

THE WHERE OF HOMESCHOOLING

BEGINNERS CONFERENCE

by Marsha LaFroth

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D&C 88:119

“Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.”

Strive to create this kind of environment in your homeschool. Strive to *be* this kind of house personally. *Be* a house of prayer, fasting, faith, learning, glory, order, and God.

ESTABLISH A HOUSE OF LEARNING

Where do we homeschool? Everywhere. Show your children that learning is a lifestyle, it doesn't only occur in a classroom. We have a school area where pencils, workbooks, tables, and whiteboards reside, but learning takes place in a variety of ways and places. For example:

- Museums & historical sites
- The library
- On the floor while playing with Legos, puzzles, and blocks (this doesn't look like public school but my son *really* does listen to history and science readings better if his hands are engaged)
- The van (we practice memory work or listen to audio books, scripture stories, songs, etc.)
- On the couch or bed (a great place for book reading and mother/child discussions; the kids will last longer if they are comfortable)
- On a blanket with snacks while Mom reads a great book (what a fun way to do something different and add variety to your school)
- At homeschool groups and co-ops

ESTABLISH A HOUSE OF ORDER

HOUSEWORK:

It is essential to get a system working in this area or you will go insane! I have found that my sense of peace and well-being is directly correlated with the state of my home.

- Create a family routine that is followed *most* of the time. It is so much easier to get kids to cooperate when they do things in a consistent manner each day. Designate a time for working/cleaning, a time for learning, and a time for playing. Our basic routine is: wake-up, do morning chores, eat breakfast, have devotional, do other studies, take a lunch break, finish whatever didn't get done in the morning, play. The more consistently I follow this routine, the less resistance I meet.
- Rather than rotating jobs among children, give each child the same jobs every day so it becomes a habit rather than a job.
- Designate one day a week for bigger cleaning jobs and hold back on academics that day. Try Glen Kimber's suggested schedule: Monday-- Cleaning and prep day; Tues., Wed., and Thurs.--academics at home; Fri.--group classes and fieldtrips.
- Establish a way for the kids to be somewhat autonomous in completing their work so you don't have to micromanage and nag. Use checklists or pocket charts and establish the understanding that certain privileges (T.V., friend time, computer time, etc.) aren't allowed until the work is done.
- If you are like me and you really don't like cleaning, chant the FlyLady's motto: "You can do anything for 15 minutes." I literally have to set my timer for 15 minutes on some days. Set it for 60 minutes on your cleaning or "home blessing" day. (See Marla Cilley's book, *Sink Reflections*, or visit her website www.flylady.net).

STUDIES:

Decide what subjects need to be done on a regular basis and organize a way to hold your children (and yourself) accountable for doing them. Ideas for doing this:

- Create a weekly checklist for each child with all of their subjects on it (could be combined with chore checklist). If your children know what

they need to do each day, they can get started without you or continue working on their own when other demands pull you away.

- Have a pocket folder for each child with “To Do” on one side and “Done” on the other side. When I’m really on the ball, I grab all the kids’ assignments for the whole week and put them in the “To Do” side and the kids move them to the “Done” side as they complete them. This comes in handy when we are on the go, the kids can just grab their folders and get their schoolwork done wherever we may be.

STUFF:

- Store it where you use it.
- Bookcases and binders are your friends.
- Have a labeled shelf or cubby for each child to keep their school stuff in.
- Have a teacher shelf where you keep all your answer books and teacher supplies for the year.
- Have a place for devotional materials (shelf, bin, or basket near the place you hold devotionals)
- Have a designated place to keep library books. Cleaning totes work great.
- Have a place where you keep toddler and/or pre-school activities. I keep blocks and puzzles in my family room because we do a lot of reading there and it gives my little one something to do. I also have a shelf full of learning activities in my school room for my toddler to play with while the older kids do their assignments.
- Papers—throw away as many papers as you possibly can. When you really need to keep something, put it in a binder or a file. Have a binder designated for records--letters to the county, test results, transcripts, etc. Use binders divided by subjects to store your children’s work that you can’t part with. Use binders to store great handouts you’ve created and may want to use again.
- Organize files on your computer. Start with a folder titled “Homeschool.” Within that folder, create other folders by subject or group such as Science, History Club, Stories, etc. Save your files to the appropriate folder. If you have your files stored in an orderly manner, you will be able to find them again.

Random tip from Diane Jeppson:

Have each child rotate being “child of the day.” On their day, they say prayers, sit up front in the car, choose the story, etc. This helps eliminate some of the bickering that occurs over small things.

Please remember:

We are sharing ideas that have worked for us. You know your children best and you are entitled to receive revelation for your family. Seek the Lord’s guidance in prayer, fasting, and faith, then follow the promptings you receive, even if it means doing things differently than other people recommend.

“My plea—and I wish I were more eloquent in voicing it—is a plea to save the children. Too many of them walk with pain and fear, in loneliness and despair. Children need sunlight. They need happiness. They need love and nurture. They need kindness and refreshment and affection. Every home, regardless of the cost of the house, can provide an environment of love which will be an environment of salvation” (Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Save the Children” Ensign, Nov. 1994).

Marsha enjoys homeschooling her three children in Northern VA. She knows there are challenges with homeschooling, but ultimately finds it a joy and privilege to teach her children at home.