

The Point of life *and all Learning*

by Diane MacEwan

When I first discovered homeschooling; I was passionate and on fire to help my children see that learning was enjoyable and fun. I loved the freedom to explore life and all that the Lord has created at our leisure and discretion. But most importantly, it felt good to direct our explorations by the interests and gifts of my children as the Lord shaped them. The more I 'de-schooled' my own mind, and moved away from 'textbook'-focused learning, the more my children seemed to flourish, and crave knowledge. I could relate to the thoughts of homeschooling pioneer John Holt in his book, *Teach Your Own*:

"What makes people smart, curious, alert, observant, competent, confident, resourceful, persistent – [and] in the broadest and best sense, intelligent- is not having access to more and more learning places, resources, and specialists, but being able in their lives to do a wide variety of interesting things that matter, things that challenge their ingenuity, skill, and judgement, and that make an obvious difference in their lives and the lives of people around them."

Charlotte Mason was another great supporter and cultivator of the cries of my heart in matters of training my children:

"A child is a person in whom all possibilities are present - present now at this very moment - not to be educed after many years and efforts manifold on the part of the educator"

"Imagination does not stir at the suggestion of the feeble, much diluted stuff that is too often put into children's hands."

As we hit the high school years, I really struggled with comparing my philosophies to the world's and felt slightly intimidated by the majority of other homeschoolers in my circles of friends who were following Alberta curriculum, or opting for credits and diplomas. With my eldest daughter showing interests in biology, I had moments of panic, thinking that she might need all kinds of credits and classes that we had never studied, and that my time was running out! And consistently, whenever I was plagued by bouts of doubt, God would offer me comfort and reground me in my philosophies.

Most recently, as we face high school graduation this summer, and my fallen self asks again, "What did I miss?" He has quieted my heart with wisdom from the wisest man who ever lived. King Solomon was a man who had everything: wisdom, power, riches, honor, fame and God's favour. Yet he too asked the question: *"What was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives?"* (Eccl 2:3b). What a gift

of all: "What is the point of my life?"

As homeschooling parents, the answer will reflect in every moment we spend with our children. Do we as homeschoolers seek knowledge for our children first, and then try to fit God into it? Or do we seek God "with our whole hearts, and souls and strength" and allow it to overflow into our quest for knowledge? (please see Deut. 6:4-9). This passage has become a cherished family mission statement in our home.

Prov. 1:7 says: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge."* All knowledge and all wisdom, is from Him. The Lord makes alive, and kills. He wounds and He heals. He brings low and He lifts up. He makes rich and He makes poor (Deut. 32:39, 1 Sam. 2: 6-8). Joy that is complete, and eternal pleasures are in His presence (Ps 16:11). His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him, Who called us by His own glory and goodness.

Through these, He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (2 Peter 1:3,4). All our quests for knowledge and gain should be for this purpose, namely, to delight in, and display love for God to shine forth His glory. Everything else is rubbish unless it displays this truth (Phil. 3:7-8). For of Him, and through Him and to Him are ALL things to whom be glory forever (Rom. 11:36, emphasis mine).

The passion fueling our days with our children needs to be aimed at a single focus - passion for Christ. Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:2: *"I decided to know nothing, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"* - right after an in-depth definition of true wisdom and knowledge. All pursuits of knowledge and wisdom outside of Christ are pointless.

In one of my favorite books *Don't Waste Your Life*, author/preacher John Piper presses this most important point:

"You don't have to know a lot of things for your life to make a lasting difference in the world. But you do have to know the few great things that matter, perhaps just one, and then be willing to live for them and die for them. The people who make a durable difference in the world are not the people who have mastered many things, but who have been mastered by one great thing."

If you want your life to count, if you want the ripple effect of the pebbles you drop to become waves that reach the ends of the earth and roll on into eternity, you don't need to have a high IQ. You don't have to have good looks or riches or come from a fine family or a fine school. Instead you have to know a few great, majestic, unchanging, obvious, simple, glorious things-or one great all-embracing thing- and be set on fire by them." ... "There must be a sense in which "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" is the ground and sum of everything."

It is for this that I strive, and when I am weary or lacking in energy, the Lord continues to teach our 7 children, for they belong to him. I trust Him to lead them down their paths, and I pray that I will ever be sensitive to His leading that I may join in, and never grow tired of accessing the resources that God has placed in our lives.

The world is our classroom! All of creation cries out to be explored and our hearts are designed with a passion for exploration. Just ask any mother of a two-year-old! And God is most glorified when we are most delighted in Him, and all that He has done.

As for the high school years, the Lord has shown me that my time is not running out, and there's no need to panic. I will continue to mentor, teach, and exhort my children until the end of my life. (And they will continue to teach me. When one sets out to teach, two learn!) There's no rule that says we have to have it all figured out by the time we are 18.

"Of course, a child may not know what he may need to know in ten years (who does?), but he knows, and much better than anyone else, what he wants and needs to know right now, what his mind is ready and hungry for. If we help him, or just allow him, to learn that, he will remember it, use it, build on it. If we try to make him learn something else, that we think is more important, the chances are that he won't learn it, or will learn very little of it, that he will soon forget most of what he learned, and what is worst of all, will before long lose most of his appetite for learning anything." ~John Holt~ Teach Your Own

I am thirty-five and still exploring "what I want to be when I grow up." I find new passions and ideas, goals and dreams with each passing year. As a grown-up, when I want to achieve a goal, I will do what it takes to get there. If I need to take a class, I will. If I need to make money, I will make it, with the Lord's help.

I want my children to see that I am consistent in this philosophy, and that I live it by example, not easily tossed by the winds of the world. I want them to hunger and thirst for Christ, and in turn, knowledge.

Love for Christ creates love for life. Love for life results in

delighting in and exploring all His creation, which in turn creates even deeper love for Christ. True learning begins and ends with Christ.

So is this the answer to the question "What is worthwhile?" that the wisest man who ever lived asked? *"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."* (Eccl. 12:13).