

Ancient Paths to Modern

Blessings: Part 4

Radical Old Ideas about Family

By David Monk

The following article is part 4 in a 5-part series describing the modern Christian Homeschool vision. The objective of these articles is to describe, in broad strokes, the common beliefs of a loosely-aligned group of visionary homeschool families from all over the country. It is my hope that this series will serve the dual purpose of introducing those unfamiliar with the movement to its core ideas and reminding veteran homeschoolers of the compelling vision that originally inspired them. They are retrospective, time-honored, traditional views. They are ancient paths which have become overgrown from decades of neglect but which lead modern families to blessings just as surely as they did their ancestors.

From the daily newspaper to the grocery store clerk everyone agrees that strong families are a good thing, but hardly anyone knows how to build one. Because there are so few strong families, many of the blessings family was designed to embody have been lost as well. Specifically, the Christian family was designed to **pass on a multigenerational spiritual heritage**, giving each family member their strongest sense of belonging and identity. Before and after we are mechanics, engineers, nurses, pastors, or leaders, we are members of our family. The family was also designed to **provide financial, emotional, and spiritual stability**. The vision for family

espoused by the modern Christian homeschool movement reinstated these old-time “lofty ideals” as a realistic, achievable blueprint for families living in a modern culture.

Family: A multigenerational spiritual heritage.

From generation to generation...

Let’s face it, our enemies have a multigenerational vision. In the secular world, this is evident from their emphasis on education and training young leaders to “get involved in the process”. Enlightenment philosophers developed most of their theory early in the 19th century, but it was not until the early 20th century that we saw sweeping shifts from the old “Christian” moral society to new “Secular” and atheistic states. Changes were over 100 years in the making. In the spiritual world, it is evident that our arch-enemy, Satan, ensnares generation after generation in the same sins. How many families have you seen who have perpetuated cycles of abuse? How many sins in our own lives can we recognize in stories of our ancestors? How many of your own sins have you begun to recognize in your children? Can there be any doubt that our mortal enemy has a multigenerational plan for our destruction? God, however, has a multigenerational plan for our preservation. It is called the godly home.

God gives all children as blessings, but to His followers they are particularly blessed. Children are blessings in that they bring joy and are ultimately a source of pride for their parents; however, they are

more than that. They are the beginning of a spiritual dynasty for the glory of God. We should, therefore, work diligently to pass on our beliefs. We have God’s promise that we can succeed. (Proverbs 22:6). The idea that “despite parents’ best efforts, children rebel” is devastating to young parents. Why should they sacrifice themselves for the hope of their children growing up to be righteous when they can’t expect to succeed? While those who give that argument are generally expressing commendable compassion,



they are mortally wounding the fledgling multigenerational vision in the hearts of new parents. Does the Bible promise 100% success? No, of course not, but it tells us to train our children diligently with the earnest hope of success. After 25 years of teaching this idea, homeschool visionaries have shown that God's grace has certainly empowered their own efforts.

Passing the Torch...

How is this spiritual heritage passed on? It is passed on much the same way any other heritage is passed, through instruction, modeling, directing the affections, application, and consistency. Consider, for example, our country's heritage. We want our children to grow to love and defend their country, so we start by instructing them in American history. We teach them about heroes, interpret the difficult histories they will have to read, answer their questions, and make stories come alive to them in unforgettable ways. Next we model the correct attitude toward our country by our own actions; we teach them to appreciate and come to love our constitutional form of government; we interpret current events for them in terms of our founding principles; and finally, we talk about these ideas consistently and regularly so they remain central to our thoughts. We know how to inculcate an appreciation of our national heritage; instilling a spiritual one works similarly.



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Creating a sense of spiritual heritage must start with consistent and meaningful instruction about God's word, God's deeds, and God's promises. Our children simply must know what He has done and promised. This critical job must be done primarily by the parents themselves. It would be unwise to expect that they will adequately learn this in crowded Sunday School classes, or from simply observing at church. Secondly, we must show our children what a healthy relationship with God looks like by demonstrating it ourselves. They should see us pray regularly, seek His guidance in difficult times, and praise Him in church. They should understand that we love Him above everything else in our lives. Then we lead our children reverently into His presence when they

face struggles in their lives. We should pray with them when there are troubles rather than sending them to do it themselves. Rejoice with them when God answers their simple prayers and point out his merciful protection when they may not have noticed it themselves. We should sing together and worship God, including songs that everyone can enjoy. Thirdly, we need to apply God's word to our children's lives regularly. Show them how the Bible's instruction applies practically to their daily lives. Show them, for example, that just as God protected Gideon and his tiny army, he will protect them when their room is dark and scary. Finally, we must be consistent. Make the times together in worship regular, meaningful, and precious.

A quiver (or van) full of blessings...

Did you ever wonder why you see so many extended full-size vans at a homeschool conference? It is funny that every year at our convention in downtown Phoenix, we surprise the convention center staff by our questions about oversize parking. These large vans will not fit in 6' parking so where can these people park? The reason there are so many large families is simple. Once you see God's plan for multigenerational heritage, the meaning of verses such as Psalms 127:3-5 becomes abundantly clear: *many children are a great blessing.*

*"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one's youth.
Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them;
They shall not be ashamed,
But shall speak with their enemies in the gate."*

But will God really bless families that, in the eyes of the flesh, "overextend" themselves by having many children? To answer this, I would ask you to consider the following question: "Can any child come into the world without God breathing into it physical life and an eternal spirit?" I think we would all agree that the answer is "no". God is the author of all life. This is, of course, our central theme in our opposition to abortion. If God is the only author of life, then why do we commonly hear young Christian families agonizing over the question of when they should "have children". We do not have power to make children; only God can do that. We do have the power to attempt to prevent conception and that decision should be approached with caution and deference



to the Creator, considering whether it would preclude us from God's blessings. I will not attempt to interject a full discussion of this topic here, but hope that this simple introduction will help you understand that large homeschool families usually come out of a determination to live consistent with their spiritual beliefs, not a selfish desire to be the parents of many, or even some ambition to "take over the culture."

Train leaders, not followers...

While it is not our ambition to take over the culture, it IS our goal to prevent the culture from taking over our kids. Therefore we should train our children to be leaders, influencers, culture shapers, and not merely survivors. They simply can't be leaders if they are constantly questioning their own belief system. This means effective worldview and applied Christian philosophy training is essential. To do this well, we should inoculate our children against deadly philosophies by exposing them, at first in small doses then gradually increasing to full strength, in the safety of our home before they see them in the outside world. Then when they encounter anti-Christian philosophies, they will recognize them and already know the answers to the questions. The same principles apply to our history instruction. We teach our children to know the TRUE history rather than a modern re-written one, the lessons we can learn from it, how it applies to events happening today, and how they can research source documents to find the truth when they want to challenge some absurd claim they find in revisionist history. We could go on and apply this to science, literature, mathematics, writing, and more. The point is that an excellent academic education combined with a solid worldview foundation equips our children to lead, rather than follow. It helps them become the ones people will look to for answers, since "they seem to know what they are talking about". Then the spiritual richness in our families can minister to others. But the vision does not stop here. Like the castles of old were built to give towns generations of protection and stability, so the

Christian family was intended to be a safe place and stable fortress.

Family: A fortress of stability.

A financial castle...



What is the basis for financial stability for the typical modern family household? It probably comes from Dad's career, Mom's career, or a combination of both. What if Dad loses his job? In some cases, Dad has a job that he can replace within the same city, but in many other cases, he must immediately start looking across the country for new work. What if this means the family must move away from Mom or Dad's brothers and sisters, parents, or other relatives? While that is a source of sadness, it is not usually a decisive factor in the decision. Our modern mindset is "train yourself to earn good wages, then move to where the work is good." We have this mindset because brothers, sisters, and parents are insignificant in providing financial stability to the typical modern family. It was not always this way; it does not have to be that way; something rich has been lost that can be regained if we set our minds to it. Modern counselors typically advise against setting up any interdependence in finances among family members since the relationships are not strong enough to handle it. Why not fix the relationships, then reap the blessings of a diversified family economy? Here is where homeschooling can help. Homeschooling requires families to work through sibling rivalries rather than letting them simmer for years prevented from bursting into flame by consistent separation of the "warring parties". Homeschooling produces a whole portfolio of shared experiences and fond memories to build relationships from. It does not guarantee good sibling relationships, but gives them a better chance.

Friends for a lifetime...

When financial stability is centered in the family, rather than the career, the door is opened to an even greater blessing: your family members can become your life-

"We must never accept what we see around us as "families" to be all God intends for us, or all that we can hope for."

long, dearest friends. You simply can not do this unless you live near each other, and if you are in the “find the best job and move to it” mindset, you will probably never live in the same city. While it may not always be possible, I suggest a different general mindset: pick a career that allows you to live in many places, then work as a family to live together. Then the family can minister to each other’s souls. The same sister that you cried with when you lost your favorite doll is there for you to enjoy your first home, to see your children’s baseball games, to cry for you when you lose a baby, and to sit with you on your porch swing as you watch the grandchildren. This continuity is something we all yearn for, but we have convinced ourselves that it is a thing of the past. Not so! The modern world does not preclude us from living with our families, we usually don’t try very hard at it. It is not a high priority, because we don’t think of our families that way. We all have a chance to inculcate these ideas in our children so they can order their lives around each other. Then they will not have to live the same isolated lives that we have.

A source of spiritual wisdom, and spiritual support...

Finally, don’t just support each other emotionally, be a source of spiritual inspiration for each other. Pray together; go to church together; celebrate spiritual milestones together like baptisms and conversions. If a thousand angels in heaven rejoice, it is surely good enough cause for us to have a party here on the earth! Add spiritual significance into your family celebrations such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and birthdays. Support each other when you fail, offer wise counsel, search the scriptures to help each other find answers to difficult problems.

Conclusion

Hopefully this brief introduction has helped you to catch a glimpse of the depth of the vision for family intrinsic in the modern Christian homeschool movement. It is idealistic, I admit. Parents and children alike are fallen creatures, and our families may be dim reflections of the ideal. But this idealism inspires us, and I believe it was meant to. In the finale of C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* (*The Last Battle*), he describes heaven as the reality behind all the imitations of reality we see in our present world. It contained everything known in Narnia, but it was all much more real. The colors were richer, the mountains higher, the smells

more pleasing. It was the fulfillment of all their yearnings for beauty and life that they were never able to realize in Narnia. I believe God has given us a blueprint of the REAL family in his Word and in our hearts. We yearn for how it should be, but must be content with what life brings. The deadly trap, however, is to believe the poor imitation is all that was meant to be. We must never accept what we see around us as “families” to be all God intends for us, or all that we can hope for. We must never let Satan convince us our home is doomed. If we do that, Satan has won. I believe that homeschool visionaries with their “foolish” idealism have been used by God to remind us of what families were meant to be. God has used them to re-ignite the waning embers of the righteous home before they were extinguished completely. No, this “idealistic” vision of family is not new; it burns in the hearts of all of us. As simple, trusting, homeschoolers feed these embers with the kindling of their daily prayers, may God show His grace and fan them into flame in their homes so that they will become living proof that His blueprint for family still works!