

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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March-May, 2008

Major Changes at *Family Times*

We are pleased to announce that plans are underway for major changes in the *Family Times* newsletter. Jonathan and Sally Perz have agreed to take over the responsibilities as owners, editors, and publishers. Jonathan will serve a supervisory role in policy decisions, but due to his limited time schedule, Sally will do most of the detail work. As our readers know, Sally has already demonstrated her interest and ability as a writer on homeschool topics in the many articles she has written for past issues of the *Family Times*. She also has experience in editing a local homeschool newsletter. We can think of no one whom we would prefer to have accept this responsibility for *Family Times*.

While plans are still being finalized, we tentatively anticipate that Jonathan and Sally will assume their new duties effective with the September, 2008, issue, which will begin a new school year. We will, of course, keep our subscribers updated as the changeover progresses. We have every confidence that this move will be good for *Family Times* and good for homeschooling among Christians.

As you know, *Family Times* was inaugurated by Dave and Bev Hewitt along with Dave and Karen Pratte almost 21 years ago. In recent years the Prattes have done most of the editorial work, while the Hewitts have managed the finances and mail list, as well as being involved in policy and supervisory decisions.

There are many reasons why we believe this is a good time for a change in leadership. Both the Hewitt and the Pratte families “graduated” from active homeschooling a number of years ago. We are increasingly out of touch with current homeschool curricula. And frankly, we are not as young as we once were. We need to simplify our responsibilities. And we hope that new leadership will result in new approaches and new ideas, while maintaining the standards and principles that *Family Times* has enjoyed over the years.

Homeschooling will remain a major interest for the Hewitts and Prattes. We hope to continue to promote homeschooling in general, and this newsletter specifically. We plan to continue the *Family Times* web site and to submit material to the Perzes for publication. However, the newsletter will eventually become in every sense the work of Jonathan and Sally. They will be re-

sponsible for any changes in policy, content, subscription fees, etc. They will proceed as they believe best, guided by the application of the word of God.

We encourage all subscribers to continue your interest in the newsletter. We hope our regular writers will continue to submit material to the Perzes for publication. We urge all to encourage and cooperate with them as they begin this new undertaking.

We have appreciated the opportunity to edit the newsletter. We believe it can continue to be a blessing to homeschoolers under Jonathan and Sally's leadership. We thank all of you for your support, interest, and encouragement.

California Homeschool Ruling

Most of you have probably heard by now about the court in California that recently ruled that homeschooling is essential illegal unless the teacher is certified by the state. This involved a family that were not members of HSLDA; and in fact the case originated over matters unrelated to homeschooling, but the court apparently used it as an opportunity to oppose homeschooling.

The ruling will be appealed to the state supreme court. The governor has strongly opposed the ruling and said he will do all he can to help protect the rights of parents.

This is obviously one of the most adverse rulings against homeschooling in recent years. To see what you may do to help and to keep abreast of latest development, check HSLDA's web site at <http://www.hsllda.org/>.

You may also consider become involved with the HSLDA spin off site at <http://www.-parentalrights.org/>. The purpose of this site it to start the process of a constitutional amendment specifying the right of parents to raise their children.

You Don't Say! (Ah, But Some of You Do Say!)

by Dawn Thompson

Johnny Can't Spell. Can You?

I've been told that I am "so last century" when it comes to technology. I don't carry a cell phone with me at all times. I don't own an iPod or a GPS. To me, PS 2 means that I thought of two things to say in a letter after I had already signed it. Perhaps I am thought by many to be "last century" on another matter: spelling. Though I seem to be in a shrinking minority, I still think spelling matters. Though I see it as a society-wide problem, not a homeschool-specific one, I believe it reflects poorly on us, as homeschoolers, if we do not bother to be accurate spellers. Like it or not, our mistakes (in spelling or otherwise) are often pointed out in an attempt to prove that we are not qualified for the job. Let's not give anyone any ammunition with which to shoot us down.

You are fortunate if you are a naturally good speller. However, you need not despair if you are not. In fact, you have very little excuse for misspelling, no matter what your natural ability is. If you are typing something on a computer, there is virtually no excuse for spelling errors. I am a good speller, but I still make use of my Spell Check. It may have been invented last century, but it still makes sense to use it in this century. Many programs have it built in, and it can be added to almost anything that doesn't already have it, including e-mail programs, word processors, spreadsheets, and websites. Once you have it set up, it takes just one click to run your check on any document. Surely, it is worth a few seconds to let your computer check your spelling for you. It may be, too, that after seeing it catch the same errors over and over, you will learn how to spell those troublesome words. If you don't have a built-in checker, there are online spell checkers that allow you to check the spelling of a single word or a whole document.

Not much is written by hand these days. For those times it is used, there is a very handy, albeit low-tech, tool that is invaluable. It is a book called the dictionary. If you don't like that option, you can use the "this century" online version at a site such as dictionary.com, although that

ruins the fun of running across some other interesting word as you look up the one in question. I even had a college student tell me recently that if he is ever in doubt about how to spell something, he uses the spell checker on his cell phone! With today's technology, there are many simple, convenient ways to check your spelling, and never be caught writing "*definatly*," "*grammer*," or "*congradulations*."

Even Spell Check is not foolproof, however. If you type in the homonym for the word you intend, Spell Check sees only a properly spelled word; it cannot determine whether it is the right word for the job. It is the writer's job to go back and check for that type of error.

Numerous homonyms and near homonyms are commonly used incorrectly. Below is a short list of ones that I have seen recently.

your/you're
there/their
who's/whose
stationary/stationery
peak/pique
throes/throws
sight/site/cite
affect/effect
advise/advice
lose/loose
accept/except

We all know the difference between *your* and *you're*, and between *there* and *their*, but it is easy as we type quickly to accidentally type the wrong one. That is where proofreading comes in. After you run the spell checker, take a minute or two to read through what you have written to make sure you have not made a silly mistake. Sure, some of those are going to slip past us sometimes, but I believe those cases should be rare.

In a future issue I plan to give some spelling rules (and their dreaded exceptions) and helpful hints that I believe are useful in improving spelling proficiency.

Now, everywon right me and telll me wear I have maid missteaks inn this artical!

Shockley Homeschooling Top Ten Lists

Sherry Shockley

A while back my husband and I were traveling and discussing what we believe are the top 10 positives and the 10 biggest regrets about our homeschooling experience. We homeschooled our three children who are now grown. Two have graduated from college and our youngest is in her third year of college. Since David and I have retired from homeschooling, we enjoyed the trip down memory lane. Here is our Top Ten Positives list. The Top Ten Mistakes will be in a future newsletter.

The Shockley Family Top Ten Positives of Homeschooling

1. Relaxing the whole family lifestyle. Homeschooling allowed us to pace our lives by setting our own schedules. We were not required to live by a prescribed schedule.

2. Family times to create memories. The five of us spent so much time together. We were able to travel with David on his business trips and just carry our books with us. All that car riding time can be quite a bonding experience. Through the years, we shared many priceless, spontaneous events. I remember once when the kids were very small we found a praying mantis. We discovered that it would eat the granddaddy longlegs that we fed it! It only ate the body. The legs dropped off one by one. The legs also continued moving! That is a quality family memory (not to mention a great science lesson!).

3. More opportunities to spend time with our extended family. We are very blessed to be close to our children's grandparents. We consciously made the decision to remain nearby. Our family has been blessed by that decision. Our children truly know their grandparents and many of their great-aunts and uncles. They also have been able to interact with their cousins and strive to be good examples to them. My mom taught a quilting class to a group of homeschoolers and our children learned many sewing skills. Mom has also helped us with many last minute costumes for our drama productions. My dad raises a large garden and our kids have definitely learned how to pick, shuck, scrape, cook and freeze creamed corn. Kerry, our youngest daughter, was able to help with end-of-life care for my grandmother who lived to be 100. Those activities of working with and serving grandparents and great-grandparents are priceless.

4. Allowing the kids to pursue their passion. Our son Daniel loved baseball. He attended a private school part-time for two years to play ball. He enjoyed some aspects of playing ball, but was also quite frustrated with some other factors, like the lack of dedication by some of the players and even some coaches! After getting his desire for playing baseball out of his system, he decided to come home his senior year to do some serious schooling. Our youngest daughter Kerry loved drama. We started a homeschool drama group so we could control the content of the plays. She was able to participate in 11 plays. She designed and sewed costumes, developed props and scenery, designed programs, and directed two skits.

5. Bible study time with the children. Homeschooling provided additional time for this to happen. It was a joy to look at Scripture with our children and have discussions together. We had ample opportunities to observe choices of people in literature, movies, and real life and discuss their consequences.

6. Reading aloud time. This has to be one of my favorites on this list. I love all the time we spent sharing books together.

7. Extracurricular activities. We were able to choose the influences for our children. We attended club meetings, ball practices, and classes with our kids. We were able to supervise these environments. We enjoyed drama, 4-H, and co-op classes. The co-op classes were great for the kids and for me! I loved planning classes and teaching with other moms. It was great socialization for me!

8. Self-directed learning! Our kids were responsible for discovering how they needed to study. They were responsible for doing their own work. When they started college, they knew how to study independently. We did not teach to the test like government schools often do. I was even surprised the year that we used the ABeka videos that those teachers "coach" the students on how to be ready for the tests. We wanted our kids to just practice learning, not cramming. (Now, I must confess that they did learn how to cram in college, but I did not want to train them that way.)

9. Some great curriculum choices. We have used some excellent materials during our educational years. Some of our favorites are Konos, Making Math Meaningful, Saxon Math, Calculadder, Rummy Roots, Easy Grammar, Phonics for Reading and Spelling, Discovering Geometry, and Shakespeare for Young People. We also enjoyed the E. D. Hirsch books, What Your _____ Grader Needs to Know.

10. Great homeschooling book fairs. We enjoyed finding books (not just curriculum) that we had never seen before. We also heard speakers who encouraged us in our homeschooling lifestyle. We were also amazed to see the huge numbers of homeschoolers at the book fairs.

11. (We had to add one more!) *Family Times*. We have made some wonderful friends. Each one of us has met godly mentors through this list. We have had such encouragement. The camps we have attended have renewed our spirits and refreshed our lives. Through the Family Times list, my son found Christians in two different areas to rent living quarters from while he attended graduate school and began working. These people have been godly influences in his life.

12. (Okay, last one!) MOM'S NIGHT OUT! I loved this monthly night eating out with a bunch of homeschooling moms. Most nights we spent time laughing together, but we also had tearful nights, like when a mom discussed trying to keep her marriage going while her husband was cheating on her. We truly helped one another solve problems and concerns about our children. My husband teases me that Mom's Night Out was THE reason I loved homeschooling!

Interview with David and Karen Pratte – Pt. 1

conducted by Wayne S. Walker

David and Karen Pratte live in Antioch, IL, and Dave serves as a gospel preacher with the church of Christ in Round Lake Beach, IL. Although I believe that I had had some earlier correspondence with him, I must have first met Dave sometime in the late 1970's when he was working as a gospel preacher with the North church of Christ in Ft. Wayne, IN, and would come to fall lectures conducted by the Thayer St. church of Christ in Akron, OH. I labored with that church in 1977 and 1978, then continued to attend their fall lectures for many years afterward. Dave stayed in my house when he held a gospel meeting with the Harpster Ave. church of Christ, also in Akron, while I was working with that church in the fall of 1979. Then I stayed with him and Karen when I held a meeting with the North church in Ft. Wayne the following spring. Since my wife Karen is from Ft. Wayne, Dave performed our wedding ceremony in 1983. Since then, we have stayed with them twice while I held meetings at Ft. Wayne and Round Lake Beach, and Dave has stayed with us when he held a meeting with the Haynes St. church in Dayton, OH, where we lived from 1987 to 2002.

Dave and Karen are the parents of three children (Sharon, Susan, and Tim), all of whom were homeschooled for part or all of their elementary and secondary education. Each of them is now grown and graduated. The Prattes began homeschooling back in the early 1980's, as they will explain during the course of this interview, and were among the first in churches of Christ whom I knew to do so. Dave and Karen helped to begin and continue to edit a quarterly homeschooling newsletter, *Family Times*, for New Testament Christians. Dave assisted in starting an e-mail list for members of the church of Christ who homeschool and was also instrumental in initiating a yearly meeting of homeschooling families during the Florida College lectures in Tampa, FL.

Wayne: Would you like to tell us some of the circumstances that led up to your decision to begin homeschooling?

Dave and Karen: We researched public and private schools in our area at great length before our oldest child Sharon started school. At that time we knew little about home schooling and did not know any Christians who were home schooling, so it seemed that public or private schools were our best options. The private schools we investigated were all associated with some denomination or else required signing a statement of faith. So we put Sharon in the public school till we could come up with a better alternative. Sharon remained in the public school from kindergarten through third grade.

Karen and I became very active in the public schools, trying to make sure we knew what Sharon was taught and trying to influence the schools for good. Karen frequently served as a parent assistant in Sharon's classes. We attended PTA meetings, but soon learned that the teachers dominated that group. Its purpose was, not to influence curricula, textbooks, or teaching content, but to promote the schools and rubber stamp what the teachers did.

David attended school board meetings, served on textbook selection committees, and reviewed carefully every textbook used in Sharon's classes. He also reviewed all textbooks available for adoption and expressed views to the textbook committees and the school board regarding controversial matters.

We soon learned that some parents were alleging that the local abortion clinic had made presentations in the mandatory ninth-grade health classes in the high school (the defenders of the school, of course, denied that such had ever happened). We attended meetings of concerned parents, eventually resulting in the school board's appointing committees to investigate sex ed in the local schools and then to present recommendations to the school board. The committees, of course, confirmed that the abortion clinic had made presentations in the mandatory health class for several years in a row without the knowledge or consent of parents.

Meanwhile, we began editing and mailing a newsletter for concerned parents in the school district. We attended all the sex ed committee meetings and reported on them. We also wrote about evolution, values clarification, and other forms of humanism in the schools, documenting many examples in the local schools. We hosted a number of small meetings and one major meeting with outside speakers to discuss the sex ed controversy.

The result, of course, was that we became labeled throughout the school district. Our daughter's teachers were always respectful and helpful, but the administration and its defenders lied to us, ridiculed us, and even literally shouted us down at meetings, including a school board meeting. The conservative parents in the district, nevertheless, did manage to get the superintendent of schools replaced with a better man.

The whole situation finally came to a head in a school board election in which the conservative parents ran two good candidates to replace two liberals on the board. Our candidates barely lost, but the whole situation soured us on the public schools. We simply could not justify allowing our children and their education to become political footballs. We believed the decisions about how our children were educated should ultimately be our choice, not the result of infighting with other parents with whom we shared little or nothing in common.

Meanwhile, we were learning about home schooling through Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family and through books, tapes, and newsletters. Very few families were involved in home schooling in the early 1980's. But Karen and I discussed it frequently and finally decided that home schooling could not take up much more time than we were already devoting to the problems in the public schools, and we could educate our children the way we believed they should be educated. Instead of fighting with the people who were supposed to be teaching our children, we could give our children a positive educational experience.

Meanwhile, we discussed home schooling with a few other families in the church in Ft. Wayne. Eventually, Dave and Bev Hewitt also became interested in home schooling. So with the mutual support of two families to encourage one another, we decided to begin home schooling at the beginning of the 1982-83 school year.

Wayne: My next question was going to be, at a time when it was almost just automatic that parents sent their children to some kind of regular school, how did you learn about homeschooling. You said that it was through Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family and some other sources. Back in 1982, what other sources of information were available regarding homeschooling and how did you get started that first year?

Dave and Karen: Dr. Dobson's Focus on the Family from time to time would interview people who were helpful resources regarding home schooling. Two of those people were Raymond and Dorothy Moore. They wrote books that were helpful about education methods in general, but they also edited a newsletter that often discussed home schooling.

Another helpful resource was Mary Bergman. She made available a booklet and an audio tape about home schooling. These materials were especially helpful in describing how to set up a home school in a way that was legal and would avoid court suits. This was especially helpful because, as Christians, we wanted to obey civil law, and because we wanted to avoid legal hassles. In those days very few people were home schooling, but a high percentage of those who did home school were taken to court. HSLDA did not yet exist, and the legal status of home school-

ing was doubtful in many states. Mary Bergman's information gave us the guidance we needed to proceed with some confidence.

Within just a few years after we began, home-school resources began to multiply. But in those days reliable materials were few and far between. These were the ones that were our greatest sources of information and encouragement.

Wayne: Today, curriculum choices from homeschool bookstores, catalogues, and conventions are almost overwhelming, especially to a newcomer. When you began homeschooling in 1982, what curriculum did you use and how did you go about finding it?

Dave and Karen: Actually, there were practically no alternatives! Generally, textbook publishers sold only to schools, and they said we were not a school. A Beka sold their curriculum guides only to private schools in those days and flatly refused to sell to us. We were legally incorporated as an academy, but that did not count with them because we taught our own children.

However, A Beka was willing to enroll us in their correspondence school. They supplied us with all the materials we needed - all of them A Beka books, of course. But we had to let them decide what courses we must take and what materials we must use. We had to keep records, send them our tests, and let them determine our children's grades. However, that was good for our first year. We thought we needed that guidance anyway.

The next year they allowed us to buy any A Beka textbooks we wanted, but they did not like to sell us the teachers' curriculum guides. We finally managed to buy the guides; I think I arranged it because I was a retail book dealer.

In any case, all that soon changed. After a few years, the home-school movement had grown till A Beka, Bob Jones, and just about all the private school textbook publishers realized we were a growing market. Soon they were seeking us out, asking us to buy their books and arrange book fairs for home schoolers! Now, as you say, there are so many materials available to home schoolers that the problem is sorting things out and narrowing your choices to what works best for your family.

Wayne: You said that you began discussing the subject of homeschooling with other families in the church at Ft. Wayne where you worshiped. As a result, another family became interested in homeschooling, and with mutual support your two families began homeschooling together. Were you able to meet up with other homeschooling families, both in your area who perhaps were not associated with churches of Christ, and among members of the Lord's church in other places. If so, how did you go about it?

Dave and Karen: Soon after we began home schooling, we learned about another family in Ft. Wayne who was home schooling. I don't recall how we learned of them. And soon afterward two other families in the area began home schooling. None of these families were truly New Testament Christians, but all of them were very moral and religiously devout. These families joined the Hewitts and us in beginning a home-school support group in Ft. Wayne. Karen and I were on the executive board for a while, but we eventually dropped out of the leadership because of conflicts in spiritual views. We continued to participate in whatever activities we could. These included field trips and an annual home-school exhibition day, at which our children gave recitations and displayed samples of their schoolwork.

As we mentioned earlier, the Hewitts and we formed a not-for-profit corporation, the Family Heritage Academy, as an umbrella school for Christians who home school. The idea was that the children would be legally enrolled in an incorporated school, which would set standards and guidelines, but each family would school at home. Our guidelines were very strict, because we were determined to be "squeaky clean." We wanted to be sure there was no grounds whatever for any legal action against any of our families.

Within a few years after we formed the academy, we had several other families across the State of Indiana who enrolled. I believe the most we ever had at any one time was five or six

families. We eventually discontinued the policy of enrolling families in the academy, because the existence of HSLDA and new home-schooling laws made it unnecessary. But in the early years, the academy gave all the families reassurance that their home schooling was legal, and it also gave all of us encouragement and camaraderie.

Wayne: Can you tell us a little bit of how *Family Times*, the quarterly home-school newsletter for New Testament Christians that you and the Hewitts publish, came into existence, what your goals have been in editing it, and any other information about its history that you would like to share?

Dave and Karen: *Family Times* was begun to provide support, information, and encouragement regarding home schooling for the benefit of true New Testament Christians who believe the church should be kept pure from such innovations as instrumental music in worship, church support of institutions and sponsoring churches, etc. While we generally accept subscriptions from all who seek to enroll, our materials are specifically geared for those who hold these views.

As we described earlier, we began our Family Heritage Academy to provide an umbrella school to encourage Christians to home school while meeting legal requirements. With the formation of HSLDA and other legal advances, the legal protection of the academy became less needed. And there were many Christians who were interested in learning about home schooling but had no need to enroll in our academy. So the Hewitts and we concluded that Christians would benefit from a means to communicate, encourage, and inform one another about home schooling. That led to the beginning of *Family Times*.

We believe that many Christians are frustrated by the moral, spiritual, and other problems in the public schools. And we likewise oppose the involvement of local churches in providing education for children aside from Bible education. So home schooling, in our judgment, has a special value to true Christians.

But in order for home schooling to be an attractive alternative, Christians need information and advice. If they decide to start home schooling, they also need support and encouragement. State or local home-school support groups may give some help, but Christians often have religious conflict with home schoolers in these groups. On the other hand, Christians who do not home school often cannot give the information or support we need.

So we began *Family Times* to help provide the support and information Christians need in order to make informed decisions about home schooling and to face the challenges involved.

Family Times is a quarterly newsletter. Originally we printed it and mailed it out by regular mail. With the advent of email, we have gradually changed till now we send it out only by email.

We have tried to focus on including profiles of Christians who home school, book and magazine reviews, teaching methods and resources, and announcements of other services of interest to home schoolers. As the newsletter developed, we became an HSLDA discount group, so we can offer our subscribers a substantial discount on membership in the Home-School Legal Defense Association. We have also developed a web site with many useful materials, including back issues of *Family Times*, and reviews of home-school curricula and teaching materials.

With the help of other Christians, we were able to begin an email group for Christians interested in home schooling. This was originally moderated by Mark Mayberry, but is now owned and conducted by Jeff Hamilton. Various other activities have been spawned by this email group, but our academy and newsletter were the springboards from which it all began.

Today I suspect that *Family Times* may be largely unknown to many Christians who home school, including many people who have benefited greatly from the services we began. That is fine with us. Our goal was to promote and encourage home schooling, not to make a name for ourselves. So as long as home schooling prospers as a viable alternative form of education among Christians, then we are pleased to have had a part in achieving this goal.

(to be continued in our next issue)

Editorial Note

Our thanks to Dawn Thompson, Sherry Shockley, and Wayne Walker for their material in this issue of *Family Times*. We look forward to continue to read material from them in future issues. And we urge all of you to continue your support for the newsletter.

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