tickets at the end of the week to “buy” it. 3) Don’t ever complete a task for him. If you tell him to get something from a room, but he professes he can’t find it, tell him to start listing everything he sees in the room and touch it, until he “finds” what he professed could not be found. (Notice that you then haven’t “found” it for him.)

We always scheduled our boy’s school work for the week. They couldn’t go off to play until the day’s tasks were done. There were some days that school went until 9 PM — not because the tasks were hard, but just because they were daydreaming. When that happened too many times in a row, Gaye announced that lunch wouldn’t be served until half the assignments were done and dinner came after all the assignments were done. Suddenly work sped up. Imagine that!

## ParentalRights.org

Michael Farris, one of the founders of the Home School Legal Defense Association, has helped begin another grassroots organization designed to help promote the rights of parents to raise their children according to their consciences without governmental interference. The focal point of this effort will be the passing of a constitutional amendment.

I encourage you to go to [www.parentalrights.org](http://www.parentalrights.org) and examine the materials they have available. This movement is in its infancy, but they plan to add more to the site as time passes. I also encourage you to tell your friends and family about ParentalRights.org. While it will be of interest to all homeschoolers, it is by no means restricted to homeschoolers. All parents and grandparents, especially Christians, should consider this movement.

## Evolution in Indiana Schools

by Brian Rukes

[Editorial note: Brian is the husband of our daughter Susan, and is an accomplished author, having already published a number of books about antique tractors. He teaches math in a public school district in Indiana. His experiences keep up supplied with “horror stories” about the public schools. Below are excerpts from a message he recently sent about evolution in Indiana schools. But understand that such teaching is not limited to Indiana. In fact, in our next issue we hope to include another article from Brian in which he discusses evolution in other states as well. - Dave Pratte]

In light of recent studies about evolution, I wanted to share with you a story that was rather timely. We had “study groups” for the teachers today, where we get together and discuss our curriculum and assessments, etc. I was speaking with one of the science teachers, and he showed me part of a test he was giving for his 8th grade science class. It was a question in which students were to fill in blanks on the graph of the “ancestors” of the human race—and I believe Neanderthal and Australopithecus africanus were already filled in on the chart. I asked him if he knew that those “ancestors” had been proven to not be our direct ancestors, but he didn’t seem to agree. And, he indicated that this was all just a part of the Standards that schools are supposed to teach their students.

So, I did some investigating, and here’s what I found. According to the Indiana Dept. of Ed. Website, the “Indiana Academic Standards describe what Indiana students should know and be able to do.” These are what students are tested over—students are expected to know the material, and teachers are expected to teach it. One of the things included in the 8th Grade Science standards—appearing as part of Standard 4: The Living Environment, under the sub-heading of “Human Identity”—is standard indicator 8.4.9, which says that students are to “Recognize and describe that fossil evidence is consistent with the idea that human beings evolved from earlier species.” Moreover, starting in the third grade and lasting through 8th grade, there is a whole sub-section of Standard 4 in Science that that is entitled “Interdependence of Life and Evolution.”

In high school, Indiana Academic Standards for Biology include a whole section in Standard 1 on Evolution, and all of Standard 2 deals with addressing Darwin, his Origin of Species, and evolution. Evolution is mentioned other places in the Biology standards, as well, so it seems to be particularly rife in that course.

Obviously, I find this very disturbing. Evolution is clearly supported by these standards, and I wanted you to be aware of what our young people are being exposed to in school—and the fact that this is directed by the state! Students are expected to answer questions about these things the way the textbooks address them or the teacher says things are (based on the standards), but to answer questions like the one I saw on the test today the “correct” way (in terms of what is considered the “correct” answer for the sake of the class) would mean that a student in fact would have to at best either be regurgitating erroneous information, if not flat-out be telling a lie. Please teach your children the **facts** about these fossils, facts that even the discoverers of these fossils have themselves admitted, and facts that speak against what textbooks might teach about the subject and what evolutionists want you and your children to believe about the subject.

You can check out these standards for yourself by visiting the Indiana Department of Education website (<http://www.doe.state.in.us/>) or clicking on the links provided above. See for yourself! And watch and pray, my brethren! Satan is seeking to devour us and our society (1 Peter 5:8).

### Change in Access to Restricted Materials on the Web Site

We have made a minor change on the web site for access to our curricula reviews and previous issues of *Family Times*. You now need to use both a user name and a password. These will be shown in the heading of each issue, so all subscribers can access these materials. The current user name is homeschool and password is Eph6:4-2006. Thanks for your interest!

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