

HOLD THE COURSE

A MENTOR MOM © CLASS

by Misty Foxley

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“A good woman knows that she does not have enough time, energy, or opportunity to take care of all of the people or do all of the worthy things her heart desires to do. Life is not calm for most women, and each day seems to require the accomplishment of a million things, most of which are important... But with personal revelation, she can prioritize correctly and navigate this life confidently.”
~Julie B. Beck, General Conference, April, 2010

The *ideal home school*—like the *ideal home* or the *ideal family*—is an ideal worth striving for, praying for, and continuing to hope for.

The great challenge in any mother’s life mission is to continue moving forward on this path, which strives for the ideal, even in times of great discouragement or opposition.

We can press forward in faith if we will focus on a few of the Savior’s true gospel teachings and apply them directly to our home school.

1ST PRINCIPLE: PUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD FIRST

1. Trust in Prophetic Teaching:

- Classic message to study: Ezra Taft Benson “The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988.
“When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.”
- Another Classic: Dallin H. Oaks “Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2009.
“Most of us have more things expected of us than we can possibly do... We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families.”

2. Applied to our home school: “Less is more.” (This is possible!)

- Stay home more.** Protect family time, seek for activities that can be developed at home, limit outside activities, and combine siblings into same activities if possible.
- Protect the most basic, priorities FIRST (these are “BEST”):** Daily individual and family prayer and gospel study (D&C 93), healthy meals (eaten together), Family Home Evening, regular temple visits for parents, sincere Sabbath observance, regular fasting (at least monthly, more for parents).
- Block time in the week (and protect it) for these other *primary* priorities (also “BEST”):**
 - School time (D&C 88:77-80, 117-126)
 - Rest, relaxation, play time (differs in time and type for each family member)
 - Work time (D&C 88: 119) (Our family cleans Monday mornings, Friday afternoons and 20 minutes in each late afternoon during dinner preparation.)
 - Personal time (needed by everyone in the family for personal development)
 - Bed time (D&C 88:124)
 - Exercise time (inside and outside the house)

- Healthy snack time (for healthy bodies and healthy outlook)

- Let’s be honest with ourselves—aren’t these the basics that get cut out most often for other activities? Experiment on these words—*make these a priority and see what happens to the family.*

2ND PRINCIPLE: ALL THINGS MUST BE DONE IN WISDOM AND ORDER—DO NOT RUN FASTER THEN YOU HAVE STRENGTH

1. Applied to our home school: Teach our children to master the most basic educational skills.
2. Learn the art of “Effective Simplicity.” A concept coined by Vince Lombardi, head coach of the Green Bay Packers. In other words, keep goals simple, few, and totally achievable, then practice to perfection.
3. First step: Identify the most basic educational skills by determining the family’s most basic, overarching goals in education. Do this prayerfully together with your husband (and then with each child as they grow older).

Example of our family’s most basic, over-arching educational goals, “The 4 ‘R’s’”:

- Religion: Develop a firm, personal testimony of Jesus Christ (a desire to serve Him all their life)
- Reading: Ability to read excellently and naturally “seek out of the best books” truths and inspiration that will enhance their life.
- WRiting: Includes the ability to both think and articulate well; written and verbal.
- ARithmetic: Perform basic mathematical skills needed for their life’s experiences (for some that means skill in figuring average daily calculations; for others that might mean engineering.)

4. Create a simple plan to focus on these most basic goals. (For our family, mornings are primarily devoted to accomplishing these goals.) Create simple seasonal or yearly goals.

5. Understand that focusing on a few, meaningful subjects each season is more effective than trying to squeeze every good subject in (while rushing and pushing the student through it.)

- There is plenty of time to study “all things” over a lifetime. (“Tortoise and the Hare” story)
- Good resources on this subject: Oliver van DeMille, *A Thomas Jefferson Education: Teaching a Generation of Leaders for the Twenty-First Century*; and John Holt, *Learning All the Time*.
- “Un-complicate” all subjects for yourself and your children. Pray, and seek for understanding of how to simplify the teaching and learning of any given subject.
- Don’t be afraid to slow down and not finish textbooks or a purchased curriculum. You control the pace and set the goals to meet your child’s needs and abilities.

- Don't be afraid to put off some subjects until the child is older and showing readiness or interest.
- Don't worry about testing. This kind of educational pursuit scores well; no need to "teach to the test."

6. This kind of simplicity **still requires constant, dedicated work, but eases the mind greatly** (because the focus is less complicated) and allows us to implement a **more enjoyable**, less stressed, educational experience.

3RD PRINCIPLE: KEEP YOURSELF MOTIVATED TO "ENDURE TO THE END"

1. Biggest motivating factor: **Staying close to the Spirit.**

- Discipline yourself to talk to God, (prayer) and listen to God (scriptures, pondering, fasting) *daily*.
- Ask for priesthood blessings (I call them my "Home school Blessings."). This is simply another form of revelation available to us. Record in a journal the counsel and guidance given and review it often.
- Counsel regularly with your husband about home school concerns. He often receives specific direction; allow him to do this and trust in his direction. Be unified.
- Pray often as a married couple to recognize false philosophies and to become more aware of spiritual dangers present in the lives of your children (that you might not otherwise be aware of).

2. **Applied to our home school: Ideas to stay motivated and inspired to continue on in this great work**

- **Pray for stamina** and emotional strength when needed. Then get off your knees and go to work, even if you don't feel like it. Trust that the feeling will come eventually (maybe days later)!
- **Listen to motivational recordings** when cooking, driving, walking/exercising, etc. Keep your mind stimulated and raise your thoughts to more noble and virtuous levels. (*I listen to all kinds: General Conference; books on CD from the library which include biographies of inspiring people, university courses, motivational speakers, classic novels, financial courses, self help books, BYU talks, CES Institute talks, and of course LDSEHE audio recordings!*) **And take time to read, at least a little!**
- **Listen to uplifting and inspiring music.**
- **Take "Teacher Prep" days to catch up.** Take several each school year—as needed.
- **Take care of yourself.** If you have young children, **take a nap** daily if you can (teach the other children to read books during this "quiet time"). Buy food that you know will help you feel better and give you energy. If you're the kind that skips meals—don't!
- Go to bed early, get up early, dress nicely and make yourself look good each day. You'll feel better. (Salvation Army has like-new clothing.) "Feel pretty" —this is healthy, not vain.
- **Date your husband every weekend;** it's worth the investment of time and money for both of you. Go to the temple together, regularly, even if it requires sacrifice. It's worth it, I promise.
- For home school support, go to trusted home school comrades. (Others often don't understand.) Email is great for this. **Build a network of home school friendships** both LDS and others.
- **Stop "whining."** We have a work to do and must do it. The pioneers are rooting for us.
 - o Good book on this: Dr. Laura Schlessinger *Stop Whining, Start Living*.
 - o Good General Conference talk: Julie B. Beck, "And upon the Handmaids in Those Days Will I Pour Out My Spirit" *Ensign*, May 2010.
 - o World Wide Leadership Meeting, Jan. 2004, President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Standing Strong and Immovable." (Google it, this message is powerful.)
- My "silly" advice: **Keep some good chocolate in your nightstand (European).** At the end of particularly difficult or hard-won days, share a piece or two with your husband. Psychologically it does wonders. I let it melt in my mouth while I'm reading my scriptures.

4TH PRINCIPLE: LIVE THE LAW OF THE HARVEST

1. We cannot escape this law—it is a universal law of progression.

2. The blessings of this law are: the satisfaction of achievement, progression, inner peace (in knowing we have done all we can), increase in confidence (in ourselves and the Lord), and greater knowledge and understanding in that which we have worked for. It's OK if we don't "make it to the end," we just have to keep moving forward in the very best way we can.

3. **Applied to our home school: There is no substitute for (1) forming a workable, achievable family plan; (2) ordering our life so that this plan can be implemented (cutting out some things); then (3) steadily working to accomplish this plan (takes discipline).**

- Is this not your strength? Or your kids' strength? Great resource on improving in this area: Stephen R. Covey, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People (or Families, or Teens): Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*

4. **Teach your family that self-discipline is not always "fun,"** but we enjoy the results it brings.

- A "Classic" on how to teach your children to work: Elder Neal Maxwell, "Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel," *Ensign*, May 1998.

5. **Attitude is important.** It starts with parents' examples.

- Quotes from Bryant Hinckley, father of President Gordon B. Hinckley, which he often repeated to his children:
*"Try to live up to the high-water mark of your possibilities."
 "Be somebody. Stand up for something."
 "Cynics do not contribute; skeptics do not create; doubters do not achieve."*

5TH PRINCIPLE: WHEN HARD TIMES COME—LEARN TO DISCERN

1. **Applied to our home school: Realize that there are times—these are the exception—when it is appropriate and wise to alter our home school to accommodate for a greater need** (for a day, week, or even a season.)

- Remember: We are the "master" of our school schedule (we created it); it is not our master.
- Whatever the life event might be—the arrival of a new baby, a family loss, death, trauma, grandparent moving in, accident, illness, moving, job loss, an important personal or family project, etc.—it is important that we put a portion or even all of our focus on successful adjustment, recovery, or healing in order for the family to cope successfully.

2. **Seek the spiritual gift of discernment to recognize when a "greater need" is justifiable, and how to adjust (or even stop) our regular schedule to meet that need effectively.**

- Trust in the Spirit, and then act accordingly. (We'll know by the Spirit when to slow down, alter, stop, resume, or permanently alter our plan/schedule.)
- Be at peace; you are trusting in the Lord's wisdom. **Remember that sometimes life *is* the lesson.**

3. **No matter what challenge or crisis your family faces—don't alter the basics!** (See 1st principle above.) Meet basic physical, emotional, and spiritual needs EVERY DAY. This will help you, your spouse and your children move through this time more easily and quickly. *The journey is worth it—so continue on, hold the course, and the blessings will be overflowing.*

Misty Foxley is the mother of six children who she has been homeschooling for over 18 years. Her oldest son recently returned from a mission and both he and his sister are students of private universities. The Foxleys currently live in Virginia, but have homeschooled in several states and countries. Misty is passionate about homeschooling, served for four years as president of LDSEHE, and is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors.