

# *A Mother's Joy*

*The Best of Principled Mom™*

Volume 1: 2005 to 2007

Biblical Principle Approach  
to life and learning.

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<http://PrincipledMom.com>

This little book is a collection of my favorite (and hopefully most helpful) blog posts over the last three years. You will find some inspiration, some challenging subjects and a little humor sprinkled throughout. New content has been added here and there, along with scripture references.

There are many references to the Biblical Principle Approach. If you would like more information, please visit <http://www.PrincipledMom.com>.

*--Anna-Marie Hawthorne*

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# Sharing and the language of liberty

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Do you make your kids share? That's the polite thing to do, for sure. From the time we were kids we have loved to hate that word. When we make our children share, it keeps us from feeling embarrassed around other parents and it makes us feel like we are doing a good thing, raising "giving" children. (We spend a lot of time concerned with feelings, don't we...)

Katherine Dang has a lot to say about liberty, and sharing is no exception. She challenges the idea of making your child share his belongings. Her take is this: never force your child to give up their property. You are raising a child with the idea of Biblical liberty. Our three inalienable rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (property). As a parent teaching liberty, you do not force a child to surrender their property to another (socialism). You ask them to voluntarily allow another to play with or use their belongings.

Liberty is natural. Even a toddler instinctively knows there are things that belong to him and it goes against his law of nature to "share." We remove that notion, with the best of intentions, when we force them against their will to share. If it is not done voluntarily with reasoning and accounting for consequences, they should not be asked to do so. Involuntary sharing ultimately teaches socialism.

So what other options are there, you may wonder. Well, before a friend comes over, have your child put the things away that they would not like to be played with. Then all that's left is happily volunteered.

There is a language of liberty, which doesn't include sharing. Ever. "Would you let Jane play with your doll?" Let the child

think about it. Discuss possible outcomes, like a broken toy, with both children. Let the owner make the decision. If it is yes, then make sure the "lender" has a time frame and will treat the toy like her own. If owner says no, then you say, "Susan, Jane says no. You will need to find another toy to play with right now."

I said this idea may challenge you. You may think you will raise a selfish child if you do not force them to share. Is that God's kingdom way? Forcing love, or compassion, or generosity? Does He demand love or force us to be generous? No, His way is always by choice, always motivated by love and internally motivated. If you respect your child's property and their choices, they will be happier children and better citizens, understanding the liberty (and the responsibility) of private property. And we can raise a generation that will not be so quick to relinquish their rights as this one seems to be.

# What my kids really need to know

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In all my planning sometimes I have to remind myself of the important things. While the math and the grammar are important, they are not the end, but a means to an end. I made this list so I can always remember that these things are what really matter.

1. Love of God and His Word
2. Their reason for being here
3. Reasoning from God's Word and its application to everyday life
4. The pleasure of independent study
5. The power of self-government
6. Care and compassion for God's creation
7. Life skills
8. That life is precious
9. The value of the past
10. Love of learning

If I can provide the environment where they can absorb all of these, then I think my job will have been a resounding success.

And if you'll notice, there aren't any "schooly" things on the list. There are no lofty academic objectives. That will come as this list is manifested. Knowledge can come anytime, this list can't wait. I think of gaining knowledge like picking flowers that we pass along the way to Wisdom.

The way I study and educate my children is the root from which these 10 things spring. The fruit comes when they incorporate these things into their lives. And what sweet fruit that is!

*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in Truth. (3 John 4 NKJV)*

# Looking at the Bible with different lenses

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Our studies place God's Word at the center of all subjects. We do not tack some scriptures on to a canned curriculum, but we discover the principles from which the subject is derived and teach those. I love using the Word of God as the foundation for all subjects. I enjoy it for many reasons.

First, it keeps me in the Word more than any other type of education would. My philosophy of education requires me to study and prepare my own heart before passing principles on to my children. Like a momma bird, I am breaking down the meat of the Word into something their little tummies can digest. This preparation keeps my mind on God's Word and meditating on Him.

Second, I see the Bible through a series of lenses, or filters, if you will. I view the Bible in different ways for different subjects. In JBC we are looking governmentally at God's Word. It is also our mathematics primer—we can see that math comes out of God's nature. The Bible is the highest form of literature, so we view all other written text compared to it. It is also a science text, even allowing us to be present at creation to see how God put the Earth and its inhabitants together. I also see its excellent grammar and manner of expression, which elevates our standard of grammar and sentence structure. And it is a big, beautiful window to His Story. We can see providential history played out over thousands of years.

Third, because it is God's written instructions, I can find everything I need there. Trouble with a child? Look for the answers there. Struggling to grasp a subject? I just check my concordance and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the wisdom I need. I never need to be stressed or concerned, for His Word has the comfort and encouragement I need to make it

through. I know what my duties are as a parent, and my children know theirs also. This structure is very reassuring to me. His will is not mysterious or unattainable. God makes it all plain for me in His Word. His Word says

2 Making your ear attentive to skillful and godly  
Wisdom and inclining and directing your heart and  
mind to understanding [applying all your powers to the  
quest for it]:  
3 Yes, if you cry out for insight and raise your voice for  
understanding,  
4 If you seek [Wisdom] as for silver and search for  
skillful and godly Wisdom as for hidden treasures,  
5 Then you will understand the reverent and worshipful  
fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of [our  
omniscient God].  
6 For the Lord gives skillful and godly Wisdom; from  
His mouth come knowledge and understanding.  
7 He hides away sound and godly Wisdom and stores  
it for the righteous (those who are upright and in right  
standing with Him); He is a shield to those that walk  
uprightly and in integrity,  
8 That He may guard the paths of justice; yes, He  
preserves the  
way of His saints. (Prov. 2: 2-8 AMP)

This is my scripture for my own home education. It is comforting to know that as I teach my children to seek skillful and godly wisdom that we will not be disappointed. All this hard work has eternal rewards. As we pursue these subjects using biblical principles, I am not just teaching science or grammar, but God is revealing "skillful and godly wisdom" to them. Hallelujah! That's all I want for them: to know the Wisdom that comes from above. All the rest is gravy.

Together, the school subjects give me comprehensive view of God's Word that I would never experience otherwise. I can see the "whole counsel of God," enjoying His wisdom and insight on matters like economics, interpersonal relations, education and home and family life. It is an understatement to say that there is no better manual for education and living

than the Bible. If you never taught from another book you would get an excellent education.

# Where are we sowing our seeds?

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At lunch with my family we were talking to a friend who is the general manager of a large restaurant. At that time he was working 60-70 hours a week. He was telling us how he had been talking to his parents about his decision to change his life. He was getting out of debt and saving up money to take a year off to seek the Lord and to do the work of the ministry. Then he planned to get a job working 40 hours a week. "My plan is to live simply. It's just not worth it for me to have all this stuff and make myself sick in the process."

This scenario is like all of us. We get so busy living life that we are making ourselves sick, if not physically, then spiritually.

Mat 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;

Mat 13:4 And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

Mat 13:5 Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:

Mat 13:6 And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Mat 13:7 And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

Mat 13:8 But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Mat 13:9 Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

I think this is the type of seed America is planting in bumper crops.

Mat 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

I don't want the cares of this world to choke out the seed God is planting in the lives of my family. I don't want my children to grow up chasing the wrong dream, living and toiling for a crop of thorns. I want them to bear much fruit.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

If I stay close to the vine then I'm sure to bear much fruit. If I keep my children close to the vine, if I teach them the ways of God and how to hear His voice for themselves then the seed God plants in their lives will not be choked out, but rather the fruit of the Spirit will flourish.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,  
Gal 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

If they are cultivating these then there will be no room for the cares of this world.

This is why I teach my children the way I do. This is why I spend hours studying and renewing my mind. This is why I am allowing the Holy Spirit to change my thinking about what it really means to train up my children.

It's more than just learning the 3 R's. It's about teaching them to think and reason from God's Word, teaching them about the rich American Christian heritage they claim. It's about training them to give a reason for the hope that lies within them. It's about teaching them about the liberty that can only come from Christ. It's about teaching them about God's providence throughout His Story and their place on the Chain of Christianity.

It's not about education for education's sake. It's not about getting into the best colleges (though they will if they want to). It's about living a life that is a sacrifice to God, about keeping your priorities in check and making sure your seed is falling on the most fertile soil.

The Biblical Principle Approach philosophy of education has done more to increase my time with God, to prepare my heart to hear His voice and draw me closer to Him than any Bible study or Sunday school class has ever done. It keeps me in His word and in His presence in a way that no other philosophy of education can do. And for that I am truly grateful that God saw fit in His providence to lead me on this path--for my children's sake.

# You are enough

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Let's pretend we are dear friends. After a hectic day you find a note from me in your mailbox. It would probably say something just like this...

Just wanted to send along my thoughts and prayers and let you know that you are doing a good job. However you are implementing PA, whatever "school" looks like at your house, whatever you get done this week—good job! There are as many ways to implement PA as there are home educating families on the planet. No two homes will look exactly the same. That's because no two children are the same.

Isn't that why you started homeschooling in the first place? To be free to teach what you want in the way you want in the time you want with the materials you want? Don't become a slave to a philosophy, a method, a plan or a notebook. I don't think that's the spirit of the Biblical Principle Approach at all. The Holy Spirit should guide you in your preparation and your teaching and He will if you don't try to force Him into a box you made.

Take everything you learn on your PA journey and prayerfully fit it for use in your own "kingdom." God placed these institutions in your life to help you, not to stifle you—let them. They are all part of God's Providential plan for your little homeschool and you should take what you get and use it for His glory. Don't stress out on the mechanics. Enjoy the spirit of PA. It will all eventually fall into place in the way you need it to.

Enjoy your kids and have a good time together. Make learning fun and they will learn all they need to know. Put God's Word at the center of everything and they will naturally begin to turn to it. Keep their eyes on Jesus, give them a love for God's Word and instill a love of learning. All the rest will come in God's good time.

# Anna-Marie: treasure hunter

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If my life would have taken a different turn I might have been an archeologist. Researching ancient cultures and plotting grids; digging away in the hot sun; sifting, sorting and cataloging the day's finds. It seems so rewarding to uncover new clues about the past. Or maybe I'd have been a treasure hunter, always searching for the next big find. That would definitely be an adventure!

I fancy myself a kind of treasure hunter. Tools in tow, I search long and hard, consulting my map (my Bible) to make sure I'm still on the right track. When I believe I'm in the right spot I drop everything and dig like mad, kicking up dirt and making a mess (cue the Indiana Jones music). I may have to search around a little but I keep digging sweating and digging sweating and..."clink!" What was that!?! Eureka! Ahhhh, there's nothing sweeter!

I'm more of an "I can do that myself" kind of learner. I enjoy getting my hands dirty, seeking things out in a way that makes sense to me, which isn't always the way others would go. It may take me longer to "get it" from time to time, but the treasures I unearth in my excavation mean more to me than anything anyone else could give me. The satisfaction that comes with the process is so very satisfying.

God has me on a journey to explore, and to lead my little explorers right behind me. I must show them the ropes, where the pitfalls are and where the true Treasure can be found. And for me to do that I must own it. And to own it I must get it for myself. Now that's not to say I don't appreciate help from time to time. I'm not crazy! It's just that I need someone to kind of point me the general direction and say, "It's that way." I'm so glad that God planted the idea of the Biblical Principle Approach in Ms. Slater and Ms. Hall. I am forever indebted to them for blazing the way before me and leaving a trail for me to follow.

Well, I'm off on another exciting dig in Principle-land. Wish me well!

# Are you teaching as Mary or Martha?

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As home educating mothers, we all strive to do our best and provide our children with the most excellent education we can. As a mom using the Biblical Principle Approach to education (and planning my own lessons), I must spend a good deal of time preparing lessons, researching and such. It is easy to look up and find myself far off the reservation, out in the desert, wondering how on earth I got there. It's dry and itchy and lonely. I need to get back to the still waters (Psalm 23).

No matter what curriculum, what philosophy we use, it is so easy to get caught up in the planning, studying researching, even teaching. We get caught up in routines, charts, plans and other things. But God has so much more for us—and for our children.

Our focus should be on “the good portion” (Lk. 10:42). In the story of Mary and Martha, Martha was caught up in the mechanics of her day. Things needed to get done and someone had to do it. Her issue was not knowing when to take off her “home keeper” hat and sit down to listen to Jesus. Mary seemed to have a sense of the importance of the moment and sat down to soak it in.

I want to be like that with my home education. I want to seek first His kingdom (Mt. 6:33) and have all the “little” things added to me. I don't want to miss a single minute of God speaking to us, while I'm distracted with planning and scheduling and the other stuff. *Lord, give me a Mary spirit...*

I encourage you to sit at the feet of Jesus with your children. He will richly reward you. You will grow and mature in Him and all the other things will work out just fine.

# The 5th R

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In the Biblical Principle Approach to American Christian education we use what we call the 4-R's: research, reason, relate and record. If you want to know more about that, Shannon offers a nice synopsis, and so does Diane. Did you know there is a 5th R? (at least in the Gospel according to Anna-Marie...)

This is important, especially for those new to home education, whatever your philosophy or methodology. It's painfully simple (yes, painfully—as you will see in a moment) and so obvious that we seem to overlook it often times. The 5th R is REST.

First you must rest in the Lord. Rest comes with trusting Him. And believe it or not, resting takes effort. It's not a lay down and relax sort of thing (although that sounds REALLY good to me right about now), but it's a resting, a waiting on God. In Hebrews 4 Paul says we must labor to enter into the rest God has prepared for His children. It does not come easy, especially to mothers. We must consciously make an effort to believe the Lord and to trust Him.

Then you must rest in your love for your children. Your mother's love compels you to learn all you can about your child: their learning styles, habits, strengths and weaknesses, giftings, callings. This maternal desire to bond can be a wonderful tool in God's hands. He will use that to make you a better teacher—and a better mother. And it will keep you striving, searching, seeking out the best materials and lessons. They will turn out well because you care and because you are making every effort toward shaping Christians who can reason from God's Word.

Lastly, rest in the process. It will work if you will work it. Reasoning from God's Word is the hardest thing you will ever teach your children to do. It will challenge you and magnify

your own shortcomings (at least in your own eyes). Your children will learn to reason. They will also learn fractions and the circulatory system and Shakespeare because you will make sure of that. But don't get so caught up in the mechanics of the Biblical Principle Approach that you lose your joy—and your sanity. Or at least give up and move on. Keep working, little by little. You will not BPA everything right away. It's a process. And don't think you are not "doing it right" or doing enough. You do what you can and when you know more you do more.

This new year I encourage you, mom to mom, to make an effort this year to enter into that rest. If you feel you are called to teach your little lambs, then the Lord will help you on this journey. And as you enter into His rest you will find renewed strength, abundant joy and eternal hope.

# A sacrifice of thankfulness

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Some think that thankfulness is part of your natural ability, like being able to sing or being a good writer—either you have it or you don't. I don't belong to that group. Others think it is something you catch, like a cold. I don't happen to belong to that group either. I believe that gratitude is a learned behavior, a lifestyle that takes a lot of effort to maintain.

Human nature is to be ego-centric. We naturally care about ourselves and not much else. Most other things we care about only because they affect us in some way. It takes a lot of work to pull ourselves out of the "ego-centrifugal force" and into a new orbit.

The Word of God says

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (*1 Thes. 5: 18 NKJV*)

It also says

Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing. (*Ps. 107:21, 22 NKJV*)

The work, the sacrifice of putting to death the flesh and living a thankful life, pulls us into another orbit. If we live in a thankful orbit, we will be more thankful all day, every day. We will seek out His Providence at work in our lives. We will be sensitized to it.

It is not enough to live thankful lives ourselves. How do we raise thankful children? We make it a habit they can see. We make every effort to demonstrate thankfulness as we go through our day. Some easy ways to do that are:

- Be an example of a life full of thanksgiving.
- Create a thankfulness box. Write one thing on a slip of paper each day and at Thanksgiving read the year's thankful notes.
- Start a thankfulness journal. Make it available to the whole family. Write in it each day.
- Start your day with praise and thanksgiving.
- Memorize thankfulness scriptures.
- Make a list of things you are thankful for. Add to it each day, eventually taping papers together into a long, long scroll.
- Create a thankfulness tree. Write things on paper leaves or ornaments and add to the tree.
- Think of things you are thankful for using all the letters of the alphabet.
- Write letters for gifts received before the gift can be used.
- Pray together regularly. Always begin your prayers with praise and thanksgiving
- Help others in need. You will be thankful for what you have.
- Pray that your children's eyes will be opened to their blessings and that a grateful attitude will become a part of their Christian character.
- Pare down their belongings. Sometimes less really is more.
- Acknowledge their thankful ways.

We must pull our children into orbit around the Son, where He is the center of everything. When they are in the right place, thankfulness will come more easily because their eyes are fixed on the one Who gives to all liberally.

# Divine discontent

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Ever have one of those ~~days weeks~~ months? It seems that everything is wrong. Everything. I am not doing anything "right." I need some peace in my mind and rest in my soul.

I have been through a sort of crisis before, so I know what that's like. I am not sure about my place in the world. I feel like I have so many ideas, so many plans, so many dreams and none of them ever come to fruition. I have an opinion about everything in my life and that constant chatter in my head is tiresome. I feel like life is spinning out of control and I have no way to stop it.

I must work to find the balance I crave. I am very much an "all or nothing" person, so slow changes are a challenge. When I get an idea of something I want to change, I want it to happen yesterday. I think that is in part to fear that if it doesn't happen right now, it may never change at all. But God is faithful and He is teaching me. He is showing me how to have balance, to get everything done that I need to and still enjoy my life.

Joyce Meyer says that enjoying your life is a decision. So why can I never seem to make that decision to just be happy? I am always in a discontented state; never at peace with my decisions. I second guess myself every chance I get. Could God really be in the midst of my mess? Could He use this condition to lead me to Him? I believe the answer is a relieved YES.

He can use my discontent to show me that I will never be satisfied with anything outside of Him. I will never be "good enough" in my own eyes, or even in His for that matter. I can never do enough, but then I am not about the "doing" at all. It's about the "being." I am to abide in Christ. I am to put on Christ. I am to enter into the divine rest. God is not so concerned about what I am doing. He is much more

concerned with what I am being. So the discontent can drive me crazy or drive me to my knees, where my Heavenly Father takes me in His arms and gently, lovingly restores my soul. He draws me closer and closer until I can hear His heartbeat. Then He shows me His plans and my plans suddenly seem insignificant. I don't want my will, but His. And His will is for me to look more and more like Him every day.

*Help me, Lord, to walk out Your will. Never let me be satisfied with my own way. That's truly divine discontent.*

# The tapestry of home education

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I think of the home education process as a tapestry. It's a beautiful work that will stand the test of time (hopefully) and bless all who look at it. But it's not easy. It takes time, dedication and resolve. But thankfully we are not in the process alone. The tapestry wasn't our idea in the first place. (Deut. 6:7, Col. 1:16)

It is unique to your family. No one else's home education will look just like yours. And the pattern can't be copied exactly. If you are trying to copy another family's pattern, you may be frustrated because it isn't working out right. You must get your pattern from the Master Pattern Maker, Jesus. (Titus 2:14)

How many times have you changed something about the way you are educating your children? I hope it's often. I don't mean your philosophy or even the content, but just the delivery or the materials. I hope you are always evaluating what is working, what needs improvement, what's coming next in the weave. Checking the color, the pattern, again just to make sure, adjusting as you need to. And making sure we are adding enough of the right things: scripture, reasoning, fruit of the Spirit, compassion and the like. These are what keep the stitches from pulling out. Reasoning from the Word of God anchors all of the stitches. Your children own their own faith, being rooted and grounded in love. (Eph. 3:17)

From the back, where you are working on the daily process, it may look like a mess. It's not always pretty. There are knots and extra string and things that don't look like they belong there (at least that's *my* experience!). I encourage you from time to time—move around and look at the front of it. Enjoy the beauty and wonder in the whole picture, the design the Pattern Maker is creating. Marvel in the intricate details and

how it is all coming together. Look with new eyes and see how far you've come. Then get back to work! (Eccl. 3:11)

I also hope you are not afraid to change things up, to do things differently. Each of your children is completely different and has unique learning styles, interests and strengths. Each time you weave the next child into your tapestry you will make some adjustment. And each time you do, the pattern becomes more detailed and lovely because we all add something to the tapestry that would be missing otherwise. (Ps. 139:14)

Don't be discouraged if one of your children has a math weakness or ADD or another sort of challenge. Look at it as adding to the tapestry, teaching you about yourself, your child and God. The challenges will not ruin your masterpiece. On the contrary, it will make it better, even spectacular—something it never could have been without the rich experiences challenges provide. (Rom. 8:28)

Now from time to time you may see that you've made a mistake. Maybe you thought you knew what was next in the pattern or just thought you would do your own thing and it isn't working out at all. You will have to remove some stitches. Or rework an entire section. Take heart. The Master is patient and has everything under control. Allow Him to guide the stitching and things will be back on track in short order. And He will take the section you thought was ruined and add it to the design, making it even lovelier than it would have been without it. (Jer. 29:11)

Enjoy your tapestry. Enjoy the way it is all working together. Enjoy the process. Don't wish anything away because before you know it, the process will be over and your masterpiece will be complete. I don't want a single stitch to be missing in my work. I want to complete it with joy and rejoice in what the Master has done. My tapestry will stand as a testament for the ages, telling all who look on it of God's faithfulness and goodness to us on this journey. (Acts 20:24) (2 Th. 2:15-17)

# Hold your housework close to your heart

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My family is benefiting from the changes I've implemented from the book *Managers of Their Homes*. One change is that we have added a "training" time. This is a small block of time where I can teach stuff they need to learn, like the proper way to wash your hands, shake out a rug or sweep a floor. This has been a great time for us together.

We were folding laundry recently and I was demonstrating the way we fold towels and clothes. I discussed why we fold things the way we do but that other families have their own way too. So we moved on to shirts. I was showing my daughters how to fold them. My then 5 year-old daughter said, "So you just hold it to your heart like this." She stretched out the shirt against her body, with her little arms stretched wide. I asked what she meant. "Like this mom, with the neck against your heart." Well, it's not exactly the way I showed them, but I thought it was really profound. Laundry is a loving task that should have "heart" in it.

When I do laundry and other "mundane" tasks, I am blessing my family. I am touching their clothes, holding them close to me and carefully folding them so they will have clean clothes to wear. I am smoothing their sheets so they will have a warm bed to sleep in. I chop vegetables and meat so they will have healthy bodies. I scrub their little heads so their hair will be clean. Each task is a labor of love, coming from my mother's heart through my hands. I hope they know that somehow.

So yes, I do hold the clothes close to my heart. And try not to think about the day when they won't need me to fold their clothes anymore. Then they will fold the clothes of someone they love and hold them close. And then maybe I'll bring my laundry over to their house for a change!

# Place Value

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I plan my own lessons. This takes quite a bit of time, even for my young ones. But it is a total labor of love. One arithmetic lesson was a wonderful example of why I love the Principle Approach so much. My daughter needed to work on her numeric place value to 1,000,000. She was doing okay but we need to continue to reinforce it. I was studying the principles that apply to this concept and I just had to giggle when I think about how good God is. As arithmetic is orderly and predictable, so is God. That's good to know. But there's more!

When studying place value you see that each number has a unique value in relation to all the other numbers. WOW! It's a picture of the body of Christ:

Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:  
Eph 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

God speaks to us all the time in His creation. If I wasn't searching out Biblical Principles I would never have considered this. We all have value according to God. He considered us of great worth, sending His Son to die for our sins. This value is constant and consistent.

When we talk about place value we discuss this scripture and place value takes on a whole new meaning. This is what PA is about: finding the principles that the subjects come out of. Who knew you could find place value in the Bible? God did!

I hope you will consider your Place Value and discover what treasures God has given you for the body of Christ.

# Reasoning with young children (part 1)

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There is a philosophy of education that takes the perspective that reasoning is for older children. Younger children are to be filled with facts and enticed to learn with interesting topics and presentation. I don't happen to agree.

On the surface, this sounds reasonable enough. How on earth can you reason when you have nothing to reason with? You need a certain amount of knowledge to be able to reason, to think things through. So what about reasoning with a second grader? A kindergartener? Is that even possible? I exuberantly shout YES!!

The beautiful thing about reasoning from God's Word is that it is God's Word. It is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. It is not head knowledge. It speaks to the heart, to the spirit. A child can hear the voice of God, just as adults can.

In *A Guide to American Christian Education*, Mr. Rose discusses the seed principle, that is, when you use the Principle Approach you plant the seeds of the whole subject in principles, not disseminating facts in an evolutionary, fact-based method. You can see in the salvation message that a child and a full-grown adult hear the same Gospel, feel the tugging of the same Holy Spirit and receive the same salvation. It is only the expansion of the idea that is different. It is the same with math, science, HisStory or English. When you are reasoning those subjects from God's Word then your child, even a young child, can reason at a rudimentary level. The principles are planted and God can grow them into mature plants for His glory.

The most powerful thing I can really say is that I do it every day in my own home. I know that I would have missed out on

some wonderful discussions with my children if I had simply been filling their minds with facts and fun. Since we are looking for principles and reasoning together, I cannot imagine doing anything else. And it gets better each year, because they are able to reason deeper and we can take the discussion into uncharted waters. God is good!

# Reasoning with young children (part 2)

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Another benefit of reasoning from God's Word with young children is that it really takes the pressure off me. I have one job to do, and it is up to God and my child to do the rest.

My job is simply that of planting seeds. I am to make sure my children have the rudiments, the seeds of every subject. It is not my job to freak out about how they will ever learn all they need to know to "make it in the real world." No child, no matter how "well educated," learns everything before they reach the magic age of 18. That's what living is for, to continue learning and growing.

This quote may help you, as it has me:

When we teach the principles of God's Word, the rudiments or "bare grain" of any subject, we do not know how the individual will mature or how the body of wisdom and knowledge implanted will be expressed by future generations. But, we are assured if we teach whole, complete principles, and "sow" them in the good ground of a diligent student, that these seeds--- will produce fruit after their own kind, and God will give them a body---and identity and individuality---that pleases Him. Careful sowing, watering and weeding cultivated the Truth sown. (*A Guide to American Christian Education* p. 127)

I do not know what my children will need when they are grown. I don't even know what I will need tomorrow. But with prayerful preparation, diligence and faithfulness I know I can prepare my children as God would have me to. And that preparation includes reasoning with them from the time they are very young.

It is important to allow your children to reason. These are their property, their own thoughts that they have discovered. When they discover that ability your school time will never be the same. When my children are able to reason, however simple it is, I make a point to remind them that that thought belongs to them. I didn't give it to them; they did it on their own. Intellectual property is a powerful force. Any insight they gain through reasoning for themselves can never be taken from them. This will strengthen their faith and their ability to reason affectively with others as they grow up.

# Reasoning with young children (part 3)

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In the final part of this series I wanted to end with some practical application, because that's what I enjoy.

Imagine the classical music playing in the background as you gather your little chicks for a day of lessons. As you finish your opening prayer your little cherub-faced angel is looking up at you longingly for some words of inspiration. You pontificate as your child sits at your feet, enraptured by your wisdom. Yea, right. Let's get real...

Reasoning with young children is a little like swimming for the first time. It's scary but you can't wait to do it again. You don't have all the answers (who does??) and you don't feel fully prepared (you probably never will, honey). The phone rings, the littlest ones get into stuff they shouldn't and you sometimes have a bad day. How do you manage to carve out some time to reason with your kids?

1. Reasoning takes place anywhere, anytime. It can be with a simple discussion about grasshoppers or a memory verse from church. Next time your little one asks you a question, I challenge you to ask them some questions back. See if they can answer their own question, at a basic level.
2. Also you must pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to make you instant in season and out of season. Kids come up with conversations at the strangest times and you would hate to miss out on a wonderful opportunity.
3. Build time to reason into your daily plans. Don't fill up with facts and activities and leave no time to ponder things. Give them time to respond with their own thoughts, even if they must take a day to do it. Let them think and get back to you. But don't forget to get back to it!

4. Get rid of notebooks with fill-in-the-blank answers. They will never learn to reason that way. Ask your own open-ended questions. When they are young it is very easy to do.
5. Take time, as you can, to prepare beforehand. I know this can be a struggle sometimes but when you read the lesson ahead and write some points out to reason together it will boost your confidence and you will be more productive.
6. Keep your Bible and 1828 dictionary close. They will be invaluable to your family as you reason together.

# The coverings of the buds

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In botany we discussed bud coverings, structures that serve to protect buds in harsh weather and keep them safe until spring. They are thick shingle-like coverings with a glue-like substance to hold them shut tight. In some plants the inside of the bud covering (sometimes called a "winter-cradle") is lined with a downy substance to shelter the little bud and keep it warm--its little blanket.

The trees in warm climates do not have bud coverings, so if you put an orange tree in a cold climate the buds will die, and there will be no fruit or leaves. They will have been unprotected.

Spontaneously my little then second grader reasoned she was the bud. She went on to say that her dad was the covering and I was the glue that held it all together. I suggest Jesus is the glue, but she did a great job. She is right. We are to shelter our little buds until it is time for them to blossom. We should offer them a soft, warm place to grow, safe from the cold elements.

It's amazing what children will glean from a lesson if given the chance to reason. God has so much to teach us, using His creation, if we will just listen.

# Critical thinking

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Recently I had some coveted down time and sat down with the remote (mistake #1). As I flipped through the channels I came across the game show "Are you Smarter than a 5th Grader?" (mistake #2). I admit I really knew nothing about the show but it seemed cute and my third grade daughter thought we should check it out. As I listened to the questions from the pre-tween set, I found myself growing uneasy. Some of the first and second grade questions my darling daughter didn't know the answer to. Since I'm the educator around here I took that personally.

I slowly started thinking about the questions and allowed my inner critic to speak to my inadequacy and it rattled off an impressively long list of my shortcomings. But then something rose up inside me. I refuse to compare my success as a teacher to a game show, and a lame one at that. Facts (especially useless ones) are not a gauge of learning. My children may not know silly facts but they are learning to reason, learning to hear the voice of God, learning to love their neighbor. And those are things facts can't do.

I turned off the TV and read a book, satisfied that I am doing right by my kids. They are right on track in every way. Thanks to Jeff Foxworthy for reminding me of that.

## And another thing...

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...about that game show bothers me. To see a grown man looking pitiful, not knowing the answer and hoping a kid does, just didn't sit well with me. Grown-ups looking to children for answers isn't my idea of good television. Or good family harmony.

And this thing of having lots of facts at your fingertips. Einstein didn't do that. Don't keep in your head things you can easily look up. The goal is not to raise an encyclopedia, but a child who can look things up in one, and then skillfully apply the knowledge he finds there.

Disjointed, useless facts held together with jokes and smarty pants kids isn't my idea of a good time. But then again, what do I know. I'm not a 5th grader.

# Asking myself some tough questions

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I have been thinking on this quite often lately: what does it mean to be content? (That is a whole other post) Why am I not content? I have been thinking of this in relation to my little home and family. Is what I am doing really "important?" Is it "significant?" I have been asking myself some serious questions along those lines.

## **What if this is all there is?**

Well, what if it is? Is that really so bad? I have a husband that really loves me, beautiful children, and the opportunity to stay at home with them. And yes, I have to listen to the whining and be responsible for their education and spiritual development and never have even a bathroom break by myself. This seems like a pretty good life to me.

## **What if I'm not doing the right thing?**

Am I doing all I know to do in the Lord? Well, that's all I can be responsible for. I must trust God to take care to let me know, and be faithful to listen. And there will ALWAYS be opportunity to work through this one. When do we ever feel 100% sure we are "doing the right thing?"

## **Isn't it important for me to *feel* fulfilled?**

If I believe I am truly in the will of God, then I should trust that I'm not missing out on something. And there are two words that make me cringe when I see this question written down: *me* and *feel*. I have to get beyond my feelings and beyond myself. My sense of fulfillment doesn't come from changing diapers or wiping snotty noses, or even from doing a relatively good job on a given day. My sense of fulfillment

comes from knowing I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing, whatever form that comes in. That takes the sting out of the bad days for me.

### **Am I making a difference in the world?**

We all have a desire to make our mark on the world, to feel like we left it better than we found it. If I am home all the time how can I possibly impact the world or fulfill the Great Commission? Well, I am raising my children to love God and their fellow man and to reason. I am making a difference in their world. Also I am involved in my local church. and missions. and my neighborhood. So I'm doing what I can where I am in this season of my life. In another season those obligations and opportunities will change.

What I am coming to realize is that one person is as important as a million. My writing is no less spectacular because only my children saw it. My handmade book is no less wonderful because it was a gift in secret. If no one sees my work but God, that's all I need to know. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" is what I'm really chasing, not the accolades of men. I want to be satisfied that I did it for an audience of one. My work is no less important if it's not published or seen and commented on by the masses.

### **Will I ever have time to do what I want to do?**

If I am always cleaning, cooking, studying, and doing things for my family, when do I have time for me? I understand that personal time is important for a well-balanced life, but I don't want one more well-intentioned person offering me a warm bubble bath. I want to know when I will have time to do things I am passionate about: writing, bookmaking, public speaking, sleeping (just kidding!). It sounds so selfish to say out loud, but when is it my turn? Well, I suppose "my turn" comes when my children have left home, or are older. When I got married, and then again when we made the decision and God blessed us with children everything changed. It's not about "me first" anymore. It's about these little beings that need a mother to be invested in their lives.

This is a lesson I am still learning because for some reason this hasn't come easily to me. My children need a mom who listens to their silly songs, mediates their arguments and cleans up their vomit. They deserve a mom who will be present in the moment and not so distracted with her own wants and perceived lack of "me time" that she misses the glorious life happening all around her. And a mom who can work in a little "me time" now and again, who isn't putting everything off until the kids leave home, is a balanced and peaceful mom. Even a few minutes a day does wonders for me.

What a precious gift I have been given, to invest my life in another. Where else do I get that chance? Where else am I loved so unconditionally and accepted to freely? What other opportunity do I have to give all of myself in such an exhausting way and enjoy the satisfaction that what I am doing really *does* matter? It's not about the masses on the internet or in great concert halls; it's about the chubby faced dragon-slayer who's found some wonderfully disgusting creature in the garden he wants me to meet. To that boy I am everything. So I savor it. I drink it in like a thirsty woman lost in the desert. The numbers don't matter but the audience. And my audience of four means more to me than any world-wide project.

# The comfort of friendship

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There are times that I feel like somewhat of a sideshow act. Not only do we home educate, but we use the BPA. Oh, and we plan our own lessons. And we aren't involved in a co-op or other home educating trappings (which isn't a bad thing). I don't wear denim jumpers and we watch TV. So even in the home educating community we are stand-outs, which also isn't a bad thing. But it can get a little lonely from time to time. You need like-minded individuals (not big anonymous groups) to rub elbows with. And online it's easier than ever to find such individuals.

I am thoroughly impressed with the friendship of Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren. They had much in common and forged a lifelong friendship through the turbulent times of the Revolution. Through their beautifully written correspondence they were able to encourage and spur one another on in their efforts to educate their children in less than ideal circumstances.

Here is an excerpt of a letter from Mrs. Warren.

Mrs. Warren to Mrs. Adams:

"You judge very right in thinking there is much pleasure in instructing the little flock committed to my care. Yet it is not without a mixture of pain when I consider the arduous work,--the importance of the charge, and frequently am I ready to think I am unequal to the trust.

"...I am sensible my own method will admit of much improvement, and though it has been my pleasing task for several years to cultivate the infant mind and plant the seeds of virtue in the bosom of my children, I am yet looking abroad for every foreign aid to enable me to the discharge of a duty of the highest

consequence to society;--though this is for a number of years, left almost wholly to our uninstructed sex.

"It is an arduous work to rear the tender plants and impress the youthful mind with such sentiments that when they go out of our hands they have only to cultivate them to become useful in their departments,-- an ornament to society, and happy themselves forever, when they shall be introduced into more enlarged and glorious scenes.

"I shall be happy indeed if I can acquit myself of the sacred trust by Providence delivered on every mother to the approbation of the judicious observers of life;-- but far happier if my conscience, and my judge, announce that no effort has been neglected.

"...I cannot but think the love of truth is of much the greatest importance; moreso than any single principle in the early culture of the mind. A careful attention to fix a sacred regard to veracity, in the bosom of youth, is the surest guard to virtue, and the most powerful barrier against the sallies of vice, through every period of life. When this principle has taken deep root, it usually produces not only generosity of mind, but very many other qualities."

How inspiring! I hope the internet can afford us the same sorts of lasting friendships. The miles are less imposing but the coldness of the internet can be hard too. I have made some wonderful friends here in cyberspace and I hope they are as lasting and as mutually inspiring as the friendship of Mrs. Adams and Mrs. Warren. Now go off and write a nice letter and put it in the mail to a friend. (But you may have to send her an email to get her address!)