

Training for Triumph E-Newsletter
Issue 019
January 2008
Happy New Year!

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Donna Reish

*Email Jonathan at trainingfortriumphhomeschool@mchsi.com if you wish to be taken off this mailing list—or to add a friend. Thanks!

Section I: Training for Triumph (TFT) Events and Announcements

1. Hello: Short Note From Donna

Dear Fellow Homeschoolers,

Happy new year! This note will be short as I am including our family’s Christmas letter in this issue...everything you ever wanted to know about the Reishes but were afraid to ask! Also, this entire newsletter is purposely shorter. I’ve had requests (from my husband!) to shorten the e-newsletter but do one every month, which I can never seem to do because I always want to “add one more thing” to them! February’s e-newsletter will contain an introductory chapter to *The Well-Trained Heart*, so watch for it mid-February!

We’re still revising Volume II of the curriculum, as well as making other changes to all volumes. We have nine editors and key punchers/typesetters working ten to forty hours a week each!! Hopefully, we’ll get it all ready by March 1st for distribution at various conventions and through vendors, such as Timberdoodle, The Old Schoolhouse, and Lifetime Gifts and Books.

If you would like to try our samples for two months (instead of one), be sure to print off the samples at our website right now (between now and sometime in February). In February/March, we will be changing the sample to a newer unit. This is your chance to

use CQLA for free for two months instead of one! ☺

Don't get the homeschooling winter blues! Surround yourself with those who love homeschooling..and love you. Find joy in the little things (see Jackie praying for those in authority below!). And remember that you are doing much more than homeschooling; you are training your children for life...and nobody could do it better than you! ☺

Keep training hearts well,
Donna

P.S. If you want to learn more about CQLA, consider joining the new CQLA Users Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CQLAUsers/> See one of the CQLA Users' Moms' testimonies in this issue!

2. Merry Late Christmas: Reishes' Christmas Letter

Merry Christmas 2007 from the Reishes! It's time for the annual "Reish Report," an update on what has been happening around our home. Ray is still busily managing the materials department at Buckhorn in Bluffton, as well as managing our family ministry and publishing company, Training for Triumph (TFT). He hasn't been doing as much teaching in our cottage classes this year as we have increased our paper route delivery business in order to pay all of the curriculum workers. We should be done with the heavy revisions in March, so hopefully our paper route business will decrease, and Ray can put more time into publishing. He is, as always, teaching, training, and loving our seven children, though three of them are "adults" and enjoy more of a mentoring relationship with us. And yes, he is still the most amazing, awesome, kind, diligent, selfless person I have ever met...and as I like to constantly say (and drive the kids crazy with!): "He chose me"! I am blessed beyond measure.

This has been a year of revisions for TFT products, hiring outside editors and typesetters to help us get our materials in "review-ready" condition. We didn't publish new materials this year, but rather increased our language arts books, teacher's guide, and writing books by thirty percent with all of the changes we implemented. We basically tested the program for three years with various homeschooling students in our "cottage classes," discovering where the programs needed shoring up, then did those things this past year (and will continue to do so in the first quarter of 2008). We are greatly anticipating the publishing of our new homeschooling book, *The Well-Trained Heart*. We were overjoyed to have our books accepted by two large homeschool vendors, and our materials are literally going "round the world." We enjoyed a week's vacation when my dad and step-mom invited us to come to Florida with them in March. We had a blast!

I am writing, teaching, editing, revising, schooling, and enjoying our young adults more and more. As far as daily ins and outs, the household practically runs itself with all of these helpful older children around—especially the twelve to seventeen year olds, who are here all the time--(with some follow up and chore chart checking, of course!). It's a whole different world with the ages of the kids now compared to several years ago when we still had babies, toddlers, and preschoolers! I had twenty-two writing students testing our programs this fall. The "little boys" and I enjoyed several field trips and still love our daily read alouds together. Ray and I continue to ballroom dance three or four times a week for an hour or so, and the exercise and time together are absolutely incredible. We were extremely blessed and surprised to receive our studio's "student of the year" award, which is given out once a year to a couple who support the studio, practice consistently, and encourage other students. There are well over a hundred dancers at Renaissance, so it was truly an honor for us.

Joshua and Lisa are doing well in Bluffton, just fifteen minutes from us. They, too, joined our studio this summer for their third wedding anniversary, and it is so fun to watch them ballroom dance. Joshua is still teaching for TFT, both locally and in other places about two hours from us. He continues to expand our cottage classes, for which we are grateful since he is the only one available to travel like that right now.

He loves teaching history, literature, apologetics, story writing, and government. He also enjoys teaching high school speech and debate and elementary speech. Oh, he does typesetting and teaching for us in between his job as a house painter. Lisa was in a wreck a couple of weeks ago; she was hit from behind while she was doing one of our paper routes to businesses. She took a ride in the ambulance, wore a neck brace for a week, and had quite the headache for a while. We are so thankful that she did not suffer any long-term effects from the wreck. Joshua and Lisa have been attending church with us in Fort Wayne since early summer. They had been attending a church just a couple of blocks from their home, so it isn't quite as convenient, but we're glad to have them with us. It is great to be all together at church (though Kayla is usually gone to Spanish church rather than regular service).

Kayla, age twenty-one, is still working diligently: attending IPFW full time for nursing; working towards a biblical studies degree long distance (half time); working at Parkview Hospital and our cottage classes twenty-plus hours a week; teaching young adults at the "English" church; and becoming more and more involved in Rio Jordan (a Spanish church) and the lives of those who attend there. The two services each week, as well as the fellowship times in homes, are all entirely in Spanish, and she is faring well, increasing her Spanish enough to test out of two years. She will finish her RN degree in the spring from IPFW and will just be attending one college for the next year or so thereafter! She got a job as a student nurse at Parkview this past summer, and much to her "I get bored if things are too slow" delight, she is working in the ER. She participated in her first birth, which, *coincidentally*, was of a Spanish mom, dad, and doctor—and was completely in Spanish. We still enjoy her here at home—when she's here, and appreciate her teaching Spanish, chemistry, biology, research paper, government, and apologetics for our cottage classes.

Cami had a blessed year as well in 2007. She was on the road or in the air every two weeks or so from March through August: traveling with Joni and Friends ministry to distribute wheel chairs in El Salvador; serving at Joni and Friends family retreats for the Chicago/Indiana area for two weeks (where she led the young adults ministry); orientation (with Kayla) at the Bible college (in Texas) that she and Kayla take distance classes from; attending a leadership summit at Joni and Friends headquarters (and meeting Joni!); and our church conference's yearly General Council in Indianapolis (also with Kayla). She received an awesome blessing in June when she went before the church board to present information about the disability ministry she leads (One Heart) to try to gain more funding and wound up two weeks later on staff as the disability ministry director, which she has done for two years on a volunteer basis. It was timely as she was having more and more difficulty keeping up with the ministry while going to college half time and working half time (paper routes, teaching in our cottage classes, typesetting, and giving piano lessons). Now her ministry is her work, and she continues to work on her church ministries degree, with an emphasis in disability ministry. She was also miraculously given a car after totaling hers trying to avoid a deer last January. She by far has the nicest car in the driveway! ☺ Cami's highlights this year have been working more closely with JAF ministry, speaking about disability ministry in various places, and spending time with her "little sister" Brianna (a twelve-year old sweetie from the disability ministry who has been spending a couple of weekends a month with us and spends Thursday evenings with Cami in discipleship and fun).

Kara had a life-changing year, resulting in her finding her niche in ministry and traveling the US! She began her "drama ministry" in January when she and Jonathan participated in All for One! Drama company in FW. They went to local, public elementary and middle schools presenting character-based dramas. In May, she was accepted by the Academy of Arts in South Carolina to take part in/act in a special four hundredth year anniversary celebration of the landing at Jamestown. She traveled with a team to Virginia and helped present dramas and re-enactments for thousands of people there celebrating this event. A week after she returned from that trip, she was asked by the Academy to come and replace an ill member of one of their traveling teams. To make a long story short, she ended up traveling for eight weeks to churches all over SC, GA, and FL, giving performances of *Sanctity of Life* four to six times a week. She came home from these experiences with a boatload of friends and confidence in her ability to serve the Lord and others in her own area—not just helping with TFT or One Heart, but in the areas of her strengths and interests. Just days after she came home, she went to a leadership/worldview conference in Colorado for young adults with some friends for two weeks, where she grew in her faith and Christian worldview even more. She was gone from home ten out of eleven weeks—and we missed her greatly. Following that, she came home and acted in the FW homeschooling drama. In November, she found herself writing, directing, and putting on a drama at church for a yearly outreach called "Breakfast at the Manger," which serves breakfast and presents the story of Christ's birth via drama, live animals, and "pictures with Baby Jesus" to nearly four hundred children and parents. She did a great job of presenting the Christmas story to young children in her original play. She turned seventeen while she was away this summer, continues to adore piano (and drama!), is still my star editor

(though doesn't work as many hours with all of her other opportunities to serve), works in the disability ministry with her siblings, and is finishing up her last two senior classes.

Jonathan turned fifteen this fall. He has done a great job of taking orders and filling orders for TFT this year. Additionally, he got to work with his brother painting for Yaste Painting for several weeks early in the summer. He also works every Saturday stuffing newspapers in FW and delivering the Sunday morning newspaper (in the wee hours of the night on Saturday night/Sunday morning) to businesses in Bluffton with Ray. Yes, he is one diligent young man! He (along with Kara, Josiah, and Jacob) participated in our homeschooling group's yearly drama. They all had an awesome time presenting a revolutionary war play. Then he and Josiah starred in Kara's production for "Breakfast at the Manger" as two young shepherd boys who needed a Savior and were visited by angels in the fields of Bethlehem. Jonathan continues to love school and says that if it weren't unethical he would write research papers and sell them online for a living! ☺ He and Kara are both in Kayla's Spanish and Chemistry classes she teaches through TFT. Jonathan is a freshman but will only have three classes left to finish high school after this year. The kid loves to study! Jonathan continues to make us laugh as he is the most clever kid I've ever known. He also makes us smile with his love for his siblings and love for learning.

Josiah, twelve, has been busy with drama, housework, tape duplication for TFT, assisting Jonathan in filling orders, school, legoes, and coin collecting. Jonathan and Josiah both enjoyed helping our church move to its new location—no small feat with a church of three thousand! They both also started working in the nursery with the three year olds this fall, and they love it. (Poor boys never had the benefits of all those littles to help with like the older four kids did!) Josiah loves to read and can often be found curled up with a history or science book. He really got into coin collecting this year, attending a couple of auctions and getting his coins graded. Josiah is best of friends with Kara, and the two of them can often be found talking late into the night. Just like the other boys, one of Josiah's highlights is playing any sports with Joshua when he comes over!

Jacob turned nine this summer—about the same time he became a fluent reader. He participated in the summer reading program and read tons of picture books! He keeps us young and makes us all more child-like and fun. He is loved by his sisters and protected by his brothers. He is a busy chorer with responsibility for all dishes (with a dishwasher) and trash in the Reish house every day. He loves the same things his brothers love—coins, legoes, being with his siblings, family nights, computer games, and "pop on weekends"! . I didn't know how educational coin collecting could be; Jacob has learned all kinds of things about history and geography through the three boys' hobby.

All the boys also love working with One Heart and truly have great love and patience for those affected by disabilities. They are gentle, kind, and sensitive to others' needs. They loved teaching at One Heart's vacation Bible school in June, which drew over a hundred teens and young adults with disabilities. The three boys and Kara are all football crazy, especially concerning the Colts! (And I found out who Peyton Manning was this year; a fact I really didn't have room for in my brain, but the kids were horrified that I had never heard of him, didn't recognize his face on commercials, etc., so they made me learn about him. I think he either kicks the ball, throws the ball, or carries the ball—not sure about that part.) Kara and the boys spend a lot of time outside playing football like maniacs. It amazes me that one minute Kara is prim and proper with make-up perfectly applied and the next minute she's mauling her brother through the mud (and getting just as muddy as he is!). The three boys and Kara are buds, enjoying sports, radio dramas, slumber parties, movies, and long talks. They all learn from each other how to be better Christians. They are too sweet, and I am so thankful for all four of the older kids' (and Lisa's) input in the three little boys' lives. It is awesome to have so much quality, character-filled, spiritual help in raising them, especially since after twenty-five years of parenting with at least ten more to go, I'm starting to wear down quick! ☺

That 'bout sums up our year, still busy but fun and meaningful. I will leave you with the mantra we have adopted here at the Reishes this year: "You're number three! God first; others second; you third." If we could all live like that every day we would have incredible testimonies and influence on those around us! It is easier said than done, but definitely worth shooting for in '08.

Merry Christmas with love--Donna

3. What We're Up To: Upcoming Events for TFT

Our cottage classes are starting in full for the second semester the first week of January and the second week of January. Donna and Kayla are teaching sciences, Spanish, and language arts here at our home. Donna is teaching writing in northern Fort Wayne. Joshua is teaching history, speech, and debate near Columbus, Ohio.

We have some speaking engagements scheduled for the spring, but we haven't put a lot of time into securing engagements because of our extensive revisions and the *Well-Trained Heart*. So...if you are in need of speakers for something, consider someone from TFT! We will also be traveling and speaking about our homeschooling book and doing all day language arts workshops. You may find an extensive list of our fifty+ workshops and sessions at our website www.trainingfortriumphhomeschool.com
Contact us about coming to you!

4. Representatives: Join us Now!

It is the perfect time to become a CQLA rep—*The Old Schoolhouse*, Timberdoodle, Cathy Duffy's website, etc. are all doing the work for you! All you have to do is tell friends, "Yes, I sell that curriculum." And wahla! If you would like to get in on the spring homeschool sales of CQLA—at your state convention, your local support group, your own website, or just to friends—contact us to find out more about our no-risk representative program—and get your CQLA at extremely reduced prices.

Section II: Using *Character Quality Language Arts*

5. Question: How can I learn to be a better CQLA teacher?

First of all, I want to encourage you that once you "learn the ropes," you will always have the same format, the same order, the same style of lessons, etc. in all CQLA's for all levels! Thus, trying to stick with it during the learning curve can be very valuable for home schooling moms. I will enumerate some answers below.

- If you want an overview of the entire program, I recommend that you get the Teacher's Guide with accompanying cd/cassette. This 200+ page book will teach you everything you need to know about using CQLA. However, it is much more than a "CQLA-How to" book. It is a grammar handbook and writing handbook, as well. Even if you do not use CQLA, this TG is a book you can use in all of your language arts teaching. Besides the CQLA helps (overview charts, Scope and Sequence, how to use CQLA, etc.), it also contains a Master Checklist Challenge, all Grammar Cards in alphabetical order, and many "how to" chapters, such as how to do a Key Word Outline, how to do the Checklist Challenge, how to cite sources in reports, and much more.
- If you want to learn more about what a weekly lesson should look like, you may want to order the CQLA demonstration video from Training for Triumph for \$15.00. It shows me teaching two of my Level B students one entire weekly lesson (in a

very fast forty-five minutes!). With the video, you get the weekly lesson that correlates, so you can follow along with me and my students. I think just seeing it in action helps tremendously and answers so many of the beginning questions (including "Which passage?").

- We have a three-tape cassette series entitled The Almost Three R's in which I describe how to teach spelling, grammar, and composition. This cassette series is available for \$12.00 and comes in a three-cavity cassette holder. It is unrelated to CQLA in that it does not reference the program, but many of the concepts CQLA ascribes to are elaborated on in it.
- We are developing all day language arts workshops in which I describe how to use CQLA, give Moms a "Grammar 101" lesson, teach editing and revising strategies, and have editing/revising sessions with small groups. This workshop will be appropriate for CQLA and non-CQLA users, so you would be able to bring friends along who are not using CQLA too. Contact us to set up a workshop in your area.

6. Question: What advice do you have for someone beginning CQLA?

The best advice I have for someone just beginning CQLA is to move slowly in the beginning. One of the biggest difficulties people have with CQLA is starting! (Isn't it like that for everything??) It is especially true when facing seventy to one hundred pages that are to be done in one month's time - and many blanks to be filled in, essays to write, etc.

I remind families over and over again that CQLA is at least comprised of four different curricula: vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and composition. Of course, it also contains comprehension, editing, copying, and dictation, too. If you were to stack a curriculum for each of these four areas-plus up beside a year's worth of CQLA, you would see that CQLA is not that overwhelming after all.

While it is true that CQLA is at least four curricula in one, it is also true that many people normally only do one or two of those at a time, and seldom do all four at once. CQLA wants to change all of that! Comprehension is too linked to vocabulary not to do them together; spelling is too linked to copying not to do those together; grammar is definitely too linked to composition not to do those together.

So..my first bit of advice in beginning CQLA is to move slowly. The first week only do vocabulary, copying, spelling, and one grammar assignment. Next week do that, plus the Key Word Outline and rough draft. The next week, when it's time to start the two-week essay, do everything except one grammar lesson. And so forth.

Or, you could take six to eight weeks to do the first CQLA and spread each "one week" lesson out over two weeks.

Lastly, you could just do the first two weeks of the unit over the first month, and the next month just do the last two weeks of the unit. With this method, you would be familiar with all four weeks of a CQLA booklet, but it would be spread out over two months. This would be a gentle introduction that even younger students could probably handle.

7. CQLA Testimony: New CQLA User Shocked at Child's First Report!

Tiffini, a new CQLA User, recently posted the following testimony on the CQLA User Group:

I have two children doing Pre-A (dd - 7, ds - 7) and one child doing A (dd - 10). Every day, they would argue over who got to go first with LA. My husband would ask for a report in the evening and the words my son would use was "great", "amazing", "wonderful", and "fun"! Again, he is the one I was most worried about because of how much he resists change and he had begged me not to change the LA program we had been using (although it was quite boring to him).

My 10 yo dd would wait for her turn and say, "When is it my turn for the fun-ness?"

I did the four day week schedule and told them after finishing on Thursday that they could take the day off of LA for Friday. I truly thought they would be happy about that because we spent a lot of time on it daily this week. My son said, "But I WANT to do LA tomorrow, Mom!" Wow!! My 7 yo dd was very disappointed as well.

I am amazed that all three of my children are enjoying this so much since they are all so different from each other. Proof to me that this works for all learning styles. I thought for sure one of them would not like it.

I can not believe the finished product that my 10 yo dd produced this week. I never knew you could learn this much about writing in such a short period of time. The book asked her to do 3 paragraphs, but since it was our first week, I just had her do one as I thought the passage was pretty difficult to begin with. We spent a lot of time working on it this week, so I thought she would be pretty worn out. However, after she gleefully typed up her final copy of the paragraph she composed, she asked, "Can I do all three paragraphs next week?"

Yes, I know this all sounds made up, but it's true! The only downside to me was the amount of time it took. I worked individually with all three all week and it took a lot of time. But I really do think that it is worth it and I can already see that once we get the hang of it, it will not be nearly as time-intensive. My 10 yo will be doing much of it independently before too long.

Well, if you're still reading, I hope you are encouraged! We sure are! One last thing - this has been an incredibly difficult week on a personal front with several situations that have been going on and I didn't know if we could do this, but my kids' amazing attitudes kept me going. What a gift!

Section III: Kitchen, Household, School, and Family Organization

8. Organizing Tip: Get Our Helps for Homeschooling Moms Tape Set!!

There are some topics the Reishes just can't keep quiet about. The first one is home schooling! I like to consider myself a "home school cheerleader." We first learned of home schooling twenty-one years ago when our oldest child was a baby. Once I read Dr. Moore's books, compared them to what I was learning as a senior in "teacher's college" (I was learning the same thing at school about readiness, boys vs. girls, etc.), I was sold. Ray and I began an aggressive campaign to get everyone we knew to home school. (I'm really kind of embarrassed about this now; we were so zealous, we must have driven everyone we knew crazy!) Anyway, we began hosting Saturday brunches in which we would feed parents brunch then give them handouts, excerpts, etc. to try to convert them to home schooling! I spoke for an hour or so (and knew so little twenty-one years ago!), then we answered questions.

What does this have to do with our "Helps for Home School Moms" tapes? Well, I feel a similar zeal and urgency to help families learn to prioritize, choose the best over the good, teach children to be responsible and diligent, and more. Much of this is covered in my three-cassette series entitled "Helps for Home School Moms."

This tape set consists of three cassettes that build upon each other: *Prioritizing Your Life, School, and Home*; *Organizing Your Life, School, and Home*; and *Scheduling Your Life, School, and Home*. They are jam packed (I can talk really fast when I have something important to say!) with tips and techniques we have used in our twenty years of home schooling. Even more importantly than those helps, they are jam-packed with philosophies of parenting, home management, child training, home schooling, and more.

Prioritizing Your Life, School, and Home deals with determining priorities, utilizing your skills and talents fully, being consistent in maintaining your priorities, learning to say "yes" to the best things and "no" to the good, and more. In it, I explain our long journey to seeking God's priorities for our family—and how each couple can and should do this to be effective for the Lord and in our families.

Organizing Your Life, School, and Home deals with more than just "Better Homes and Garden" storage tips. It continues the prioritizing message by helping you teach your children to be responsible, working together as a family, the importance of chore times and schedules, and more.

Scheduling Your Life, School, and Home helps you put it all together. Once you have prioritized and organized, how do you keep on track to fulfill God's calling for you and your family? By scheduling and organizing your days! This tape deals specifically with scheduling your school day to get the most out of it. Whether you have seven children twelve and under or three teens, "scheduling" gives many tips and solutions that have worked for us throughout the years.

"Helps for Home School Moms" tapes are available from Training for Triumph in a three-cassette holder for \$12.00 or individually for \$5.00 each. They are described at our website, or you may order them by calling Jonathan at 260-597-7415.

Note: See the article at the end of this newsletter (“Eight Daily Habits for ‘08”) for more info on these areas...and watch our website for availability of our book, *The Well-Trained Heart*, which is full of training information and help!

9. Organizing Tip: Simple Kitchen Tips for Busy Homeschoolers (Updated from an '05 newsletter)

Meal time can be hectic in the homeschooling family. I have found that to be especially true over the past few years when, due to busy-ness of writing for ATI, and starting Training for Triumph, my mega cooking days dwindled---and my freezers nearly emptied (except for meat I got on sale that I was going to cook ahead *someday*). Prior to the last five years, meal time was a snap. Every morning I would get an entrée, soup starter, or casserole out of the freezer and later in the day, the “servant day person” would finish that off with side dishes, breads, salads, fruit, etc. The little guys would set the table, and wahla...we had good, home made meals all the time. It really was that easy (each day anyway).

Of course, in order to get to that point, every fifth week, we would take off from school and have all of our appointments, monthly cleaning, and “mega cooking”---cooking times in which we would put fifty to a hundred entrees, soup starters, and casseroles in the freezer. This cooking alone would take us at least two days. But it was SO worth it.

Anyway, so now, we are busy working around here—and we look around to see that Kayla and Cami are both at college or at their ministries and Kara and Jonathan are out in the learning center in one of Joshua’s classes—and that leaves me with two little boys (ages twelve and nine) to cook dinner. Enter frozen pizzas! tee hee In spite of not having the time to put dozens of freezer meals into the freezer, we do have some temporary solutions to the meal time dilemma that I would like to share this month.

1. I try to have the boys do some kinds of prep work each week with meats. (See November of 2005 newsletter for instructions for that.) If they at least get some ground beef fried up; some beef or chicken cooked and shredded; or some chicken breast or beef cut in strips or cubes, seasoned, and pre cooked, we have something started. Then we can use these for soups, casseroles, stir fries, Mexican and Italian dishes, stews, and more.
2. Do two things at one time. I read aloud to the boys while they peel and cut up fruits or potatoes. They listen to story tapes while they fry meat. Any kind of “two for one” time makes it more enjoyable---and gets two things done at once (learning from a tape and frying meat!).
3. Resort to simple recipes. We have simplified our lives a lot in the areas of meals. We use more convenience foods than we used to when the older kids were little, but we also just make simple things a lot---stir fries with frozen vegetables; soups with store bought noodles and canned beans; baked potatoes; rice, stews, and soups made with canned or frozen vegetables; spaghetti made with store bought meatballs; salads made from pre-bagged Romaine purchased at the wholesale club; and more. Even my nine year old can make spaghetti and meatballs using our own frozen meatballs or store bought frozen meat balls.
4. Teach children to cook. We have “cooking lessons” at least a couple of times a month. In this time, I teach a new skill or concept that they can carry over to other areas. I teach all four of the “younger children”—ages 17, 15, 12, and 9—

- together. I know I'll have to re-teach most of the things to the two youngest guys, but I still want them introduced to the skills. For instance, I teach them how to thicken gravies or soups (with corn starch or mashed potato flakes), how to season a certain type of meat (for swiss steak, roasts, or Monterey chicken), how to make a certain casserole, how to precook veggies in micro at the same time as you're browning meat in order to have stir fry all done at same time, etc.
5. Think double. I love to get double benefits out of any work in the kitchen I do with the kids. This week, Josiah and I seasoned tons of stewed beef that was reduced for quick sale. We made stir fry for that evening and enough for leftovers for lunches. Then we froze the extra pre-cooked beef for stew, fajitas, or stir fry another time. When we make pot roast with potatoes and carrots, I make twice as much meat as we need, and then we shred up the leftover, along with any juices, gravy, and veggies that are left, and stick it in the fridge for a few days. (Or in an ongoing freezer container with "beef soup starter" written on it.) Then we're ready to add Veg All large stew veggies (or fresh, pre cooked veggies that the boys prepared while I read to them!) to it for another quick meal--beef stew. When we fry hamburger for sloppies, we have another pan of taco meat going, too. It doesn't take double effort to do double duty—and end up with double results.
 6. Have each person in charge of certain often-made foods. I have found that teaching the children to make a few things each very well goes a long way in getting ready for company, taking foods to potlucks, and more. For example, Kayla always makes homemade butterscotch pudding, "homemade" popcorn, chocolate chips cookies, and mashed potatoes (seasoning and mashing them). (Kayla can and does make anything, but I'm trying not to depend on her too much since God is leading her to prepare to be a medical missionary.) Cami always makes salads, roasts and veggies, and doubled eggs. Kara always makes goodie trays, chicken noodle soup, sour cream cookies, corn, and green beans. Jonathan always makes omelets, pumpkin bread, and Mexican wedding cakes. Josiah always makes boxed brownies, Monterey chicken breasts, and hot Mexican dip. I am expanding these all the time, but the general idea is that that food becomes "his" or "hers." We have some quality control as the same person makes it over and over and gets better and better at it. The children like to be "known" for their specialties. (Josiah's great uncle couldn't believe he made the hot Mexican dip all by himself at our Christmas gathering a few years ago, and Josiah was one proud nine year old!)
 7. Have a night (or more) in which everyone comes into the kitchen together and cooks. When we're in a pinch, we'll all gather in the kitchen and within thirty minutes we can have something put together and on the table. We have eight here now, with Joshua married, and I am always amazed what eight of us can do in the kitchen in thirty minutes. We use this approach often when we're having company, cooking for someone with an illness or new baby, or going to a potluck (only a longer period of time). Just start the first person on the task that takes the longest (browning meat or cutting veggies or potatoes; use the micro liberally (for precooking veggies, etc.); start the little ones on table setting, salad assembling, etc. and your meal will be ready in no time!
 8. Have a few very easy "standards" and always keep those ingredients on hand. We have several dishes/meals that are fifteen minutes or less in terms of prep time. They are not gourmet (and a couple are actually embarrassing!) But they are standards that nearly anyone can whip up within fifteen minutes (prep time only). The secret to success with these "standards" is to always have the ingredients on hand. These items are on my "running grocery list." If you don't

have any really quick ideas, you might check out *Taste of Home's Quick Cooking* or one of those "five ingredients or less" books or "thirty minute meal" books. Many entrees (besides those listed below) become fifteen or twenty minute prep time entrees when meats are done ahead of time and in the freezer. Obviously, if entrees are that quick, they are not the healthiest meals in the world. We use a lot of frozen vegetables, fresh vegetables, fruit, and bagged salads (from a discount store) to add to them. We rely on these dishes when we're desperate:

- (1) Chicken noodle casserole with store bought noodles, canned chicken, cream of chicken soup, chicken base. Simple!
- (2) Tuna casserole with canned tuna, potato chips, milk, and cream of mushroom soup.
- (3) Layered Mexican casserole (only if beef, chicken, or ground beef are precooked and in freezer is this quick) with layers of meat and enchilada sauce (combined), shredded cheese, and flour tortilla shells.
- (4) BBQ meatballs or BBQ chicken thighs and baked potatoes (only if we have store bought meatballs or meatballs prepared ahead of time in the freezer is this one quick).
- (5) Egg casserole with the following layered: hash browns (We bake them a little on 400' in the pan we're making the casserole in while we're whisking eggs and milk or cream.), eggs mixed with cheese and milk (or cream), shredded cheese, and bacon bits (or any precooked meat you have on hand).
- (6) Pork and beans with noodles (Don't ask. It's a "delicacy" my dad taught my kids to make!)
- (7) Macaroni and tomato juice (same as number 6!)
- (8) Chicken noodle soup with canned chicken and store bought noodles.
- (9) Chili (only if ground beef is pre cooked).
- (10) Chicken stew or beef stew (only if we have precooked meats in freezer) with cream soups, canned large vegetables, bases, etc.
- (11) Chicken Alfredo (again, only if we use precooked chicken or canned chicken is this a quicky): We cook spaghetti noodles until al dente; drain; add milk and cream cheese, garlic, parmesan cheese; and seasonings; stir in shredded chicken. Very fast and all in one pan. Plus, it's my kids' favorite. (For their birthdays and Christmas, we make this with cream instead of milk and shrimp instead of chicken!)
- (12) Spaghetti casserole with cooked spaghetti noodles, precooked ground beef, and store bought sauce. Stir together, layer it in a casserole dish with cheeses of your choice (and mushrooms, if desired).

Section IV: A Merry Heart Doeth Good Like a Medicine

10. Merry Heart: Pray for Those in Authority

The other night after dinner we were having sentence prayers, in which Ray calls out what to pray for or whom to pray for and each person goes around and in a sentence or two prays for that request. At one point, Ray said, “Pray for someone in authority over you.”

Jacob leaned over to Kayla and asked, “What does that mean?”

Kayla answered, “It means those who are your boss.”

Jacob, in complete seriousness and displaying full understanding of the concept, said, “Oh, you mean everyone.” Then began his prayer: “God, please bless Josiah, Jonathan, Kara, Cami, Kayla, Joshua, Lisa, Grandma, Grandpa, Grandma, Grandma...”

By now, everyone was chuckling....understanding who your authorities are is very important! ☺

Section V: Encouragement From TFT--Article

11. Article: “Eight Daily Habits for ‘08”

“Eight Daily Habits for ‘08” Donna Reish

It’s a new year and with it comes new opportunities to do the things we want to do—and not do the things we don’t want to do, as Paul puts it. How many of us make resolutions over and over again only to fizzle out by March (or earlier)? How many of us have awesome plans in January to do more for God, train our children’s hearts more, and generally be more successful during the new year?

I used to make long, elaborate resolutions—complete with subpoints and sub-subpoints on how to achieve them! Even with all of that detail and thought, I still found myself

floundering. Now I don't make grandiose plans to be and to do every January. Instead, in January, and anytime I want to make a change, I take baby steps. Little, daily steps towards the goals I might have.

For example, instead of revamping the entire schedule, sure that next week I will start my day an hour earlier, exercise with the kids, put food in the crock pot every morning, read aloud for two hours before lunch, etc. etc., I do one of two things: (1) Start with the beginning of the day and change that according to what I think will make things run more smoothly—just one small change; or (2) Start with the most important change I want to make, and just do that item. Not long lists of dozens of improvements. Just one change; baby steps towards success. One change that I can implement today. One change only—until I have that one under control. Then, I've been successful already, so I know I can do another. Success breeds more success. Positive changes breed more positive changes.

Of course, I didn't come up with this idea on my own. (I am an "idea lifter"---lifting ideas from other people and using them for myself!) It actually originated with our mentors, Terry and Esa Everroad, nearly twenty-five years ago. (Boy, when I say things like "twenty years ago" and "twenty-five years ago," I feel reaaaallllly old!) Terry told Ray to meet with me once a week and just listen. Ask me what was wrong, what I wanted changed, what I needed from him. Then, together, choose one thing--just one--that we would work on improving. When that was better, choose another, then another, then another. He told Ray to do this until one week he would ask me, and I would have nothing to say. Then, he told Ray, he could consider his own needs. Good selflessness advice for husbands, huh? (Well, for wives, too.)

And the same idea can be duplicated in any area of our lives--eating more healthfully, schooling better, building stronger relationships. One change at a time. Baby steps. Then another, then another. Not life remodeling all at once. Just one goal at a time.

To start out this new year, I want to give you "Eight Daily Habits for '08"—eight things that I have found make my day run more smoothly, create the environment I want in my home, and cause me to have success in my homeschool. These are eight things that I know help me and maybe they will help you, too. Now, there are one or two items that I have "fallen off the wagon on"—that I need to work on re-implementing myself (one at a time, of course)...but I won't tell you which ones those are. ☺

I have found that it is the little things that make the difference. Spring cleaning is incredible...for a few days afterwards. However, making sure that the floors are swept, bathrooms are wiped down, and laundry is done every day is what makes me really sing. The big things will always be there--waiting to be done and waiting to be implemented, but the small things are what make each day better. The daily ins and outs. The habits that make us truly successful.

So...without further ado, I give you my eight daily habits* for success in '08, not necessarily in any certain order. You choose the one that will make tomorrow a better day for you and your family—and implement it, one baby step at a time, to reach your goals in your homeschool and in your family.

Daily habit 1: Rise with the Lord

When people used to tell me this, I, of course (being the big thinker that I am), envisioned an hour in the early morning hours, in a prayer closet uninterrupted, worshipping, praying, and reading the Word. Because that could never happen in my life (and I can give you eight good reasons why it never did!), I never truly felt like I was ever "rising with the Lord."

Then, I happened upon some verses that I could really sink my teeth into--meeting God in the night watches (perfect for us insomniacs!); God giving me a song in the night; etc. I might not be up at the crack of dawn, but I was often up throughout the night--those night watches and songs in the night were perfect for me!

Now that I am, well, maturing, I can't stay up quite as late as I used to, but I still pray at night that God will give me a song in the night and that I will wake up with that song. And when I consistently do this, I do wake up with a song in my heart, a song that God gave me in the night. Many days, before I even open my eyes, my mind will start reciting words to a song: "Lord, you are more precious than silver"; "Be thou my vision"; "Cast me not away from your presence, Oh, Lord"; and much more. I am rising with the Lord! He is giving me a song in the night, and I am waking up with His song on my lips.

What does rising with the Lord mean to you? It could mean waking up and reading the Bible or a devotional before you do anything else. It might mean a prayer time before you start your day. However God leads you to rise with Him, make it a daily habit! Do not make it so elaborate (an hour in the Word and an hour in prayer!) that you cannot continue it your entire life, but do make it meaningful enough to have an effect on your day (which should be the result of any encounter with God).

Daily habit 2: Make a place for God before retiring

Many years ago I found myself reciting a certain verse over and over to myself: "I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, Until I found out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob" (Psalm 132 4: & 5). I taught it to the children and then made it into a song that my girls and I enjoyed singing for some time:

I will not (I will not) close my eyes (close my eyes);

I will not (I will not) slumber (slumber).

Til I've made a place ('til I've made a place)...

For the God of Jacob (for the God of Jacob)

'Til I've made a place ('til I've made a place)

For my Lord (for my Lord).

Til I've made a place ('til I've made a place)...

For the God of Jacob (for the God of Jacob)

'Til I've made a place ('til I've made a place)

For my Lord.

Jacob was just a toddler at that time, and he, of course, thought we were singing about him--and often asked for the "Jakie song." However, for me, it became a nightly prayer/song. No matter what my day held; no matter how busy and hectic it was; no matter how I felt about this or that--I was telling the Lord that I would not go to sleep until I had cleared my mind and heart for Him.

How can you make room for the Lord everyday? Some may feel that they are creating a place for God if they study the Bible before bed. Others might feel that they are clearing a path for him through family prayer or praying with your spouse. Regardless of what you do, do not close your eyes; do not slumber...until you've made a place for the Lord.

Daily habit 3: Teach your kids God's Word and the character of Christ before other subjects

When we start the day out with our children and God's Word, we are telling them that the Bible is the most important book to study and its truths are the most important knowledge to obtain. We decided nearly two dozen years ago that we would not teach academic subjects without teaching the Bible--and that it would be first. If we had time for the other subjects, great. If not, at least we had done the most important subject.

We have taught the Bible and character dozens of ways. There is no one "right way." Ray's favorite way is to open the Bible, read it together, and discuss it. I personally like using "programs"--reading from creation science books, character based books (like IBLP's *Character Sketches*), Bible story books for younger children (like our favorite, *Family Bible Library*--see our website for info on this), IBLP character booklets and other bulletins, etc. Ray has read through *The Picture Bible* with each child when each little one was between the ages of four and six. I read through the entire *Family Bible Library* with each child around that same time. We also enjoy reading devotional materials together: Max Lucado books, names of God books, and other "daily devotionals."

If this habit has eluded you in the past, just pick up a devotional or other "daily" type book (even if it is just a few paragraphs in length for each entry), and read it at breakfast every morning. That will get the ball rolling. From that will likely spring discussions and applications galore as you build those truths and principles into your children's lives.

Daily habit 4: Tie heart strings

We can get so caught up in work, teaching, outside demands, and physical needs (feeding and clothing) that we overlook one of the most important things that we should do each day--tie heart strings with our children. Most parents have their children's

attention for eighteen years. Those are years that we can invest in them spiritually and build relationship with them.

It is so easy to get to the end of the day and discover that we have not squeezed our special squeeze, winked our special wink, or hugged our special hug. This is especially true as our children get older and no longer cuddle in our chair with us or have "rockies."

In addition to the physical closeness that our children need, they also need our verbal affirmation and communication. My and Ray's input into our three young adult daughters' lives (ages seventeen, twenty, and twenty-one) is like a daily healing balm to them. Two of them are heavily involved in demanding ministries--to the disabled and to the Spanish community (no English spoken!). One of them is searching for her place and working hard to prepare for her future. They need to connect with us. They need for us to tell them that we are proud of them and that we support their endeavors. They need for us to hurt with them when they are hurting. They need for us to say, "So, tell me about your day," and "Give me details!"

Tying daily heart strings is more difficult than simply reading a morning devotional or being sure the laundry is done each day. It isn't usually in the schedule. It is needed at the most inopportune times. The more you give, the more they seem to need. But it is essential. Our children need to have their heart strings tied to ours so that when the storms of life roll, they will have a safe haven of love and understanding---"Jesus" with arms and words of encouragement on this earth.

If you find that each day ends with no heart strings tied, try this little tip: In the corner of each day on your planner, put a little square. At the end of each day, write the initials of the child that you connected with that day in that little square. Purpose not to end a day without being able to write one sweet child's initials in a daily square. Each week you can look back over your planner and see who missed out that week. (You know, the squeakiest wheel gets the grease!) Then next week, you will know who needs focused on more.

Or try this tip that I did for years and years when our older children were younger: have a "day" for each child. We milked this day for all it was worth. It was the child's day to help me with dinner (or fix it herself as she got older); it was the child's day to do extra chores; it was the child's day to help teach the preschooler. But it was also his day to pick two books for story time, sit in the front seat of the van if we went somewhere, and sit closest to Mom during read alouds. Heart-wise (and often unbeknownst to the child), it was his day to get a longer blessing during blessing time, to have a longer time with Dad at bedtime, and to get extra attention from Mom throughout the day. This is especially helpful for families with several children. Each child needs a day! :)

Daily habit 5: Get completely ready for each day

Years ago, when my older children were younger, I seldom "fancied up" unless I was going somewhere. I often put on sweats, took my walk, then showered and put sweats back on. I figured that if nobody was going to see me except the kids and Ray, I may as well use that time for something else (efficiency expert gone wild here!). Then I met Geney and Lilli, yes, that's you, you two. They always looked great no matter whether I

dropped in unexpectedly or saw them at the skating rink. And I decided that my family deserved more than ponytails and sweatpants.

Flylady (a self-help, organizing, cleaning guru online who helps thousands of women get control of their daily lives) sends out daily email reminders early each morning that read, "Dress down to your shoes." Her premise is that if you get completely ready for the day (as though you are going somewhere), you will feel more professional and serious about what you do each day.

Now that Ray and I dance most days for exercise I don't just have to get ready down to my shoes; I actually have to get "dressed up" (well, somewhat dressed up). The studio where we dance has a "no jeans and no sweats" unwritten policy. But you know what? I like it. I have come to enjoy not being dowdy all the time! I don't panic if someone pulls in the driveway. If I have to run a quick, unexpected errand, I don't have to make excuses for my appearance to everyone I see.

Whether you get "fancy" each day or simply get clean and presentable, I think you will enjoy it too. I feel so much better coming out to teach the kids and manage the home with myself pulled together. Besides my family deserves to have a happy, glowing mommy--and wife!

Daily habit 6: Read aloud to your kids (and husband!)

We have read aloud to our kids for years and years. When our older children were little, they would get read to by me or Ray (through Bible, unit studies, devotions, and story time) three to five hours every day. Now neither of us has time to read aloud that much with the kids (and I admit I use talking books to substitute for me quite often!), but we still enjoy reading to and with the kids every day.

You have heard it all before--if you want to raise readers, you have to read to them. Children who are read to daily are x times more likely to become readers themselves, etc. etc. Guilt trip aside, we have found that reading has built a strong educational foundation--and tied heart strings at the same time. We have so many memories of "Jack, Max, and Axle at the Acme Painting Company" and "Morris learning to count," as well as inspiring devotional materials and awesome creation science books. And, yes, we have raised several readers. Even the ones who do not read lengthy pieces of literature love to read the Bible and inspirational materials. And we all still love gathering with a stack of Christmas books in December for long evenings of reading aloud.

Again, think baby steps. Just read from a Christian adventure chapter book every night towards the end of dinner. Or read two stories to the littles before naptime. Or stick a book of short stories in the van and read aloud while Dad drives. You don't have to read three to five hours a day. And you don't have to read certain books. Just enjoy reading and learning together.

Daily habit 7: Do most important chores before starting school each day

Twenty years ago we started the habit of doing the most important chores first thing each day. We might read together; then some will go do devotions while others exercise, but before we "hit the books" for the day, we do the most important daily chores for that day. For us, this means getting something started (or figured out) for the evening meal, doing a load of laundry (and starting another one), unloading and reloading the dishwasher, being sure the kitchen sink is empty, gathering all trash and taking it out, making the beds, putting away anything that is out from the night before, and wiping down the bathrooms.

About fifteen years ago, we lived in a home with a full basement, and our schoolroom was downstairs. One morning we went down to do Bible, and then I gave everyone assignments to go upstairs and do chores. Someone mentioned that it would sure be a lot easier if just did our schoolwork right after Bible then went upstairs and did chores. I almost agreed, but told the kids, "No, we want to come down to do school with a clean upstairs and all of the daily work done." Well, when we came upstairs to do our jobs, we smelled something burning--and our attic was on fire. We had just moved into that house, a rental, so we didn't have smoke detectors up yet, so if we had stayed downstairs, we might not have discovered the fire until it was too late (especially as long as it took me to get through several elementary children's school every morning!). We called the fire department and got out of the house before any damage was done to anything except the attic. And I was quick to tell the kids that it pays to do chores first thing in the morning!

One thing about important chores that has helped me immensely in raising a large family with several children in homeschool at one time is to think of dishes and laundry the same as brushing my teeth. I never brush my teeth less than twice a day...and we never do dishes or laundry less than twice a day. Saving dishes for later and accumulating large amounts of laundry always depressed me. I cannot function in school, writing, and other household tasks with undone dishes and undone laundry.

If daily chores are keeping you from doing the important things each day, start with this one: a daily chore time for twenty minutes or so each morning in which each person has a list of tasks in order to conquer those "dailies" that keep getting in your way. If you have two, three, (or in our case, six!) people doing daily chores every morning, those ongoing, never-quite-finished tasks will not seem so big.

Daily habit 8: Kiss your spouse for at least fifteen seconds and hug for at least thirty seconds

This is a new "rule" for us! Don't blush...you know that you function better in all areas when you have kissed and hugged enough! My brother-in-law, a much cooler, younger person than Ray or I, came home this summer to visit following a marriage retreat. When anything got stressful for my sister, he would say (as only Uncle Leonard can), "Come here, honey. You know we didn't have our kissing and hugging yet. That's probably what's wrong." What a sweet husband!

Our kids thought our elevator kissing was unbearable already, without enduring it for a full fifteen seconds! But you know what? They secretly like it. :)

It isn't, of course, the magic of kissing for fifteen seconds or hugging for thirty seconds that makes this a good daily habit. It is the fact that a fifteen second kiss is more than a peck, and a thirty second hug is more than a passing squeeze. The "time minimums" force us to stick around a little bit, stop what we're doing, and be close to the one we love. Maybe there won't always be time for romance, hearts, flowers, and rainbows, but our marriage is the most important (and longest!) relationship we have on this earth. We need to protect it, nurture it, and shower it with kisses and hugs.

So....there you have it. Eight daily habits* that make a huge difference in my home and school. I did want to add that "daily habits," for us, has always meant "more often than not." We do not beat ourselves up trying to achieve perfection. We have found through the years that if we can do those important things four days a week at least (more often than not), we will succeed over the long haul. Of course, hugging and kissing has to be 365 days a year to make me truly successful in life. ☺

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