

# Ancient Paths to Modern Blessings:

## *The Vision of the Modern Christian Homeschool Movement.*

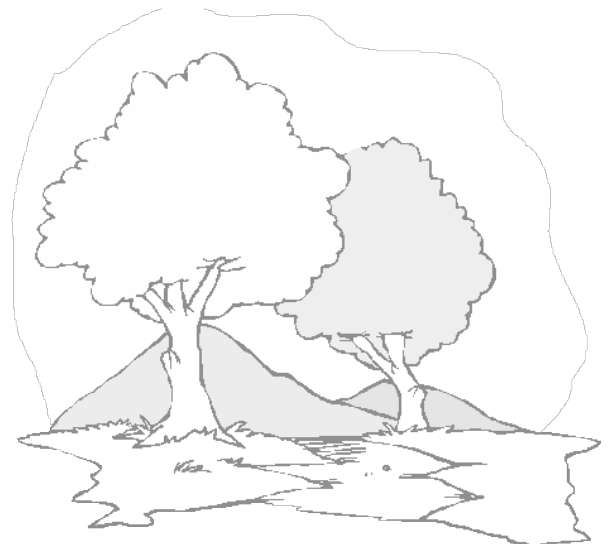
By David Monk

Homeschooling as a movement, particularly the Christian stream of it, should have died long ago. Pulling children out of public school so they can be taught exclusively by their parents was repulsive to the powerful educated elite that dominated our country in the mid-1980's when this movement began. Nevertheless, a rag-tag band of pioneering homeschool heroes braved threats, went to court, and eventually prevailed against these powerful enemies. Not only did these homeschool pioneers have enemies in the world, they had little support from their Christian community. Pulling children out of private Christian schools to be taught at home was incomprehensible to church and school leaders and even to caring Christian relatives. While Christian leaders were certainly more tolerant of homeschoolers, they felt teaching at home was an overwhelming responsibility for parents to take on and that God did not require it. Therefore while Christian leaders offered homeschoolers no resistance, they also offered no encouragement or hope of success. With rich and powerful enemies and unsupportive friends homeschooling had no future. The movement should have died after some noteworthy accomplishments by the zealous pioneers. But it did not die.

Why didn't the modern homeschool movement die? Why didn't the powerful opponents of these "fundamentalist narrow-minded brainwashing parents" defeat them? Why didn't good, highly respected Christian homeschool families sacrifice some money to put their children in private school and earn the praise of their fellow Christian families and escape the heat of their powerful enemies? How did they stand? It is because God preserved and defended them. Instead of capitulating, they sacrificed a salary so mom could stay home, sacrificed most of their free time, and sacrificed some of their friends and even the approval of their in-laws to homeschool. With His help, they not only stood, but grew exponentially in numbers.

I believe that God preserved this movement because homeschoolers have rediscovered ancient, sacred truths about family and have chosen to follow them. Homeschoolers succeed and are blessed when others fail because these truths are, well, true. These ancient, sacred truths are not new, just forgotten. When we apply them today, they lead our modern families down ancient paths to God's blessing as they always have.

What are these ancient, sacred truths? The Christian Homeschool movement is quite diverse, with adherents from every denomination, yet there are certain beliefs we share in common. This series of articles will explore these common beliefs. I would call this set of sacred truths the "Christian homeschool vision." There are many slants to this homeschool vision, but I will attempt to focus only on the aspects which distinguish us most sharply from the world, and on those aspects which are unique to the homeschool movement. Along the way I hope to encourage current homeschoolers to remember their rich heritage and to remember the bigger picture. I also hope to inspire those who have not yet begun homeschooling to consider the power of these ancient ideas. Consider what God would do in your family if you were to follow these ancient ideas, forgotten and now remembered, which bring rich blessings to all who have the courage to embrace them.



# Part 1 – Sacred Truths about the Family

*A Biblical Foundation for the Christian Homeschool Movement.*

## *3 Foundation Stones*

The Christian homeschool movement is not just the latest educational fad, it is a revival. Its roots are in God's word which is the ultimate source of ancient, sacred truth. In this section, I will present three foundational principles that form the Biblical foundation of the Christian homeschool movement. I will demonstrate that the home education model flows directly from scripture when you consider the responsibilities He gave exclusively to parents. Because there is a Biblical foundation, homeschooling is not just another teaching technique. Because of its Biblical basis, we can count on God blessing our efforts.

I believe many miss what the Bible has to say about homeschooling because they ask the wrong question (such as: "where does the Bible say I should homeschool?"). Sadly, we can not just run "homeschooling" through our computer's concordance to come up with answers. To be able to search scripture on this subject, we must consider what homeschooling means in terms of the culture to which scripture was written. One way to get a handle on this is to picture yourself trying to explain homeschooling to a Hebrew from the time of Moses. Teaching children at home would certainly be a familiar concept to him although he would not use the word "homeschooling" to describe it. In fact, it would be so familiar to him that he would probably find it ridiculous to fret over the question of whether "homeschooling" was healthy. It was normal for a Hebrew to teach their children at home. It is the concept of schools that would be foreign to him. Our modern word "homeschool" simply means we have kept our children out of schools. We need a word like "homeschool" today to emphasize the fact that we are not sending our children to the schools like everyone else. In Moses' time, they would have just called it "training your children". Once we have established that "homeschool" just means child training that is done by parents at home, we can find plenty of scripture references on the subject.

Now that we have our terms straight, let's lay the first foundation stone. In laying this stone, I want to dispel a myth held by many Christians today. That myth is that school is the best place to educate children. This is not a Biblical concept but a worldly idea that has crept

into Christian circles so universally that many think it was ours to begin with. The Bible simply does not say anything favorable about schools. In fact, going a step further, God did not set up schools at all. This is our first foundation stone: **schools were not established by God, they are an invention of man.** When God set up the laws, and government of the Jewish society in Exodus and Leviticus, He did not set up schools. Schools, in their modern form, did not appear on the scene until about 150 years ago. You simply can not argue that school is the best place to train children according to the Bible. Our 21st century culture may

believe this, but you can not derive it from scripture. If God wanted to establish schools, he would have surely done so.

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The Bible's silence on the subject of school begs the question: to whom did He give the job of education? To whom did He identify as the proper persons for teaching character, customs, and Hebrew history? To whom did He give responsibility for teaching the scriptures and for leading children to God? Is God silent on these subjects as well? No, the Bible is not silent. When God gave the children of Israel commands He wanted passed on throughout the generations, He charged the parents directly with the responsibility of transmitting them. This is our second foundation stone.

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. (Deut 6:5,6)”

Nowhere does the Bible speak of someone else sharing responsibility for teaching children. Later in history when Eli failed to teach his reprobate children to follow God's commands, Eli himself (the father) is chastised for the evil character of his children. God laid the blame on Eli alone, not also on some "teachers of the law" or other priests responsible for the training of young men. So the second foundational principle is: the Bible establishes parents, and particularly fathers, as the teachers and trainers of children.

Before I move on to the third principle, I want to clear up a point about academic vs. character/spiritual training. In many people's mind, character training is done at home, and schools provide only the "academic" portion. An analogy in Biblical times may be sending your

son down the lane to be taught carpentry skills by another man. The comparison is similar. One important difference, however, is that he would probably not go there

when he was six, stay for 5 – 8 hours a day, and keep going until he was 18! Nevertheless, as a matter of principle, is it wrong to send you children away to school to learn skills? No, it is not wrong to send them down the road to learn skills. The problem is that the school settings almost always diminishes the parent's influence over their children to a dangerous level. Even at Christian schools students typically turn their hearts toward their peers (Proverbs calls them "fools") for approval so that the influence of a 10 year old bully is often more powerful than his wise parent. If a student were being bullied in a homeschool setting, the bully would be sent to his room, and the parent would be all the more honored and influential! Without a strong influence over their children, parents can not lead them into good character and spiritual wisdom. So the point is not that children must learn every fact from their own parents, but the parents must retain primary influence in the children's lives. Without primary influence, parents can not train their character and spirit as God requires.

We have established that God did not assign the responsibility of teaching to schools (which are the inventions of men); He assigned this responsibility to parents. But He has not given us this responsibility without a promise. Proverbs 22:6 tells us: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This comforting promise is the third stone in our foundation. "God has empowered parents to raise Godly children." Godly children is the expected result, the normal outcome, when we train children in the way they should go. This simple idea is held almost universally among homeschool pioneers (and homeschoolers in general), yet virtually nowhere else. It is the spark that ignites all the kindling piled up by the teaching about parental responsibility into the flame of the homeschool movement. Because of God's promise, homeschoolers have an uncommon hope that

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their efforts will result in God-fearing, righteous young men and women. Those results are eternal and worth all the sacrifice here on earth. This is contrary to the common belief that despite the best efforts of righteous parents, teenagers rebel, good boys go bad, and nice young ladies get "into trouble". There is nothing

parents can do but pray. Yes it is true that a large percentage of the children of righteous parents have departed from "the way they should go", but this shows a failure to "training them up". It is not a sign that God's promise does not mean what it says. Parents can do something; they can bring their children home, win their hearts, teach them character, and lead them to God. With empowerment comes accountability. If peer influence, temptations, or confusion are coming from schools, they must be avoided. If schools undermine the parents' influence or tear down the Godly values parents are teaching, parents must act to defend their children from this. Parents are accountable to raise Godly offspring. If school gets in the way of this, it must be avoided. In the context of God's promise, however, taking on the responsibility of teaching our children is not a burden, but a blessing. Our labor is not in vain.

In this part of the series, I have established three foundations stones which lay a biblical foundation for the homeschooling movement. First, schools are inventions of men, not of God. They are not the institution God

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established for training children. Secondly, we saw that parents are God's chosen instruments to train children in character and spiritual wisdom. In order to succeed at this, parents must win and keep their children's tender hearts. Schools generally get in the way because they reduce parental influence and lead children into temptations they are not equipped to handle. Finally, God promised that if we train up our children well, they will not depart from God. This great promise gives us inspiration, and an uncommon hope. God empowered parents to succeed in raising Godly children. Our sacrifices seem small compared to that great reward.

To anyone well-read in the homeschool movement, the ideas I present are not new and many others have presented them much better than I. The works of Greg Harris, Mary Pride, Doug Phillips and Chris Klicka are excellent sources on this subject and are highly recommended.