



The Relaxed Home Schooler®s Newsletter

May/June 2014



Coming Up:

May 16-17, 2014

Mary is speaking at MTHEA in Nashville.

Friday at 1:00 she is speaking on “The Relaxed Home Schooling Lifestyle”, and

Saturday at 10:00 she is speaking about common core and how it impacts us all.

Info: www.mthea.org

Mary is available to do Relaxed Home Schooling Workshops, talks on Common Core, SAT prep workshops for teens, or workshops or keynote addresses at homeschool conventions. For info, go to our website

URL:
<http://www.archersforthe lord.org> and

click on the the “speaker’s page” or contact her directly at mary.e.hood@gmail.com

Welcome to all our new readers! Hope we help you to relax and enjoy life at home!

From Mary:

Hello again!

Welcome to the second issue of our e-newsletter. This is a replacement for our long-running snail mail newsletter, which started in the early 90s and was shut down in 2006. If you’d like to read the first issue, you can find it on our website, www.archersforthe lord.org.

After working for six years in the real estate business, God has led me to return to working with homeschoolers full time as a ministry. With the increased time, I made the decision to start this newsletter up again. We also have a facebook group if you’d like to join, “maryhoodgroupies” (I didn’t make the name up :)

In each newsletter, we will have four pages, this front page with “coming up events” ; a “spotlight on” feature, a short article by me, and something from our archives, typically from the old newsletter.

If you’ have an idea or would like to submit something for our spotlight section, email me at mary.e.hood@gmail.com.

Introducing Chris Davis:

For those of you who don’t already know Chris Davis, he was one of the early pioneers of the homeschooling movement, and the co-founder of one of the first homeschooling supply companies, The Elijah Company. For many years, the Elijah catalogue was one of the most helpful resources available to learn about the various styles and materials.

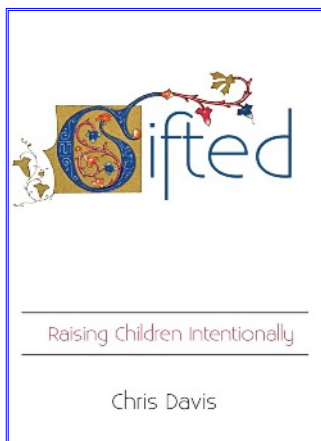
Of course, Chris was also a homeschooling dad, and he continues to serve today’s homeschoolers through arranging trips to Israel, speaking at conventions, counseling, and writing. His new book, “Gifted: Raising Children Intentionally”, is the subject of our “Spotlight On” section in this newsletter.

In addition, Chris has compiled a helpful list of resources for homeschooling families, located at www.ChrisDavisRecommends.com

So glad you are all here! Please also come and visit us at our website, Also feel free to contact me at mary.e.hood@gmail.com

URL:
<http://archersforthe lord.org>

Spotlight On: **Chris Davis & His New Book, “Gifted: Raising Children Intentionally”**



On the first page of Chris' new book, I wrote, “This is one of the most important books on education that I have read in several years. “ The only thing is, I hadn't actually read the entire book when I wrote that. I

had skimmed the galley proofs, and knew that anything Chris wrote would be important, so I felt confident in saying what I did.

However, when I wanted to actually write about it here, I decided to read the entire book, and highlight a few important statements for inclusion. What I hadn't counted on is that I wound up highlighting almost every single line!

It really IS the most important book I've read on education in quite awhile!

The main premise, in his own words, is that “Each child is a unique creation of God, and God has placed within that child very specific giftings and callings. God, then, sends the child into our time-space world to be raised by the adults He has chosen, and who are responsible for discovering what God has put into the child. Having begun to discover the child's giftings and callings, parents must then provide

the child with the tools and the time to become proficient in those giftings and callings.”

In one section of the book, Chris discusses the development of a personal family “scope and sequence”. This section is similar to my discussion of goal setting, but goes into more depth than I usually do. Another section deals with “the reluctant learner”, and discusses such things as readiness, learning styles, and personalities.

He also talks about the importance of creating context for any learning that is to take place, and shows clearly how the public school can simply not create this context effectively, therefore making it difficult for students to learn.

If you read just one new book this year, this is the one I would recommend. The only thing I don't like about it is the title...because I'm afraid people will think it is a book about “gifted children” as the educational world defines that... and this is a book about so much more!

Even if you don't agree with every word, reading this book will make you think, and open your eyes and your heart to find the best questions to ask when trying to treat each of your children as individuals!



The Importance of Flexibility

By Mary Hood

I was going to write on a different topic today, but I decided to be flexible and write on this instead! The reason this topic is on my mind has to do with a fender-bender that my husband had last weekend.

You see, I had this week all planned out! I was going to check out a possible site for one of our programs, go on a movie date with a girlfriend from high school, hike every day at the park, and do some needed shopping.

Then my husband wrecked his car. Of course, since he is the one with the job that actually pays the bills around here, he had to have first priority on the use of my car. That meant that suddenly my plans were all gone, and I had to decide what I could accomplish sitting right here at home.

When homeschooling, I think that it is very important to have a basic structure to your day, to know what your long-term goals are, and to have a plan for the month, the week, and the day. However, equally important is the ability to set aside all those plans and go with the flow when it seems like the best thing to do.

One of my kids had a real hard time with this type of flexibility. He was the type who liked to plan, since he is a natural born leader. However, when his plans didn't work out for some reason, it was very hard for him to bend to change. It was definitely something I had to help him develop.

One of the best parts about homeschooling is the built-in ability we have to tailor things to the individual, to demonstrate flexibility in scheduling, and to be able to enjoy a nice day in the out-of-doors while doing our sit-down inside work when the storms are raging outside.

Sometimes the best-laid plans just don't work out. A particular set of curriculum materials, which looked so great at the fair, or which already worked well for an older child, suddenly just isn't working for another one. Sometimes a child might be surging ahead in a math book, and then shuts down just a few pages from the end.

At such times, it is important that the mom be willing to put aside that curriculum, to stop doing math for a bit, or to simply decide on a beautiful day that it is a better day to

splash inside a stream bed than to do science experiments indoors.

Once, many years ago, we were taking tennis lessons with two other families in the middle of the week. All of the kids were really excited and enjoying themselves.

One week we called to make arrangements for car-pooling, and the other parents said, "Oh, the public schools have off today, so we won't be doing p.e. this week.

(Insert speechless moment of silence here.)

What in the world does a public school schedule have to do with a homeschooling family?

Why is tennis only important if it "counts for p.e.?"

When I was a young mother, one of my tools for planning was a simple 3 x 5 card which I wrote out every morning. On one side I wrote down any external appointments we had that day (dentist, dance lessons, baseball, etc). On the other side I put down a few categories and then listed the one or two most important things to do in each one...those things that, if accomplished, would make me feel that we had had a productive day.

Example: Household: clean bathroom
Do 2 loads of laundry
Academics: Sam's math,
reading time after lunch,
go to library
Mom's sanity: talk to friend on
phone...take bubble bath, preferably
without audience.

Sometimes, the list happened just as planned. Sometimes I wound up throwing it away and doing something completely different. However, making the list always helped me stay in balance. If I could think of 5 things that absolutely had to happen in the household area, but couldn't come up with anything academic, I was out of balance. If there was no time for mom at all, I knew I was headed for burnout.

Plan, set goals, organize your household, and set up a basic schedule. But once it is all in place, be ready to RELAX and be FLEXIBLE when needed!

From the Archives:

“Relaxed Home Schooling with Young Children, Part I”

Excerpted from Spring, 2006, issue of our newsletter

For those of you with young children, up to about the age of eight, I really believe that the key is to be the absolutely best mother you can be, and provide them with a stable family life in a nurturing environment, with lots of real-life experiences and plenty of vicarious experiences in the form of good books, videos, etc.

I also believe that one of your main roles is to shelter your younger children from the damaging effects of such things as bad television shows, junky movies, and children from families that don't share your values. Basically, from absolutely anything that brings the “world” to them before they are ready to handle it.

Try to spend almost every morning at home. Add in some old-fashioned activities, like gardening, baking bread, or sewing. Those old skills really have a way of settling you down and reminding you of what life should really be like. Limit the amount of technology you allow in their lives, and consider taking fewer classes when the kids are still little. All those athletic programs and dance classes and outside academics can usually wait until they are older, unless the impetus is genuinely coming from them! A few such activities can be fine, or even necessary, but watch the balance carefully. If you have five children and each of them has one activity a week, they may each be in balance, but YOU will be out of sorts playing chauffeur!

Remember the importance of setting goals, and getting into as much agreement as a married couple as is humanly possible. My list consists of values, habits, attitudes, skills, talents/interests, and knowledge. The first three, in my opinion, are most important with young children. Concentrate on building their character first, and the rest will follow. You don't need to do unit studies to accomplish this, or place the “character word of the week” in front of your house or school! You just need to live with them, week in and week out, and work on your own character. As you have successes, make mistakes, and apologize for them, the kids will learn along with you. Read the Bible every day for your personal growth, and share the stories

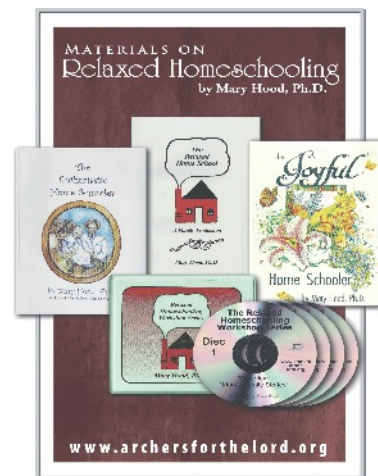
with the children. That's the way Jesus taught, through stories, parables, and life examples.

I used to have a little Bible story time at the kitchen table every morning, often using Pearl S. Buck's “Story Bible” and having them make their own booklets with pictures and captions. After awhile they had actually created their own little Bibles, and learned most of the stories in that manner.

All this emphasis on character, and living together as a family doesn't mean you shouldn't help them learn to read, write, and do math! It just means your common sense and mother's intuition should always guide you more than some parenting book or curriculum guide.

In the early years, very little actual curriculum is needed. The best learning is experiential in nature. As Chris Davis said in the book I referenced earlier in this newsletter, the end product of our parenting should be to simply “provide the resources and the time to become awesome at what God has already put within them to become.”

In Part 2, next newsletter, I'll talk a little more about specific subject areas in the early years. Until then, relax, and enjoy these special days at home! You really will miss them when they're gone!



All of Mary's talks are now also available as MP3s!