

Chapter 15 Subjects You Will Teach

Teaching Life Skills!

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“I’m trying to find a good pie crust recipe,” Katie Beth caught my attention as I was opening the mail Jimmy had just brought in.

“I have a great one!” I responded gleefully. “Drive to Publix, go to the frozen food section and buy a frozen Pillsbury crust.”

“Didn’t you ever make pie crusts from scratch?” Jenny Rose asked from the family room, where she was checking her e-mail on Julianna’s laptop.

“I hope you asked Julianna if you could use that,” I said pointing to Julianna’s high school graduation present. “And yes, I did make pie crusts from scratch. I have two rolling pins, you know!”

“Mommy used to bake pie crusts from scratch and bake bread. She would knead the dough and let it rise on the dryer.” Katie Beth closed the cookbook she was searching through and smiled at me.

“Yes, long ago, I was the perfect mom, but now I’m just too busy homeschooling!” I teased the children.

Truthfully, life is a little too busy right now for me to bake bread or make a pie crust from scratch. But I do know how to do those things, and I’m so glad that I do. Someday life will get a little saner and then my rolling pin will move across dough again, creating something that is delicious and satisfying.

The art of baking is a skill that so few aspire to anymore. The same could be said of sewing, quilting, woodworking, and gardening. There is something deeply satisfying about being able to knead bread, turn the soil over for planting, or make a piece of furniture by hand. There are also life skills that are necessary for survival such as cooking, laundry, household repairs, and personal hygiene.

From brushing teeth to frosting a cake to balancing a checkbook, life skills are needed by the entire human race. Most of the life skills we pass on to our children will enter their lives effortlessly on our part. We won't even realize that we are teaching them to brush their teeth or weed the garden. Our little one might watch Daddy fix an overflowing toilet and then a few years later help him. He has acquired a life skill, albeit a yucky one!

Woodworking, homemaking, plumbing, and car repair can be taught as classes or simply be a part of the learning lifestyle of homeschooling families. Do whatever works for you, but be sure to take inventory now and then and make sure you are raising children who are able to live, not just survive, on their own.

When we think of life skills, we can forget how important they really are in living useful and productive lives. Gregg Harris makes a great point about Christian education.

A complete Christian education will also equip each student to fill his station in God's design for society. It will include both vocational and a-vocational training. The ability to establish a business and manage a godly home will be high on the list of priorities. Such a household will then become an embassy of God's Kingdom in the community, a source of strength from one generation to another.

And finally, we were created for rulership in time and eternity. The adventure of the Christian life is infused with practical challenges which require a useful knowledge of God's creation, understanding God's principles of government, economics, history, science, and human culture. Great are the works of the Lord. They are studied by all who delight in them (Psalm 111:3). All areas of study are delightful to those who can see how each area relates to all the others in God's plan. --Gregg Harris

(The Christian Home School pg 71; Noble Publishing Associates; 1995)

Some of the life skills you will teach your children, such as money and property management, will equip them for ruling and reigning in this life and the next. The ability to apply the Word of God to daily life is called wisdom, a rare commodity in these days. Everything we do from baking cookies to managing a trust fund should be done for the glory of God and in obedience to His Word. Maybe you should think of this subject as "WISDOM from God's Word to daily life." In whatever way you choose to impart these skills to your children, keep in mind that to learn these skills or not learn these skills will make a difference in how your children will live, and, in turn, how they will teach their own children to live!

Spiritual Habits

Going to church every Sunday, being committed to a local church, tithing, and having daily Quiet Times are all habits in our lives. Though they are a delight to me, there are times when I “don’t feel like” doing one of them. However, I do it anyway, because God is my highest priority. I want to do the right thing at all times as an overflow of my love for Jesus Christ. We would never think of not brushing our teeth because we “don’t feel like” doing it. So why would we consider skipping church?

Going to church is a starting place, but mature Christians come to a place where they commit themselves to a local body of believers. They serve faithfully in whatever they are able to commit to according to their season of life and spiritual maturity. It is certainly harder to serve when the house is full of babies. We try to choose ministries where we can serve together, rather than being pulled into several different directions.

Serving is another spiritual discipline. It starts in the home and occurs whenever and wherever there is a need. It leads to opening doors, giving up seats, carrying heavy packages, giving up the best piece, helping clean up spills, and cheerfully helping others. While parents model this for their children, a wise parent gives little suggestions to inspire this wonderful habit! “Why don’t you give up your seat for Aunt Tilly?” “It looks like your little brother can use some help fixing his bike.” Commend children for serving as if you are giving out medals of honor! Call the press! Let your children know what a big deal serving is to you and to God!

Caring for the poor, orphans, and widows is a spiritual habit. Compassion leads us to action, but we should have a regular habit of caring for the needy. Maybe your family could adopt a Compassion girl and write letters to her each month. At Christmas, you might deliver baskets of food or serve in a soup kitchen on Thanksgiving Day.

Health Habits

Children should understand basic nutrition principles (vegetables are good! Too much sugar is bad!), and know how to choose healthy snacks. They should understand and choose to get the sleep and rest their growing bodies need. Brushing teeth and hair, taking baths, and other hygiene habits should be independent at an early age. The joy and habit of exercise is another thing to instill in young children.

When sick, herbal remedies and rest should be given. Learning to take temperatures and discernment of when to call the doctor is a life skill that parents need! Teach your children to care for one another when someone in the family is sick. First aid is actually fun to learn when no one’s really hurt. We have had some silly moments bandaging dolls! Dental care and flossing is important. Choosing a good doctor and dentist is another life skill.

Children should understand that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and should be kept pure, avoiding smoking, drugs, and sexual activity outside marriage. They should be taught how to avoid temptation in these areas. Role playing works well with younger children to prepare them for teenage years.

Preparation for Puberty

Puberty is coming, whether they're ready or not! Don't let the changes catch your child unaware! Prepare them for the physical and emotional changes that will occur. There should be a basic understanding of normal male and female anatomy, including the changes of puberty, pregnancy, childbirth, nursing, and menopause. Teens have a greater need for hygiene and sleep which they need to take responsibility for. They also need to be trained to deal with raging hormones and learn to control passions.

Time Management

Time management begins with discerning life priorities and goals. Schedules are then based upon these priorities and goals. If God is a priority in your life, you might schedule a daily Quiet Time or an afternoon walk to pray. Children should learn to stay on a flexible schedule and eventually to plan and live by their own schedules, using calendars and planners.

Property Management

One day they will be responsible for their own home, but for now children can learn to keep their own rooms tidy and organized. Their clean laundry can be folded, and put away neatly. Books, toys, music and other possessions can be cared for properly so that it will stay in condition, lasting a long time. Allow children to collect things and to save memorabilia, but keep them from morphing into pack rats. As a devout saver of everything, I hope to keep my children from this affliction!

Responsibility for their own school books is not more than children can handle. Let them get their books out and put them away each day. I cannot tell you how often we all have to stop to look for one of my children's lost books. It is so frustrating. Keeping track of their own things is part of being a good steward.

Money Management

In the real world, you have to work to earn money. Let their allowance be based on the completion of chores. If they don't do the work, why on earth would they get money? Allowances are wonderful training tools because they give children the opportunity to tithe, save, and budget!

We give our children the opportunity to earn extra money for something they want with additional work. When Jimmy wanted to buy a video game, he washed and detailed my van several weeks in a row until he had earned the needed funds. They can't do extra work if they are not faithful in their regular chores.

Children should learn to work hard and save up their money in order to buy expensive items—which brings me to the next life skill. Teach your children to HATE DEBT! Debt leads to more financial problems and financial problems lead to conflicts of the worst kind. Teach your children to save now and buy later, rather than GET now and pay later at exorbitant interest.

Financial planning is making a strategy to achieve a desired outcome. Financial planning is needed to make large purchases, invest, or start a business. It can be fun to start a babysitting or lawn care business, complete with a name and business plan.

Children should learn the wisdom of investing for retirement, making a will, and preparing financially for the future. Teach them about paying taxes with integrity and the proper use of insurance.

Banking is another life skill. Give them their own savings account. With most banks, children's accounts are free and let them put a little in each month from their allowance. Teach them about money markets, CDs, and checking accounts. They should learn to balance a check book!

Children love to shop, but teach them to be wise consumers and to shop for value and price. Help them to discern if a "sale" item is truly a bargain. Show them how to compare prices and find the unit price.

Decision Making

Making good decisions is an important part of a successful life. Decision making is a life skill. There are easy decisions of right vs. wrong; obedience vs. disobedience; or kindness vs. cruelty. Once your children are skilled at making the correct choices in these easy situations, allow them to learn to make choices between good, better, or best.

Decision making begins with weighing all of the options and then choosing a course of action. Prayer and counsel from wise adults should be part of this process. Let your children in on some of your decision making so they can watch the whole process. Let them make their own decisions and fail, when the consequences are minor. For example, allow them to buy a cheaply made toy and find out that it was a bad investment.

This life skill will require lots of coaching on your part, but the fruit is priceless!

Career Exploration

As they approach graduation, teens need to think about possible career choices. Various careers should be considered and explored. Diligent work habits can be built through chores, work projects at home, and serving in the church or community.

Communication Skills

Active listening leads to good communication. Teach this skill to your little ones, and continue to work on it throughout the school years. The life skill of speaking with clear enunciation, pleasant tone of voice, and body language that communicates interest and respect is invaluable. Choose wholesome words and topics when speaking. Avoid gossip—it always causes problems and pain. Listen to other people’s point of view without being manipulated or coerced. Above all, don’t interrupt! Practice good communication skills with your children on a daily basis. Their future spouse, children, and co-workers will be thankful!

Mail & Telephone & Email & AIM

Let children write and mail letters, addressing the envelope, putting on postage, and dropping it in the mail box. My younger children love to “go get the mail!” They can learn to pack, label and send packages through the Post Office or UPS. Teach polite telephone manners and train them to make business calls, making appointments or asking for help. Allow them to use email and instant messaging under your supervision at first. Be vigilant in overseeing this dangerous area: the World Wide Web. Children are preyed on and asked to divulge all kinds of information when using the internet. Especially beware of Myspace and Facebook. I have accounts on them both simply to monitor what my children are up to so that I can protect them, not because I don’t trust them. I trust my children, but, don’t trust strangers who use the internet.

Conflict Resolution

Your children will get into arguments and disagreements. Resolving conflict is necessary in marriage, business, family, and church life because everyone sees the same situation through different eyes. Add to this, the fact that we have a sinful nature by birth and you can see that we have a big problem with getting along on planet earth.

Approach all conflict with a “win-win” attitude, the desire that everyone walks away having “won!” Carefully train your children to NOT seek revenge, their own way, or to humiliate others in any way. Putting down other people never really helps children feel better about themselves and creates more pain than we can imagine.

Speak in gentle voices when resolving anger and choose to listen carefully to each other. Be willing to compromise and let go of the desire to “have things my way.” Apologize when you are wrong and ask for forgiveness. Don’t say, “It’s okay,” say, “I forgive you.”

Good Citizens

Teach children to appreciate our history and heritage as Americans. Make sure that they understand the branches of government (legislative, judicial, and executive) and the levels of government (federal, state, county, local).

My parents voted in every election. I was shocked to discover that most Americans do not vote. I take the right to vote as a sacred responsibility and joyfully vote in every election. I so appreciate my parents’ example in this and I make sure my children know that I have voted on Election Day.

Obey the laws—don’t speed, litter, or rob a bank. We want our children to grow up to be law-abiding citizens.

Above all, pray together for government officials and our soldiers, especially our President. God wants us to pray for them and they need it!

Building Friendships

Teach your children to welcome people into their life and to initiate conversations with an accepting smile and warm greeting. Friendliness is a character quality, not a personality trait. Teach your children to be friendly and model a lifestyle of love and kindness.

Conversation skills and the art of asking questions to draw people out are the beginning of friendship and help to keep them growing. Teach children to be kind and share.

Be discerning in who you allow children to become close to, without being judgmental. Maintain a sweet witness to unbelievers and set the standard for believers by living a life that is pure and loving.

Friendships begin in the home. Cultivate lasting friendships among siblings and with each of your children. The days of parental authority end, but a lifetime of friendship awaits.

Courtship & Marriage

Teenage guys and gals can really be “just friends,” although it may take some self-control! A young man who is in tenth grade is certainly not ready to support a wife and family, so why would he pursue a relationship that leads to marriage? When men and women are ready to settle down and get married, they should begin to think about entering a courtship. Until then, life should be filled with wholesome fun and friendship!

Have your teens set standards for their future spouse and work on becoming the kind of person who will be a blessing to marry. Value purity and train children to value and guard their purity, while praying for their future spouse.

Courtship should involve a closeness between a young man and woman that deepens emotionally and spiritually as they spend time together. It should be entered into by two people who are ready for marriage and believe that they are called by God to be together. This should be confirmed by the blessing of both sets of parents.

House, Lawn & Car Care

Cars need more than gasoline fill ups. Oil changes, tune-ups, cleaning, and repairs are part of the stewardship of car ownership! Lawns and gardens need to be mowed, weeded, mulched, trimmed, and planted. The care seems endless, sometimes. Houses are filled with maintenance and repair needs such as painting, plumbing, installing locks, hanging doors, fixing appliances, changing filters, or cleaning out gutters. All of these skills are life skills that will enable your children to take good care of the home and property God will give them.



Homemaking Skills

Cooking, baking, sewing, mending, needlecrafts, knitting, crocheting, quilting, cake decorating, interior design, pet care, card making, gift making, beauty care, etiquette, and fashion are all the fun things to learn in homemaking! Each one could be a course in itself.

There are also housekeeping skills to learn such as cleaning, tidying, sweeping, mopping, vacuuming, dusting, setting tables, and washing dishes. Laundry must be sorted, washed, dried, folded, ironed, and put away according to the care the fabric needs.

Untold numbers of creative things can be done to make the house more beautiful. Scrapbooking is a fun way to preserve memories for the family after planning wonderful times of celebration! Celebrating birthdays and holidays falls under homemaking too!

We set aside one day a week for three years for “Homemaking Day” with another family. Rosa and I alternated weeks teaching the children to sew, quilt, decorate cakes, bake, and make delicious meals. We used a lot of 4H materials because the children were part of a 4H group at the time. It was so much fun, the girls learned so much, and we all have sweet memories of that time.

Parenting Skills

Basic child development training will help older children understand and care for younger children. Older siblings can teach little ones school subjects or life skills. Learning about breastfeeding, how to change a diaper, putting a child down for nap, reading story books, and leading children to Christ are all parenting skills that can be learned now!

Babysitting can be an opportunity for your children to care for younger children. Encourage them to make the time special for the children they are caring for!

Hospitality

Welcoming others into our homes and lives is a great privilege. Model the habit of hospitality. It doesn't have to be fancy. If having company for a meal is overwhelming, consider inviting another family over to watch a movie, play games, or eat dessert.

Think about singles and include them in some of your family activities. Many are lonely and would enjoy spending time with your family! Newlyweds enjoy being around families—they go home and imagine what their own children will be like!

Bible studies and church social events are often held in people's homes. Consider opening your home for a weekly Bible study or occasionally for a church social. It is a wonderful ministry!

Children can learn to plan and prepare menus and food. They can greet guests and help to make them feel at home.

Photography, Videotaping, Websites & More!

Pictures are my hobby! I love taking pictures so much that I carry a camera with me at all times! Digital cameras are wonderful because you can choose which pictures to develop! Your children can learn to be proficient shutter bugs and can help take family pictures (that way if you are the family photographer, you'll actually be in some pictures!). Videotaping is another way to preserve family memories. What child isn't excited to get behind and in front of a video camera?

The family computer makes power point presentations and web sites easy to create. Let your children learn these skills. They are great for teaching and home businesses.

The sky is the limit! There are so many things to learn that make life simple and fun! Let your imagination run wild as you and your children prepare for the glorious life God has planned for them in the years ahead!

Life Skills Resources

Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren; Zondervan; 2002.
Stop Dating the Church by Josh Harris; Multnomah; 2004.
Search for Significance by Robert S. McGee
The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman
Eternity in their Hearts by Don Richardson
More Than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell
Secrets of the Vine by Bruce Wilkinson
A Life God Rewards by Bruce Wilkinson
Stop Dating the Church: Falling in Love with the Family of God by Joshua Harris
Bondage Breaker by Neil Anderson
Victory over the Darkness by Neil Anderson
Understanding the Times by David Noebel
A Wise Woman Builds by Meredith Curtis

The Wonderful Way that Babies are Made by Larry Christenson; Bethany; 2000.
Raising Teenagers Right by Dr. James Dobson; Tyndale House; 1998.
Shepherding a Child's Heart by Tedd Tripp
What a Daughter Needs in a Dad: How a Father Prepares His Daughters for Life by Michael Farris
Raising a Modern Day Knight: A Father's Role in Guiding His Sons to Authentic Manhood by Robert Lewis
The Peacemaker by Ken Sande; Baker; 2003.
A Little Book of Manners: Courtesy and Kindness for Young Ladies by Emilie Barnes; Harvest House Publishers; 1998.
A Little Book of Manners for Boys: A Game Plan for Getting Along with Others by Bob and Emilie Barnes; Harvest House Publishers; 1998/
Friends to the End! Bible Study Workbook by Meredith Curtis; Powerline Productions; 2007.
I Kissed Dating Goodbye by Josh Harris; Multnomah; 2003.
God's Girls Talk about Boys, Dating, Courtship & Marriage Bible Study Workbook by Meredith Curtis; Powerline Productions; 2008.
How To Win Friends & Influence People by Dale Carnegie

How To Manage Your Money: An In-Depth Bible Study on Personal Finances by Larry Burkett; Moody Publishers; 2000.
Business by the Book by Larry Burkett; Moody Publishers; 2005.
The Clipper Ship Strategy: For Success in Your Career, Business & Investments by Richard J Maybury; Bluestocking Press;
Finding the Career That Fits You by Larry Burkett; Moody Publishers; 1998.

Disciplines of a Beautiful Woman by Anne Ortlund; Thomas Nelson; 1981.
15 Minute Organizer by Emilie Barnes; Harvest House Publishers; 2003.
More Hours in my Day by Emilie Barnes; Harvest House Publishers; 2008.
Lovely to Behold: The Priceless Treasure of Godly Womanhood Bible Study Workbook by Meredith Curtis; Powerline Productions; 2008
Jesus, Fill my Heart & Home: Dwelling in God's Presence & Bringing His Presence into our Home Bible Study Workbook by Meredith Curtis; Powerline Productions; 2008
The Hidden Art of Homemaking by Edith Schaeffer; Tyndale House; 1985.
Hearth and Home by Karey Swan
The Spirit of Loveliness by Emilie Barnes
Welcome Home by Emilie Barnes
L'Abri by Edith Schaeffer; Crossway; 1992.
Welcome Inn! Bible Study Workbook on Hospitality by Meredith Curtis; Powerline Productions; 2008.
God's Girls Talk about Homemaking as a Lifetime Career Bible Study Workbook by Meredith Curtis; Powerline Publishing

JoyfulandSuccessfulHomeschooling: Home Sweet Home
<http://www.joyfulandsuccessfulhomeschooling.com/homesweethome.aspx>
More Hours in my Day with Emilie Barnes
<http://www.emiliebarnes.com/>
Messies Anonymous
<http://www.messies.com/>
Marilyn Rockett.com The Mom's Mentor
<http://marilynrockett.com/>
Master Your Money Ministries
<http://www.mastermoney.org/>
Crown Financial Ministries
<http://www.crown.org/>
Mary Hunt Debt-Proof Living
<http://www.cheapskatemonthly.com/>
Focus on the Family
<http://www.family.org/>
Gary Chapman
<http://www.garychapman.org/>
Smalley Relationship Center
<http://www.smalleyonline.com/>
Tomorrow's Forefathers
<http://www.brothersandsisters.net/>
Peacemaker Ministries
<http://www.peacemaker.net>