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TFT Newsletter
Issue 025
March 2009

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CQLA March Sale - Purchase *Character Quality Language Arts* until April 1st for only \$59 per book. A \$20 savings. Call to order. 260-597-7415

Donna's Desk

Hello: Note from Donna

Dear Fellow Heart Trainers,

Welcome to another edition of the TFT E Newsletter! I hope this March newsletter finds your family thriving in this journey known as homeschooling.

CQLA and MC are in the middle of more reviews by some large homeschool materials providers and writers. We appreciate the help that we are getting from some of our faithful CQLA and MC users in spreading the word about our character-based materials. We are still looking for **representatives to carry CQLA and MC** to conventions and events around the country. If you would like to share our products with others, please contact Ray to become a TFT rep.

Don't forget about our March sale. CQLA books are still \$59 each until April 1st. All of the levels of all of the color series' are available now...including the newly-revised Blue series. (See the margin for the character qualities covered in each unit.)

Keep checking our website for our new materials. If you will be **teaching or leading a writing co-op in the fall, check out our new MC books**. We are adding to our books each month or so—and our *Meaningful Composition* books are perfect for classes and co-ops. (They even have lesson plans for fourteen week small group classes.)

I am "recycling" and "regifting" an article in this newsletter that I wrote a few years ago for the Indiana Informer. Many newsletter subscribers have not received it, so I will be including it in upcoming newsletters in three parts. I hope that you find some

**New (and revised)
TFT products:**

CQLA

- CQLA Blue Pre A--revised (available in March)
- CQLA Blue A--revised (available in March)
- CQLA Blue B--revised (available in March)
- CQLA Blue C--revised (ships 1st of April)

*Meaningful
Composition (MC):*

- MC 4+--revised (available in March)
- MC 6+--revised (available in March)
- MC 8+--revised (ships 1st of April)
- MC 5 I—NEW (ships 1st of April)
- MC 5 II—Creative Writing-- NEW
- MC 9 I—Research Reports-NEW
- MC 12 I—The Research Paper—NEW

**CQLA Character
Qualities Unit by
Unit**

- Red 1- Peacemaking
- Red 2- Boldness
- Red 3- Endurance
- Red 4- Joyfulness
- Red 5- Initiative
- Red 6- Thoroughness
- Red 7- Truthfulness
- Red 8- Compassion

- Blue 1- Creativity
- Blue 2- Obedience
- Blue 3- Orderliness
- Blue 4- Virtue
- Blue 5- Love
- Blue 6- Responsibility
- Blue 7- Wisdom
- Blue 8- Decisiveness

inspiration (and humor!) –and some ideas for creating a love for learning (and ultimately a love for homeschooling) in your children.

I am continually amazed as we travel and speak or teach various children in our co-op classes at the dedication that so many homeschooling parents have for their children. I love to hear of the projects, family times, and great teaching that is going on every day in homeschooling families. What an incredible blessing these students are receiving to have their education tailored to their needs—and supervised by people who love them more than anyone else in the world! Keep on training those minds as you train those hearts!

Love,
Donna

TFT Teaching Mobile

Is it coming your way?

Now is the time to start thinking about special classes, co-op activities, etc for the next academic year. Some of our teachers are available to travel up to two hours to teach classes. Joshua has developed a dynamic fourteen week (three to four hour weekly session) course on American History, Government, and Economics (his area of interest and degree area). He has dozens of pages of handouts and thousands of power point slides that are wowing his students every week—and letting them leave class with an understanding of supply and demand, the Great Awakening, the Constitution, and more. This would make an ideal co-op class for seventh through twelfth graders.

Additionally, we have CQLA classes, as well as composition-only classes using any of our ten new Meaningful Composition books that will be available for the fall semester. Of course, we are still teaching speech and debate or elementary/middle school speech a couple of locations each semester. Call Ray to find out what we might be able to offer in your area! (You can reach him at home at 260-597-7415 in the evenings.)

Need a Speaker?

Green 1- Alertness
 Green 2- Self-control
 Green 3- Gratefulness
 Green 4- Humility
 Green 5- Meekness
 Green 6- Diligence
 Green 7- Gentleness
 Green 8- Sincerity

Reishes' Speaking and Teaching Availability

We have four speakers available now—on over fifty topics.

Ray and Donna LOVE to speak about heart training and our new book, *The Well-Trained Heart*, as well as many other topics (academic and non-academic topics). See our website for a complete list of topics and contact Ray to set up a TFT speaker for your event.

Want to learn more about our cottage classes? Check out our [class list](#).

Watch our website for the [fall class listing](#) for Fort Wayne and Ossian, IN. Call to be put on the waiting list. 260-597-7415

Section II: Heart Training - This and That

The Next Right Thing

Just Do It

Check out the dozens of [topics and workshops](#) we offer.

Our family's focus has been on "doing the next right thing" lately. I hear Ray continually counseling Cami, Joseph, and Kayla over the phone to do it. It seems like a daily mantra around the house with the younger kids. And Ray and I have to remind each other all the time to do it too. (Why do homeschooling parents always have to learn the same life lessons as our children are learning? J)

Read [more](#) about my sweet, sweet Kara "doing the next right thing."

No matter what anyone else does or says. No matter what we may have just done that maybe wasn't the wisest, kindest, or best choice—we will always respond in the right way if we just "do the next right thing."

Donna's Morning Read Aloud List

In His Hands by James A. and Priscilla Tucker (seems to be out of print—try to get this book used—it's awesome!)

The Adventures of Missionary Heroism by John C. Lambert

If Animals Could Talk by Dr. Werner Gitt

The Complete Book of Hymns by William J. Peterson and Ardythe

We used to sing a song in family worship (maybe I'll resurrect that old tune around here) that contains a Scripture that sums up "doing the next right thing": "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).

But I Can Control Myself

An Exercise in the Right Response

In keeping with the thought of "doing the next right thing," I

Peterson

The American Adventure: Enemy or Friend by Norma Jean Lutz

The One Year Book of Poetry by Philip Comfort and Daniel Partner

The Story of Stories: The Bible in Narrative Form by Karen C. Hinckley

Invitation to the Classics: A Guide to Books You've Always Wanted to Read
edited by Louise Cowan and Os Guinness

Character Sketches
by Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts

"Morning Reading" Tips

Choose ongoing books that you can do a portion of each day.

Choose a chapter book (fiction?) or other high interest book to end morning reading. (Ours is currently a historical fiction book.)

If you use dated books (like several of ours are), just do that day's reading and move on. Do not worry about days you skip or weekends. We often use a dated read aloud book (i.e. daily devotional type like our poetry book or *In His Hands*) for two years, thus eventually reading nearly all of it. (Obviously, this does not work for something that needs read in its entirety to comprehend or enjoy.)

Choose the number of books and the amount of each book that you think you

wanted to share an exercise that has helped our family. Our associate pastor, Don Williams, and his wife (head of renew counseling center at our church) recently spoke together on a Sunday morning about marriage. During this message, Nancy had everyone take a piece of paper and fold it in half. On the left side, you were to write a list of things that someone (i.e. your spouse, but we discussed this with our kids in terms of their relationship with each other, too) does that you do not like. Then on the right, you were to write your response to each of these acts (the way you usually respond).

Then you were to tear the page down the middle and throw away the half that listed your spouse's (or sibling's!) faults. But keep the list of your responses. That list is yours to work on.

Talk about doing the next right thing. Nancy was exactly right. We cannot do anything about the list on the left. We cannot control that person. We cannot make that person change. We cannot "help" that person do the right thing. But we can control the list on the right. That is ours alone to control. That is a list of "to do" items—to change, to respond differently, to quit, to alter, to improve. That list needs to be our focus—not the other person's list.

Ever since I can remember, Ray has coached the children in relationships in this way—you cannot control what the other person does, but you can control yourself. Nancy's exercise was a visible, tangible way to see this. When you rip up the other person's faults and throw them away, you are symbolically and physically saying that you will not try to change that person. When you embrace the remaining list—the one that enumerates your faults (your negative responses), you are saying that you want to change—to do the next right thing, to work on that relationship—and your part in any negative aspects of it.

The Next Right Thing for Your Family

Doesn't Have to Be Huge

To do the next right thing for your family, you do not need two hour devotions every morning. Or hour long Bible studies each night. If you have the time for those (and your children are trained to love learning and to enjoy studying God's Word), that's great. But you can start this very week doing the next

can get through in the time you have for it. We usually read 75-90 minutes three or four mornings a week, so I chose and divided ours up accordingly.

Gear the reading to your older kids, but let the little ones join in if they can sit quietly and play with legos, etc. (I always had a morning reading geared to the two oldest or so then an afternoon reading just for the littles.)

Change it up. We do at least nature, literature, and biographies pretty much all the time, though we often do creation science, hymns, and poetry as well.

Always include biographies. We enjoy biographies of godly heroes, as well as books (like *The Adventures of Missionary Heroism* for older or our *Cloud of Witnesses* for littles) that contain short biographies of many people.

Allow multi-taskers to multi-task. I have had a child or two who pretty much could only color in their educational coloring books as I read (or do hand sewing projects). I have had others who could sit there and do their math drill, penmanship, and Geosafari as they listened (and heard and understood every word!).

Avoid interruptions. Once I start taking calls (even if it is just a "quick question"), I find that morning reading is pretty much sunk. I have begun the habit of even telling the older kids I will call them back when I am done with morning reading

right thing—choosing to take time to read aloud from a biography; deciding that you will worship God in song before dinner; making the right decision to teach your children about godly living, strong character, and relationships; sacrificing the time needed to discuss these important things and challenge your children to "do the next right thing." We always have a choice—we can make the best choice to "do the next right thing" for our children and our marriages.

Heart Training (and Mind Training) First Thing in the Morning

"Oh, It's Morning Reading Time!"

Throughout my twenty-five years of homeschooling (even with my sister whom I taught at home twenty-five years ago), one of the greatest delights for me has always been our read aloud times. When the older kids were little (and I had more time—go figure out how I had more time with five kids nine and under than I do now! J), our children were read to and/or with, three to five hours a day. It wasn't uncommon for us to have several reading periods daily: devotions with Dad in the morning; Bible and character reading after breakfast; subject studies (as we fondly called our unit studies back before there was such a thing!); lunch time reading; oral reading with or to Mom and/or Dad by each reader; story time; after nap reading; dinner time reading; and bed time reading. Oh..those were the glorious days of not leaving the house for days at a time and just learning together without the pressures we start to have when kids have to grow up and get certain SAT scores or decide what they want to be when they're adults!

Today, with only three "not-so-little" boys left to school, we still enjoy read alouds, though never for three to five hours and rarely ever Dr. Seuss or Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories. One standard heart (and mind) training time that has continued for twenty-five years is that of morning reading (formerly called Bible and character reading twenty plus years ago). I sit down in my "lazy girl" chair (some parts of this scenario never change J) with a basket full of books and start reading, and I end when the phone rings too much, I get through all the books I wanted that day, or somebody announces that he really has to go do math! A week or so ago we were all situated for our morning reading when Joshua (age twenty-six, my very first and most blessed

(after all, they already had their four hours of reading a day!).

Do it first thing. If I do not get to my "lazy girl chair" within an hour or so of us getting up, I never get there. We follow morning chores and morning routines with morning reading (and the kids often eat while I read).

Tip for the strong-hearted efficiency expert: have the kids peel potatoes, clean vegetables, cut up fruit, shape meatballs, etc. during morning reading sometimes. The three little boys rarely listened to morning reading (when more of the kids were still living at home) without at least a small kitchen job as I read. It takes some patience to do this, so if you cannot stand interruptions (i.e. is this meatball too big?), I don't recommend it. Now Jacob (age ten) mostly does kitchen work during morning reading—he just stemmed grapes, cleaned strawberries, and peeled potatoes during this morning's reading.

Just do it. Just pick up a nature book, a biography, and a fun chapter book—and read to your children's hearts.

Reish Family Read Alouds for March
(all together while driving or eating popcorn in the living room!)

Ships of Mercy by
Don Stephens

3:16 (audio book) by
Max Lucado

beneficiary of read alouds) walked in to pick up some documents for editing. He brightened immediately and announced, "Oh, it's morning reading." He made his way over to my chair and started ruffling through the basket of books. "Oh, I always loved this one. I haven't seen it for years." Then, "I've never seen this before. How come you didn't read this one to us?" J And he sat down and proceeded to listen to *If the Animals Could Speak* (a fun creation science book about animals).

You see, morning reading is much more than just a time to fill the kids' heads with information (though one of my favorite past times is showing off what I learn—did you know that a blue whale's tongue is the size of an elephant?). It is an opportunity to fill their heads and their hearts with truth. Truth of Scripture. Truth of the heart. Truth of character and virtuous living. Truth of successful people. Truth. It is heart training at its best as it is set in the context of stories, anecdotes, history, nature, and more.

I have preached for years (and will continue to do so) that you do not need a fancy Bible program or theological degree. Just sit down and "do the next right thing." Just sit down with your children and do two of the most heart-reaching things you can do—read aloud and talk. It's informal. It's enjoyable. And it's effective.

Note: See the sidebar for our current morning reading list—and watch future sidebars for book reviews of some of our morning reading books.

Section III: CQLA and Meaningful Composition

CQLA Labeling

About the Colors and Volumes

In CQLA, it does not matter which color you begin with! **The three color series'-- Red, Blue, and Green--are just the way the character qualities are divided.** Choose the level you need according to your student's language arts abilities (Level Pre A--2nd and 3rd grade; Level A 4th and 5th grade; Level B 6th, 7th, and 8th grade; Level C high school), then choose the color series you desire according to the character qualities you would like to study that year. Be sure to get the same color (same set of character qualities) for each student so

Cooking Tips

One of my favorite "kitchen staples" is the simple "base." We use four main kinds—beef base, chicken base, pork house (or ham) base, and vegetable base. These bases come in little rounded plastic "jars," like Noxema or face cream used to come in. We are base crazy around here. In the past month, we have used it in beef roasts (beef), to season green beans (pork), added to water and olive oil for stir fried vegetables (beef or chicken), to tone down the tomato-y taste of chili (beef), to liven potato soup (chicken), to make richer hamburger stew (beef), to make gravy, to make mock dry "onion soup mix" for cheese spread (beef), to make mock cream of mushroom soup, added to sloppy joes, with minced onions and some seasonings in meat loaf (beef), and more. It is much richer and more convenient than boullion cubes (it scoops out and can be whisked directly into a liquid). You can mix some with a little liquid and a few seasonings in place of dry onion soup mix—then just stir it into sour cream for dip or soup or meat. The label will indicate how much to mix with water to make broth and give you an idea of its strength. (Be careful at first—much richer than boullion.) Try it. It's an essential kitchen staple.

Wedding Recipes

You can find the following [recipes from the wedding](#) at our blog - Mexican Wedding Cakes, Sour Cream Cookies,

that the **entire family is studying the same quality at the same time.** [Check out the character qualities of each color series on our site](#) or the sidebar to the left.

Section IV: In the Kitchen This Month

Wedding Recipes

Dessert Reception

In November we had our first "girl" wedding—the first of our three daughters (Cami, now 21) married Joseph Gross. Some day when I have time and the emotional energy to write about the entire process, I will do so. J Until then, I will share some of the recipes that we used for the wedding.

We had the wedding at our large church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. We also had the reception there. Cami did not want her One Heart (First Assembly's disability ministry, which Cami directs) and Joni and Friends (JAF Chicago area retreat) people to have to leave the church and go somewhere else as it is often difficult enough just to transport many of them (with wheelchairs, oxygen, etc.).

We also wanted to keep costs down as much as possible, and the reception (especially when you anticipate five hundred attendees) was a good place to cut costs (but still keep it nice). Thus, we chose a dessert reception. That is, a reception that is not held at a meal time and primarily consists of desserts (though we did have fresh fruit bowls, cheese balls, and snack mix for those who did not want "dessert" on top of cake).

Our church has a cook on staff, so the "kitchen" parts of the reception—the perishable foods, serving, punch, etc. had to be taken care of by her. We added the non-perishables. Thus, she did things like chocolate bowls with mousse, miniature cheese cakes, punch, etc. And we did the cookies and bars. I say we, but as I pointed out in last month's newsletter, we had friends and family who definitely went above the call of duty in this "mega cooking" adventure.

I will put the link to our bar and cookie recipes in the sidebar.

Peanut Blossom "Kiss" Cookies, Chocolate Chip Cookies, Goopy Snickers Brownies, Pecan Tassies, Party Cookies, Raspberry Ribbon Bars, Peanut Butter Fudge, Decorative Sandwich Cremes, and Chocolate Crackle Cookies.

For more goodies and cookies, check out some of our [Christmas recipes](#).

[Read our past article about **building comprehension skills** in your student.](#)

[Read Newsletters 1 - 24](#)

Teaching Tip
One of my long-time favorite (and most used!) teaching tips was shared at one of Gregg Harris' homeschooling workshops nearly twenty years ago—**teach using parenthetical phrases**. Do not assume that your student understood what you were saying with just one explanation, phrase, or wording. After you say something, repeat it in another way (thus, the "parenthetical phrase" model). You might already do this dozens of times a day—without even realizing it. For example, I say, "Go put that in the knife drawer (the one with the sharp ones)" or "That bird shows resourcefulness. (He is innovative.)" "One

Basically, I took the number of people we thought would be attending, multiplied that number by five (the number of items the cook thought each person would take on a small plate), and chose the number of each item we would need to reach that 2,500 item mark (i.e. X number of cheese cakes, x number of raspberry bars, etc. all adding up to 2,500). Then, because we were so worried about running out, we added to that number—a big mistake.

We also had cake, of which we ordered three times too much. Yes, you read that right—three times too much. (I've never been the greatest at figuring these things up—always afraid I would run out.) I should have believed the cake lady when she said that many would not take cake at all since we were having desserts. We had way more than we needed—of everything. But thankfully, everything froze nicely, so we had goodies for Christmas trays, cake for desserts, cheese balls for gatherings and parties, etc. etc.

All of the recipes listed are multiplied many times. They can be reduced to fit your group however needed. Some of these recipes are ones I use at Christmas time and for graduations, showers, etc. as well. They are versatile!

The wedding was beautiful. It was extremely moving with all of the siblings lined up around the front and the beautiful vows that Cami and Joseph wrote themselves. They had a footwashing for the two of them, and this was incredibly meaningful. And, just like Joshua and Lisa's wedding, they included the song we had sung at our wedding: "How Can I Say Thanks?" by Andre Crouch (also called "To God Be the Glory").

You can find the following recipes from the wedding at my blog-- Mexican Wedding Cakes, Sour Cream Cookies, Peanut Blossom "Kiss" Cookies, Chocolate Chip Cookies, Goopy Snickers Brownies, Pecan Tassies, Party Cookies, Raspberry Ribbon Bars, Peanut Butter Fudge, Decorative Sandwich Cremes, and Chocolate Crackle Cookies. (See link in sidebar.)

Section V: Article from Training for Triumph

"Creating a Love for Learning in Your Homeschool"

fourth of the whole is one quarter. (Just like one quarter is one fourth of a dollar.)" It just makes sense. It gives our children a chance to grasp what it is we are explaining, an opportunity to hang it onto one of the hooks they have developed for themselves from earlier learning experiences, and a chance to understand something that might not be understood with the first wording or phrasing.

Heart Training Tip
Develop your family's own "specialties"—

special signs, signals, stories, etc. that nobody but someone within your family would know. This can be done individually (i.e. you and one child's special sign) or as a group. For example, we have a habit of saying, "A penny for your thoughts" when there is silence while we are driving (especially if we are one on one with a child). That child knows that at that point, I care about what he is thinking. It opens up an avenue for sharing and heart training that may have gone unused had I not said our family's "little sign." We are also big Adventures in Oddysey fans; thus, we have certain "Oddysey quotes" that we say to one another, such as, "the best is yet to come." This makes the Reishes, the Reishes—and causes a feeling of belonging and ownership in our family.

Cleaning Tip
 One of the best things we have done in

Part I of II (Jan. 2005) by Donna Reish

I recently had a "kick-off the school year lunch" with my mini-support group, unit study co-op group, field trip group, and accountability group---all the same five fellow homeschooling moms. One creative and affirming mother had the idea that since we are starting a new school year, we should go around the table and encourage one another in our home schooling strengths. After we bawled our way through lunch and dessert and the Kleenexes were all discarded, there was a common encouraging thread towards me: They felt that I had encouraged them and modeled for them how to create a love for learning in my children and in me.

After our emotional lunch (and a quick stop at the scrapbooking store—we recovered from our emotional outburst enough to shop!), I contemplated how I influenced these moms in that way. I considered some of the comments they made. And then I asked myself, *How can I spread a love for learning to home schoolers everywhere?* In this article, I would like to share over a dozen key strategies that Ray and I have discovered to help our children love to learn—strategies that have caused our children to get out their school books on a Saturday night simply because they want to, strategies that make learning in our family a joy instead of a drudgery, and strategies that have helped us build fond (and exciting!) home school memories.

I. Make Learning a Big Part of Your Family

Model a love for learning

Your children want to be just like you! They might not say it. They might say just the opposite at times, but the fact is, they want to be just like Mom and Dad. Thus, the beginning of teaching our children any skill is to model that skill for them. I remember in teacher's college when the buzzword (or acronym, actually) was SSR---Sustained Silent Reading. The goal of SSR was to set aside ten or fifteen minutes each school day to have every student reading. The superior teachers were the ones who didn't grade papers or file their nails during SSR; they read too. The idea was that if the teacher were modeling reading for her students, they would follow her example.

The same is true for home schooling parents with modeling a

terms of teaching our children to do household chores is **to teach them to work fast**. It hasn't been an easy task—and one or two of our kids are still in process. However, it has paid off in so many ways—their jobs as adults, their ability to get so much done in one day (or hour or week, whatever the case may be), and our lengthened family times. We began teaching this early on—with an object lesson. One evening about fifteen years ago as we were ending dinner, we began discussing all of the fun things we would do that night—read aloud, play games, play knee football in the living room, etc. when one of the kids said that we wouldn't have much time to do anything—because it would "take all night" to clean the kitchen. Ray and I saw the opportunity and seized it. We told the children that the two of us alone could clean the kitchen entirely in under ten minutes—dishes completely done and put away, floor swept, etc. Then we pushed their chairs back (so they could watch "the show"), set the timer, and started. Their eyes got bigger and bigger as they realized that Mom and Dad were really gonna make it. We finished in well under ten minutes. And the kids learned that when you work fast, you have more time for other pursuits—like that crazy knee football in the living room!

love for learning. Do you force-feed your students what they need to learn but remain stagnant in your learning? Do you act as though you already "know it all," so there is nothing else for you to learn? Do you seek out information about topics you are interested in learning more about?

We recently took a family vacation to Disney World. I carried (well, whoever carried the backpack actually carried) an eight hundred page volume entitled, *The Unofficial Guide to Disney World*. I pulled it out as we traveled to each park, reading aloud about the best viewing spots for the afternoon parade, the worst hamburgers in the place, and the longest time one has to wait during mid-morning to ride "Space Mountain." At first the kids teased me merciless (okay, I did have over a hundred sticky notes of various colors and sizes protruding from the sides of the book—you're not allowed to highlight in a library book), but then they began asking me what "my book" said about this or that. Eventually, we were fighting over the book during tram, monorail, and bus rides! On the last night, the kids insisted that I cover myself in sticky notes, scatter my "charts" (oh, I made charts too) around me, and have my picture taken with my precious book. They saw firsthand how learning new information makes for a great vacation; they came to see the method to Mom's madness---and I guarantee not one of them will ever take their kids to Disney World without that book! *Modeling* a love for learning for our children works.

Learn with your children

Throughout the years, we have made purposeful attempts to learn with our children—especially if the topic was important to the child. There is nothing that builds relationship more than to have someone truly interested in what you are interested in. Now, this hasn't always been easy (or fun). Many years ago, I took sewing lessons with the girls for a couple of years. It was like having my finger nails pulled out with pliers. Pure torture. However, sewing was important to Kayla—and she went on (along with Cami—definitely not with me!) to quilt quite a bit, make "dress up" garments for her brothers every year, and hand make other quilted gifts. When Cami first started attending deaf church this year, Ray enrolled in sign language with her, so they could share it together—and so Ray could at least greet Cami's friends from deaf church. We have taken many community type classes with the children—internet use, town history, county history, etc. Obviously, we haven't learned everything our

Still not sure about CQLA? [Try before you buy!](#)

Want to be a CQLA rep? Read [about it](#) on our website. Call Ray for more details. 260-597-7415

Love CQLA? Mention it to your favorite vendor.

Read [CQLA Reviews](#) on our blog.

children have learned, but these opportunities have given us avenues for spending time with the kids—and showing them that we value what they value.

We are always encouraged by the parents who come to speech and debate classes with their kids on occasion. Sometimes a parent will come the entire semester and learn right along with their kids. Not long ago, a mother and father came up to us and told us how much they had learned through our speech and debate class. We were surprised as we had not seen these parents in class. They proceeded to tell us that they went over their daughter's notes and worked on her speeches and debate preparation with her—and learned as much as she had! This input and level of interest had to be an incredible encouragement to a girl who was fearful of taking speech and debate class.

Integrate school with chores, service, ministry, and more

In other words, do not make "school" a separate entity from your life. "School," as we know it, is a man-made institution. The New Testament says that children are to be under tutors and managers until the time appointed by their father. Many schools began as a result of a perceived need to teach children the Bible. Certainly no body (governmental or otherwise) was intended to raise our children for us! The "rules" and "guidelines" that we devise for our home schools are often the result of what we see in "real schools." Of course, many of these are based on solid research and experience of how children learn, etc. But more often than not, the "school ways" are devised in order to provide "mass education." We should only copy what are truly superior ways to learn. How many children do you know who go to school (public or private) and truly love school or love learning? We don't want that to happen in our home schools!

The Old Testament is filled with admonition after admonition to teach our children *all the time*. It tells us to teach our children when we get up, when we walk, when we sit, and when we lie down. That certainly doesn't mean to "have school" day and night! I believe that learning takes place all of the time---life skills from chores; social skills and much more from service; Bible, character, and godliness from ministry---and of course, academics from bookwork.

When everything we do is looked at as "learning" and "valuable,"

it doesn't matter if a student is completing a math page, helping an elderly neighbor, or reading to little sister. It is all learning; it is all valuable; it is all needed. I realized that I had done *too* good of a job incorporating school in our lives and our lives into school when ten years ago, my oldest daughter (Kayla, now eighteen and faster than lightening at household and kitchen tasks!) was a dawdler. At five o'clock one evening, she was still sitting at her little table doing a math page when I suggested that if she would work faster on everything, she wouldn't still be sitting there doing her math book so late in the day. She smiled her cheeriest smile at me, shrugged her shoulders with arms out, and exclaimed: "I like school. I like chores. And I like to play. It doesn't matter how fast I go or when I'm done because I love it all!"

I cringe when I hear of academic students who are too busy "doing school" to minister or provide services to others or selfish young people who are too consumed with their own interests to reach out to those in need. A well-rounded student is one who balances his time among "academic" pursuits, ministry and service opportunities, hobbies, family activities, spiritual growth opportunities, and fun. Any imbalance in these areas—even in "over-academics"—makes a student lacking in something—and certainly not a model of a student who loves to learn and loves home schooling. When we train our sons and daughters to put making a meal for a new mother right up there in their "to do list" with their English, we are integrating school with life and life with school.

School all the time

One of the downfalls of "traditional homeschooling" is the idea that we have a school in our home. In that regard, we would learn only in the same way the schools do (mass education, workbooks, etc.) and during the same hours that schools do. The best thing we can do for our children in this area is to create a love for learning and not confine learning to "school."

I can still remember when my first born was eight years old and discovered that other children did not do school on Saturdays. To him, every day was a learning day; why would you skip learning on Saturdays? Even worse though, was when my children found out that other home schoolers do not have to do school in the summer. They thought everyone did everything just like we do, so when they discovered that, they started

begging for more “free time”!

I overcame the summer dilemma by making summer school our “fun” school---letting them choose the things they wanted to study in the summer and modifying our schedule so that there wasn’t as much bookwork in the summer, but learning still took place. We called these “summer school goals,” and my older children still remember these “put a sticker in the blank for each chapter you read” or “put a sticker in the blank for each 15 minutes of math drill” charts with fondness. My little kids now actually beg to “do summer school goals” like the older kids did.

By “not confining learning only to school,” I do not mean that everyone has to school on Saturdays and all summer long. Nor do I mean that you have to “have school” beyond 3:00 in the afternoon. What I mean is to try to develop such a lifestyle that your Saturday, summer, and “after three” activities are viewed as school just as much as the math pages your child completes first thing in the morning on “school” mornings. Take “field trip” vacations—a weekend to museums, an overnight at the science museum (that was a great trip!), and more. Discuss “academic” subjects all of the time—not just during school. Talk about current events while gathered around the dinner table. Discuss things you see while on the road. Listen to things while driving that will enrich, bless, and/or educate the entire family.

Basically, try to make your lifestyle such a spiritually and academically-enriched lifestyle that you avoid non-learning times as much as possible. Of course, you’ll always just go to Grandma’s for dinner, watch a movie on a Friday night, or clean out the garage on a Saturday afternoon, but make life your school and school your life. This truly causes a love for learning as children are always learning and growing—and school becomes a way of life rather than a time of day.

Make learning a family affair

Prior to my friends encouraging me in my accomplishments of developing a love for learning in my children, I had never given “teaching my children to love learning” much thought. I love to learn. My husband loves to learn. Learning is such a major part of our lives; I never considered it something that we should “do” or teach our children “to do.” Loving learning is what we do twenty-four/seven. We have an ongoing library list like many families have grocery lists. Dinner conversation often goes like

this: "When the next person goes to the library, I need a book about photography. All of my pictures from the park today have shadows." "Oh, if you're going, pick the boys up some more *Magic School Bus* videos." "While you're there, could you get me the latest issue of *Today's Christian Woman*. I noticed it has Joni on the front of it." "Add my two items to your list: *How to Write Query Letters* and *Reading Difficulties Handbook*." "Oh, I need that book on creating believable characters in novel writing again." "I need that book by the president's speechwriter again for our debate class. You know which one...the one that I paid twice its worth in fines last fall." And on and on. The next library patron in our family rarely gets to eat dinner. He or she is too busy making out "the library list." Everyone in our family—from the six-year-old kindergartener to the forty-something-year-old father is constantly learning---and often all learning together.

With everyone's busy schedules and various activities (not to mention age gaps of the children), learning together can be quite the challenge, but it is a challenge that is worth pursuing. We have found that what we learn together as a family stays with the children longer than almost any other learning. I think it is because of the *process* of this learning together. When you learn something alone, you might read it or hear it, and that might be it. Maybe you will encounter it again soon (a test) or maybe you will not encounter it until it comes up in a movie, book, or conversation some months down the road. When a family learns together, the topic is brought up again immediately---by someone (the larger the family, the more likely that it will be brought up sooner rather than later)—then discussed, dissected, evaluated, debated, and more over and over again.

For example, right now a few of our children are studying Shakespeare together. Joshua (our married son) is their teacher. They "go" to his class once a week for ninety minutes, yet the class seems to continue day and night throughout the week. They come in from class discussing it; a movie or book reminds them of it, they are picking up library picture books of Shakespeare; and the whole family has to hear about the plot, the characters, etc.; my nine year old and six year old are even quoting from Shakespeare now---long quotes without missing any of the words! It is like this with anything that two or more of the children are studying together (except for math!). Learning is contagious.

Discuss everything

Another good way to develop a love for learning in children--- and to increase their comprehension skills---is to discuss everything. When discussing reading, language arts, and comprehension with homeschooling moms, I often hear a mom say that her child can read everything, but he does not seem to comprehend what he is reading. Some students can word-call anything put in front of them (much like reading "There's a Wocket in My Pocket!"). In these cases, to say a student can "read anything" simply isn't true. Yes, he can "word call" anything, but if he does not comprehend the words he is calling, the material really isn't "at his reading level"---it is just at his "word call level."

What does this have to do with developing a love for learning in children? When a child either 1) cannot read well (via word calling) or 2) cannot comprehend what he reads, the chances for him developing a love for learning are very slim. Do you love reading a book you cannot understand? I put those books back on the shelf! One of the ways we can create a love for learning in our children is to increase their comprehension through discussion. I can remember Gregg Harris explaining this at his home school conference fifteen years ago. It made so much sense to me, but we don't hear a lot of advice on this today because families are often either 1) too busy or 2) not together often enough to have good, educational and spiritual discussions. If your family is one that is too busy or not together enough for discussions, work on changing that! Make a "three nights a week all at home rule," drive one vehicle (and all get in it!) to church or gatherings, make two or three (or more!) no television nights, etc.

Once you have everyone all together (or at least part of your crew), talk. Talk about the importance of picking up after yourselves; how you can use dish soap and water in place of window cleaner when you run out; the number of hours different sized candles burn; how various camera angles make things look like they're spinning or getting farther away; why you shouldn't point a toy gun at mother; what the word "acknowledged" means; what to do in an emergency situation, such as a "hazardous waste" in someone's eye (don't forget a play demonstration by the twelve year old carting the kicking, screaming, dramatic six year old to the sink); why the Ethiopian eunuch came to Jerusalem; why child-centered parenting results

in badly behaved children; who Mom's favorite teacher was when she was little; what the fruits of the spirit are; how much Spanish someone needs to take in order to be ready to travel to a Spanish-speaking country for ministry; the difference between analogous colors, complimentary colors, and coordinating colors; why you have soup or stew every other night—and when can someone fix something good (i.e. pizza or French fries!); and more (all real conversations in our living room and dining room within the past couple of hours as I was working on this article with everyone eating, cleaning, studying, and talking around me).

Again, what does that have to do with love for learning? When children come to a new learning opportunity (or adults do too for that matter), they bring what they already know (the vocabulary, the background of knowledge they have about that subject, any topics they might know about related to that topic, etc.) to the opportunity. The larger the background of experience a child has when he encounters any learning experience, the greater his chances for success in learning the new material. He has more "hooks" from his past learning to hang the new material onto.

When the new learning opportunity takes place, the student will gain a little, a moderate, or a large amount of "learning" from it--based on his comprehension of the material. His comprehension of the material, of course, is related to many things---the level of the material presented (if he is unable to even decode the words, he will be unable to comprehend any of it), the student's background of experience, and the method by which the material is presented (i.e. learning styles).

Take my sewing example I mentioned earlier in this series. If today I were to enter an advanced sewing class in which the teacher began discussing how to smock a dress for a little girl—and I have virtually no learning hooks on which to hook that (can't thread the sewing machine, can't even turn on the machine, do not know cotton from polyester, etc—I'm telling you, I was a sewing failure!.), very little learning will take place. However, if I had had many sewing experiences (years of sewing classes, sewing at home, reading of sewing books and magazines, attendance at a sewing circle, etc.), I would be immersed in that subject. I would toss sewing terms around much like I do grammatical terms. I would have a large background of experience to bring to that advanced sewing

class, I would be much more successful in the class, and more real learning would take place for me. (Well, theoretically speaking, that is!)

Obviously, our children cannot have real experiences with everything they will ever learn—any more than we adults can. However, we can discuss things with them as they come up, explaining foreign concepts to them and giving them a large background of experience to bring to their learning opportunities. I have come to the conclusion that this is why my kids love having Kayla for a big sister (besides the fact that she is a great baker!). She increases their comprehension of everything. During her first day at Huntington College (she's commuting as a senior in high school), everyone here was having Kayla-withdrawal! In the first three hours she was gone, each of the children said independently of each other something like this: "I have all of my biology done except for one section; I need to wait and have Kayla help me on that," "I don't understand this US Government; when Kayla gets home, she can explain it to me," "Mom, this is serious. We can't function with her away all day. I *need* Kayla!" (Wait a minute, why don't they say that if I'm gone for the day!!! ????? tee hee)

Anyway, it's the discussions she has with them about *everything* that increase their comprehension. It takes a lot of time to explain everything all the time, but that is how they learn. Ray is a master at this (and probably why Kayla naturally does it too) oftentimes when I'm trying to talk to him in the van, he holds up a hand to me to wait a second while he explains to the kids something along the road, in the ditch, on the highway, etc.--a building project, the meaning of this particular flashing light, how a nature scene reminds him of a Scripture, what material the pipes they are putting in the ground is made of, etc. Discussion builds comprehension.

These types of activities will increase our children's comprehension, which will carry over to all their school subjects and all of life. Comprehension of information is the groundwork for all learning--oral, written, or auditory—and the more our children comprehend, the more they will love learning.

Help them see homeschooling as superior

When my older kids were very young, and I would get extremely stressed out with five kids nine and under, I would do the

unthinkable—threaten to send them to school. When they were really driving me crazy, I would make a “tire rolling” sign and sing, “The wheels on the bus go ‘round and ‘round,” to indicate that if they didn’t straighten up, the big yellow bus was going to come and take them to school. Now, I have since matured quite a bit (!) and no longer threaten the kids with going to school. But I do know that if I had continued in that vein, they would definitely not have the love for learning that they now have. Threatening to quit homeschooling is not a way to build love for and confidence in homeschooling, either.

Thankfully, I learned quickly that threatening is not a good way to parent children. I can remember about that same time thinking that I wanted my children to grow up loving homeschooling. I wanted them to see it as a superior way of life—as a means to the goals that God has given us. I wanted them to love our life—and be grateful and happy that their parents followed God in this calling. This is a life-long process that, I believe, has come about by doing many of the things suggested in this article. It has come about by constantly discussing the many benefits of homeschooling. It has come about by their parents openly thanking the Lord (and expressing our joy and gratefulness) for allowing us the opportunity to train our children at home. And it has come about simply because we communicated to our children early on (after the “wheels on the bus” episodes) that we were committed to this way of life—and we were not going to stop just because one of the kids was strong-willed and drove me crazy, or someone had difficulty learning to read, or life would be easier if they went to school.

I have noticed a trend in home schoolers: the reason they home school often determines their children’s love for or lack of love for learning. Children from families who home school because they think it is a superior way of learning seem to love learning more than children from families who home school because the other option (public school or private school) is “bad.”

Now don’t get me wrong. We home school for a myriad of reasons, but our children know we are in this because it is plain and simply the BEST---all the way around. They also know that we are in it for the long haul, as long as God permits us. Thus, there is no way out. There is nobody else that will pick up the slack in learning for us. There is nothing in the future that will save our children from our laxness. It is all up to us. We are responsible for our children’s education for all of their school

years; and once they become a certain age (oh, say, eight years old or so), they are responsible for their learning, too. It is *ours* and it is *theirs*.

II. Understand the Effect of Readiness on Love for Learning

Start early and go for the long-haul

When I say “start early,” I don’t mean start out with workbooks and assignments early! I mean start out with learning early; make learning a lifestyle from a young age. We decided that we were going to homeschool when our first child was a little over a year old. (And we actually began home schooling my eighth grade sister at that time.) Everything in our life became school—morning devotions, chore time, story time, evening devotions, listening to tapes while traveling, etc. Ministering at the nursing home, hosting Bible studies in our home, and preparing the church bulletin board all quickly became “school”—with a toddler in tow, learning as we went.

I always got so upset when my children learned from others that school means book learning---and specifically workbooks—and as preschoolers and kindergarteners would say, “I want to do school.” My mantra through the years has been something like this: “Did you do your dishes this morning? Did you read the Bible with Daddy? Did you do story time with Mommy? Did you play a math game with sissy? Did you help brother make bread today? Then you just did school!” Starting early means beginning in their very first years to develop a love for learning in our children by providing learning activities that are worthwhile and enjoyable—giving them a good taste for learning.

Do not put pressure on children to learn things not ready for

Some of the best advice I ever received concerning educating my children came from Dr. Raymond Moore’s books, *Better Late Than Early* and *School Can Wait*. In these books, he detailed the way children learn—the stages of learning, the signs of readiness, and the importance of taking our cues for “formally educating” our children from the children themselves (not a magic age that the child turned or what our child’s little cousin is learning in school at that same age). The funny thing about his

books is that they contained the same information I had just learned in college (and continued to learn about that same time in my master's program). The research, statistics, and proof of the importance of readiness in learning were the same as those I had been studying. The major difference? Schools are usually unable to do anything about those variances in children's readiness (aside from small groups, teacher's aids, etc.). If little Johnny comes to first grade at the appropriate age of six, the school is unable to say, "Well, Johnny's signs of readiness show that he might not be ready to learn to read until he is eight." They simply must push him through the best they can. However, we do not have to!

Every time Kayla (our late blooming, dyslexic, dysgraphic learner) has another success, I praise God for Dr. Moore. Kayla received perfect scores on the verbal ACT portion not once, but twice. She has co-written curriculum with me since she was fourteen years old. She attends college very successfully while still in high school. And much more. These things bring me even greater joy when I realize that Kayla would probably have not had the success she has had if she had gone to school. She did not learn to read until she was nine. She was unable to spell or write much at all until she was thirteen and began using the computer (and spell check). Her penmanship is still in process as a senior in high school. And yet, she has come out of all of this with great success—because we learned the importance of waiting for readiness and not pushing a child to do something that is out of her control to accomplish.

So many times we parents get this completely backwards. We insist that a child learn to potty, read, spell, or pen words when he is simply not ready to do so, not fully realizing that these things are out of that child's control. A child has no control over whether he is ready to potty train at two or at three. A child has no control over whether he is ready to learn to read at six or at nine. Yet we often insist on pushing in these areas. However, in areas in which a child truly can control himself, we might let slide by. Areas such as kindness, diligence, responsibility—these areas of character can be learned (at their appropriate levels) by children as young as three. These are areas of which a child truly can control.

Our children will love learning much more if we wait on readiness to occur before teaching things that they are unable to learn without readiness. Without readiness, we have tears, frustration,

and a disdain for learning. With readiness, we have joy, success,
and a love for learning.



