



Our Readers Write

Individual Home-School Styles Fit Different Families

Thank you so much for the encouragement you always provide. We moved two years ago from a community and church filled with home schoolers to one with almost none and our first experiences with persecution.

I am so grateful that God allowed us to learn so much from the godly home-school veterans in our former community that helped us find our schooling style.

We have friends who have set up a classroom with desks and a dry erase board. They follow a strict time schedule and run their days and years much the same as a campus Christian school.

Another family focuses mostly on discipleship and character training. Their family is involved in many ministries together and they read many great books on all subjects and do many projects together (including building their own home over the last couple of years). They do very little "bookwork."

Some families use one curriculum exclusively and completely; others pick and choose. Unit studies and many field trips are preferred by some, while others use wonderful Christian curriculum. Most mix some of each.

One family stays up late doing ministry together and sleeps in each morning. Many get up early and do chores, then finish up the day earlier.

As we look toward our eighth year of home schooling our five children, I try to encourage others not to follow in our family's path, but to look for God's plan for

their families and to understand that it may take some trial and error to find it; and it may change over the years.

I want to encourage others that in Christ, you can home school. He will give you all you need, physically, spiritually, and financially. Just look to Him to guide you in the way you should go.

JulieBeth L., California

Commitment to God Brings Family His Love and Hope

"For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My loving-kindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says the LORD who has compassion on you" (Isaiah 54:10).

For the first two years of home schooling, I anxiously awaited each issue of the *The Teaching Home* magazine and "Our Readers Write." Those letters from home-school moms with testimonies of the blessing home schooling was to their families were my inspiration.

However, the letters that had been so uplifting in years past were now rubbing raw nerves. I had had a very rough year.

Halfway through our daughter's 2nd-grade year, we discovered that she had learning difficulties.

We understood that God's principles of child training were effective in every situation. But the stamina required to apply those principles with our daughter seemed out of reach.

You see, at the same time we were dealing with this, my health was failing

significantly. I was extraordinarily tired all the time, and any time I had to deal with major problems, which was frequently, I would experience extreme pain throughout my body. Recently we discovered that I have Lupus.

I longed for assurance that home schooling is not always the easiest road we travel. We do hit major bumps in this home-school road. People need to know that. Otherwise, how do you continue when it seems so hard? How do you get through? How do you hold on?

None of these "how" questions can be answered until we have a firm answer to why we are home schooling.

That's one thing about trials; it is in the midst of them that you really have to grab onto the answers to those "why" questions and hold on for dear life!

When my husband and I have had to answer the "Why home school?" question, the answer has been quite simple: God put the conviction to home school so deeply in our hearts that to do anything else would be inconceivable. It is a commitment to God and to His will.

We see home schooling much the same as we see our marriage commitment. It is not based on how good we are at it or how happy it makes us. It is simply a commitment to obey the convictions God has placed in our hearts. If our conviction had come from some outside source, it could not keep us going in the hard times.

God got us through the last year and a half. He showed us solutions to many of the problems that we were going through. He gave us hope and direction when we couldn't see any light.

We found that we can trust Him to see

Continued on p. 49.

Continued from p. 11.

us through. He uses the very things that caused the greatest pain to bring us the greatest joy and Him the greatest glory.

Through these trials, more than at any other time, He once again has proven that His unfailing love for us will not be removed nor His covenant of peace shaken.

Patricia D., California

Sixteen Years of Encouragement Contributes To Success

We have just returned from our 16th annual visit with our school department representative, and I am in awe at the faithfulness of our Heavenly Father to us all these years.

Before we began teaching our children at home, I was teaching music in a private Christian school, where our oldest son was in 2nd grade. Our principal actually encouraged us to home school in order to save us the hours we spent in our car each day.

Even though I was skeptical, I prayed and agreed to try. Back then there were no support groups, so I clung to each copy of *The Teaching Home* I could get my hands on. (That was back when you looked more like a newsletter than a magazine, but I have learned that looks don't matter! Your content was as timely and useful then as it is now!)

Without you folks I might have turned back! You offered encouragement, information, and wisdom in the uncharted waters of home schooling!

We have seen two school district representatives come and go (we met our newest representative at our meeting today), but *The Teaching Home* has been with us all this time!

We sat listening to the outgoing school official confess that he had been skeptical of home schooling when he first arrived ten years ago. He says he has been won over by the obvious success of the concept. I quietly thanked him for his kind words, grateful to the Lord for seeing us through and to *The Teaching Home* for being there in those times of doubt when I, too, was skeptical.

God has had a plan for our family, and He is continuing to show us His will. I rejoice in the words from Jeremiah 29:11: "For I know the plans that I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you



a future and a hope."

Whenever I am asked what advice I could give a new home schooler, I tell them, "Get a subscription to *The Teaching Home*!" And "trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6).

God bless your work!

Marij D., Rhode Island

Mother Gets Surge of Power from Grandma's Letter

The letter in "Our Readers Write" May/June '99 entitled "Home Schooling Grandchildren" was so timely for me as a mom needing encouragement.

Tears flowed as I meditated on the thought shared about parents "catching the vision," but the day-to-day practical outworking sometimes overwhelms me. This Grandma addressed some of the struggles and demands on our time by saying we need to look at priorities. Yes, God met me through that letter.

Time and again we need the reminder to examine priorities and make adjustments. Yet in the midst of home schooling, many get discouraged by demands, pressures, school board expectations, mixed-up priorities, the expectations of others, and even personal expectations.

The article addressed priorities, nurturing our children in the Lord, and not letting curriculum rule us but letting whatever we use be a tool.

Even though I have subscribed to *The Teaching Home* for several years, I've never written to express my appreciation for the many articles that have either encouraged me or given me ideas to incorporate into our home schooling.

Sometimes I share articles over the phone with moms who don't receive your magazine, and what an encouragement it is for them. I recall sharing an article with a group of parents one evening and the heads nodded in agreement.

It is similar to a surge of power—a a

timely moment an article gives us a word of encouragement to press on.

Your magazine is not a one-time read-through for me. Even after several years of filing them, on numerous occasions I have retrieved articles to reread, sometimes to search for ideas and at other times to gain a fresh perspective. What a helpful resource, even years later!

Louise L., Saskatchewan, Canada

Apprehension Disappears as God Changes Hearts

My husband and I had always planned to send our children to public school. My husband's experience with Christian schools was negative. The members of his family who had attended Christian schools were spiritually backslidden and not interested in the things of God.

We felt that home schooling was not for us, because we thought I would have to seek outside employment to pay for it. Also, we were negatively impressed by a home-school family we knew; they seemed a little eccentric. We felt public school was our only option.

As our son approached his 5th birthday, however, I felt more and more apprehensive about sending him to public school. Because of the intensity of this pressure, I decided to do a little more investigating of the home-school option.

I read a book on how to home school, which persuaded me that home schooling was the best choice for our children and that it was doable. I had just one question. Could I do it?

As I prayed about it, I sensed God impressing my heart with the thought, "If you will do this, I will help you," and I sensed an incredible peace instead of the constant pressure that had plagued me for weeks.

My husband reacted very negatively. I asked him to hold off making a decision until he had read the book. I told him that if he was not convinced after reading it, we would send our son to public school. I prayed and prayed. God did change my husband's heart; however, he said I could only home school a few years.

God is very gracious, and when our son turned 8, my husband decided that all the children were doing so well that he did not see any reason why we could not continue to home school through high school. Now our son is 12 and his sisters

are 11 and 8. I can clearly see God helping and sustaining us in this adventure.

I give God the praise for changing our hearts so we would be in the best situation for training our children to love and follow Him. It has been an added blessing to see them excel academically.

Mindy W., Idaho

Our Relatives Still Don't Get It

Our family is in its fourth year of home schooling. This is also our youngest son's first school year.

I have felt misunderstood, belittled, and even hated for our decision to home school. Even though my husband and I were both raised in Christian homes, we have been tremendously ridiculed by our parents on both sides.

I have learned to tolerate strangers who get frustrated and even angry when they hear of our schooling. I can tell myself that this person may not be a Christian, hasn't researched the positive effect home schooling has on a child's ability to learn and communicate with people of all ages, and does not understand that a Christian upbringing creates a citizen with good moral values.

When it comes to our families, however, criticism can be discouraging. The people who love us the most now treat us as inferior. Even though I've shown my mother and mother-in-law our children's wonderful test scores, the official state papers, and all, I am still labeled as "cruel."

We home schoolers simply need to remember why we decided to teach our children in the first place.

I wanted to broaden our children's horizons and do more in-depth study with field trips that public schools usually can't afford. I wanted them to learn every subject from a biblical perspective, to make God a real part of every aspect of their lives, not just in Sunday school and at family prayer.

Through our years of home schooling and using Christian curriculum, we are training children who have great Christian character and values.

Look at your children. In the years to come, these values will be the payoff. Our families and in-laws may never understand or approve our decision, but you have the approval of our Lord Jesus Christ. After all, isn't His opinion the only one that counts in the end?

May we all go forward, enjoying the

blessing of schooling our precious children, and always remembering to forgive those around us who do not agree or understand. Press on in Christ.

Name Withheld

Family Joyfully Accepts Responsibility for Teaching Children

Clint and I both had bad experiences during our own school years. Now we look back and thank the Lord for these experiences. What we encountered during our school years served to point us to home educating our children.

Clint and I were first introduced to home education when we were newlyweds, because home educators lived nearby. We didn't form opinions either way, but didn't consider it an option.

Later, I remember holding our son Brandon when he was 6 months old and wondering how I would be able to send our children off with complete strangers for the whole day once they turned 5. It seemed unnatural!

Who would teach our children? How could I find out enough about people to trust them with our children? What were their values?

I hadn't even considered objectionable curriculum materials, teacher-related problems, labeling, drugs, violence, weapons, gangs, school shootings, etc. But I knew that no matter how good were a teacher's intentions, she would not love our children the way I do.

One of Clint's co-workers was home educating his five children. As we came to know more about this family, Clint became interested in home education and talked more and more about it.

I lacked confidence in myself; however, we became more open to home educating our children as we began to research what other home educators had experienced. We examined the pros and cons and asked God to open our hearts to His will for us.

As we read the Bible, we were convicted that educating our children was our responsibility. We would be the ones to answer for what they were taught.

My 5th-grade teacher had told our class that she was more of an influence in our lives than our parents ever would be, because she spent the most time with us. She told us that she also knew us better than our parents because of the time she spent with us. This stuck with me

through the years.

Did we want a virtual stranger to have the biggest influence in our children's lives, knowing them better than we did? More importantly, did we want to answer to the Lord for what our children were taught if we had no idea what that was?

We were convicted that the Lord wanted us to educate our children at home. My confidence problems faded as I realized God will prepare our children through me for the life they will live. I am a willing vessel for the Lord's work.

Although I started teaching Brandon at age 2, Clint and I kept our decision to ourselves until it was close to time for Brandon to start kindergarten. We didn't know what to expect from our family and used the time to pray about the situation.

The only support we received was from my parents, who kept any questions and concerns to themselves. They told us they supported us in whatever we chose to do. We realized this was more support than most home schoolers ever see and considered ourselves very blessed.

Three years ago we officially started home educating our children with a Praise Party. We stood on the steps of our "classroom" and thanked the Lord for directing us to this lifestyle and all it would hold.

Three years later, I can say it has been a joy to teach our children and see them learn. They are excelling in academics and, more importantly, character. I like the people our children are becoming and enjoy spending time with them.

Interestingly, I am getting a better education now than I did in college. My confidence has grown each year as my own personal style of teaching emerges more and more. The Lord continues to mold me for His use, and I am so thankful.

Thank you, Lord, for guiding us into this path!

Wendy A., Virginia

Two Mothers Share the Same Problem, Solution, and Name

In the many issues of your magazine that I've read, I have very much enjoyed "Our Readers Write." While it is always encouraging and uplifting to hear the many positive stories, a recent, very honest letter was especially helpful.

In the January/February 2000 issue, a woman from Canada wrote about her very emotionally trying experience in

home schooling/parenting. As I read her letter, I felt as though it could be my own letter. Like her children, my children can be very challenging on a daily basis.

I was mentally exhausted (save for God's strength) and had been waiting for God's answer, and when I read this letter, there it was.

Cheryl B. in Canada, God has blessed me through your letter. I sometimes ask God to help me so that I don't miss His voice. He answered that prayer through you. I knew that, not only because of the contents of your letter, but also because of your name. You see, my name is Cheryl B. also.

I laughed and cried at the same time as I read your name at the close of your letter. Thank you, Cheryl B.

Cheryl B., New York

Family Together Through Son's Cancer Treatments

I have been receiving your magazine for four years. I first became acquainted with it when a veteran home-school mom loaned me a few of her old copies. I love to read them as soon as they come in the mail. Many times the articles and letters are just what I need at the time.

We are now in our fifth year of home schooling, and although some days are hard and some days are great, we are doing what God desires, and He is blessing us. We have three boys ages 9, 6, and 4.

This summer our life took an unexpected turn. Four days after we returned from a 10-day mission trip, our 4-year-old was diagnosed with Wilms Tumor Stage 3, a malignant kidney cancer.

We were immediately thrust into the world of cancer, hospitals, etc. Mason had surgery to remove his left kidney, and we began radiation treatments and chemotherapy.

While Mason was hospitalized, we depended on family and friends to care for our other two children. Now that Mason receives his treatments on an outpatient basis, we are able to stay together.

I had great plans for this year. I was going to spend the month of August ordering just the right curriculum and really getting our house organized and ready for this year. However, after spending half of the month in the hospital three hours from our home, I soon realized some of our plans would have to change.

We travel for chemotherapy once a

week, breaking it into two days to make it easier on Mason. I plan all the children's schoolwork for the week and put it in folders labeled Monday through Friday. We simply pack our folders for the days we will be gone and go. (I hadn't planned on it, but this year we are studying the human body, blood, and cancer.)

Because we are home schooling, we are able to be together during this time. Mason's immunity is low, but I don't have to worry about what the "school-children" will bring home to him.

God is truly in control. We can see His loving care in the way He is taking care of us. Whatever you are facing, remember Romans 8:28: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Thank you for being a support for us, for encouraging us to continue with this important work. We may not have our children for very long, but we will be thankful that the time we did have them, they were with us.

Dadra S., Florida

Children Respond to Challenge of Sibling Influence

I wanted to thank you for the article "Sibling Relationships—Ten Ways Older Children Can Positively Influence Younger Siblings" in the Nov./Dec. 1999 issue of *The Teaching Home*.

We have used this article for morning devotions with our children for the past few weeks. We simply used one point in the article each day and taught our children. We have noticed a marked improvement in the sibling relationships in our home this past month.

I praise the Lord for his Word and its effect on the lives of our children and family. Please continue to print other simply written articles that can be used in helping us guide and teach our children.

Scott O., Iowa

Family Fries Christian, Public Schools; Now Home

I am a home-school mom who has been teaching children at home since 1985, when home schooling was quite new in the state of Georgia. At that time

my husband and I had two boys who had spent three years in public school and then three years in Christian school.

I had worked in the Christian school to cover the cost of tuition; however, I was about burned out from working with children being sent to Christian school to "make up for" the deficiencies in their home lives. Some of these children were angry and belligerent, others were sad and depressed, but the cumulative effect on me was just plain draining.

My husband was weary of putting me back together emotionally each evening, and suggested that since I had been helping other children with their studies each day anyway, surely I could do that at home with our own boys.

The boys were doing extremely well in their studies, but I was seeing behavior issues in our younger son that made me feel it would not be wise to move him up to the middle school level of that school.

The teacher I worked with confirmed my feelings; she felt that home school would be good for our son. We also had friends who had begun teaching their children, and they were doing very well.

At that time in this state, there were no home-school conferences, seminars, or book fairs. I had no idea where to get curriculum. I contacted the company that supplied our boys' Christian school curriculum, but they would not sell to home-school parents. I got the same response from other curriculum suppliers.

We decided to use what our friends were using. It turned out to be very good curriculum, and the company could not have been more helpful.

We received much resistance and hostility from relatives. I can only advise that wives cleave to their husbands and look for ways to be good witnesses at family gatherings, not so much by words, but by attitudes and behavior, always being kind and accepting of others.

After three years of home schooling, the boys were doing extremely well in every way, but then our home was thrown into turmoil that did not let up for almost seven years.

During this time we lost our bearings and put the boys into public school. That was a mistake! It only exacerbated an already tense situation. I would never advise any other family to take that track.

During that seven years, I gave birth to three children. When I saw the effect of public school on our boys, not just because of peers, but mostly because of ungodly teachers, I knew we would

Continued on p. 55.



Our Readers Write

never go that route with our little ones.

During those years I found your magazine, and it has ministered to me. I cannot count the times the Lord has used the writers of your magazine to answer questions about socialization, curriculum, scheduling schoolwork around babies' schedules, or working with toddlers. I would get your magazine in the mail, and there would be the answer to the very questions I was struggling with.

You have been like far-away friends all these years, and I wanted you to know.

I would also like to say that home education is not an inoculation against the world's ills coming into our homes; if anything, we are bigger targets for the enemy, because we have taken a stand that many Christians are not willing to take.

It is imperative that we recognize the battle and be prepared (Ephesians 6). I truly believe that it is only through prayer and continual submission to the Lord that we will be able to stand, especially through hard times.

Thank you for your ministry to home schoolers over the last 20 years. You have been a help and encouragement to others like me, who did not have many other sources of help. God bless you all.

JuJuan F., Georgia

Issue on Family Relationships Gives Welcome Guidance

I just finished reading the Nov./Dec. 1999 issue of *The Teaching Home*, and it was an answer to prayer! Thank you for this issue on Family Relationships.

I am in my first year of home schooling our kindergarten daughter; we also have a 2-year-old son.

I truly believe in firm but loving biblical discipline, but lately I have felt lost as to how to implement biblical principles in discipline, especially in the relationships with our children. They seem to fight so often (mostly over sharing), and our daughter is prone to tantrums.

I prayed for God's guidance and was reading several books on the subject, which discouraged me even more, because they were all so vague. I needed to sit down and make a plan, but I didn't know where to start!

Then I read your Special Section on "Family Relationships." It encouraged me in areas that I already knew I wanted to implement, such as giving a direction once and then disciplining appropriately if compliance doesn't follow.

The most important area, however, was the specific outline of ideas and Bible verses that I actually carry out straight from the page.

The articles gave me the biblical plan for our children's relationships that I have been searching for. I plan to use the included Bible verses for our memory work, the ideas behind them for our devotions, and then follow up by admonishment with the verses when needed.

These articles reminded me to put God's Word into every aspect of my discipline, that all I can do is plant the seeds and then let God do the rest!

I thank God and you for this much-needed information and encouragement.

Karen B., Virginia