

## **Faith, Character, Knowledge**

What would it look like in your family's home school if God were honored, included, and significant in everything--including math!--that you teach this year?

Knowing that our heartfelt goal was to honor and glorify God as a family, Steve and I developed our own working definition of what we were aiming for: "A Christ-centered education is one in which God is accorded His rightful place and is given all the significance He is due."

We knew that God wanted us to teach our children about Him; He wanted us to teach what is godly and right; and to not teach our children the details of ungodliness, unrighteousness, or wickedness. So how could we accomplish such a task?

As a suggestion, consider using the wise plan of God's that is listed in 2 Peter 1:5-8, "For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Examining these verses carefully, you can see that the foundation of all the character qualities listed is faith -- that is the starting point. If our children were to get nothing else from us as parents, we would be eternally grateful if each of our precious children came, in God's perfect timing, to a strong faith in Jesus Christ as his or her own personal Savior and Lord.

Because this is our starting point, we continue that idea and plan our school year with faith first; we plan our school day with faith first; and we plan our lives around faith first. We first plan how we will grow and strengthen our children's faith each school year (e.g., determine a Bible reading plan, choose a Bible curriculum, consider a teaching of the Bible that we would like to focus on, like what the Word says about angels or salvation or creation). We begin each school day with those activities which will remind us of God: who He is, what He has done for us, how we can see Him in every school subject (e.g., prayer, praise and worship, listening to tapes of Scripture reading, reading biographies of Christian heroes of the faith). During the day, if an opportunity arises to emphasize or teach faith, we will take the time to do that first. Should the day unravel, for some reason, by lunchtime, I know that we have at least covered the most important topic -- faith -- for that day!

The next quality that we diligently and purposefully add to our child's faith is goodness. Other ways to translate that would be virtue, moral excellence, or character. So, on the firm foundation of faith, we would next choose to emphasize all matters dealing with the development of a godly character. Each year we prayerfully decide what qualities we need to focus on as a family or as individuals. Each day we determine what small, manageable chunk of that project can be taught or put into practice. Sometimes, when a conflict erupts between siblings, I take a deep breath, move the skillet to a back burner on low, send up a quick prayer for wisdom and discernment, and I go deal with both siblings' character issues. Dinner will probably wait, while the souls of our children will not. If, after building faith and emphasizing character, our day takes a sharp turn for the worse or our motivation evaporates, we have at least covered the two most important topics in our home school!

That leaves knowledge, facts and figures, academics, firmly in third place behind faith and character. We plan actual reading, math, and history after considering the first two foundational levels. We do academics third in our daily schedule; usually doing the subjects that are the most difficult or frustrating as early in the day as possible, while we are still fresh and thinking clearly. (Should your family be more similar to late-night owls than my early-bird larks, organize your day so that the hardest subjects are tackled whenever you and your children have the most energy for them.)

Here is a quote that seems sums up what we have been discussing:

“Education comprehends all that series of instruction and discipline which is intended to enlighten the understanding, correct the temper, and form the manners and habits of youth, and fit them for usefulness in their future stations. To give children a good education in manners, in arts and science, is important; to give them a religious education is indispensable; and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties.”<sup>1</sup>

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1 Noah Webster, *Webster's 1828 Dictionary*.