

Featured Excerpt

The following is an excerpt from
Things We Wish We'd Known.

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From *Confusion to Confidence:
Making Choices in Curriculum*

By Camilla Leedahl

The following is excerpted from Part 4: **God's Involvement** of
Things We Wish We'd Known.

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About the Author:

Born into an Air Force family, Camilla spent her first fifteen years in cities, living around the world. When her father retired to a small farm in northwestern Minnesota, she thought that this time they had moved to the end of the world. Working in Fargo, North Dakota, Camilla had big dreams for her career as a registered nurse. When she married Arlo in 1977, she traded her nurse's cap for a pair of chore gloves and became a partner in their farm and ranch in southeastern North Dakota's rugged sandhills. Arlo and Camilla have been homeschooling their three children for eleven years: Jonathan is 18, Melody is 16, and Peter is 12.

Camilla is an enthusiastic advocate of home education in the state of North Dakota, speaking to civic groups and the media, writing how-to articles and presenting workshops on a myriad of topics, counseling homeschoolers and support group leaders, and serving as a support group leader in the Fargo area.

She recently established Hearthside Productions and published her first book, *The Homeschool Support Group*.

From *Confusion to Confidence*
Cam Leedahl

"You seem so confident and your children are remarkable. What curriculum do you use?" As home schoolers earnestly look for the direction they need, this is the most common question they ask me. It is also the most difficult question to answer. It is difficult, not just because each child is an original or because each family situation is unique, but because books and curriculum are not the central issues to the success of home education. The confidence I have is not in myself, nor in books. It is assurance in the Lord and His direction. The pleasant results others observe in my children are fruits of their relationship to Christ. These things I learned the hard way after misplacing my reliance onto methods and curriculum, rather than on the light of God's word.

Eleven years ago, I approached this new venture of home education with my naturally methodical, researching ways. With a "Lord, help me!" prayer, I gathered, organized and

digested all the information I could find. I subscribed to magazines (there were only a few back then), read books, examined curriculum catalogs and what reviews I could find. I busily wrote out my philosophy, determined some goals, and set up my record keeping. I visited a curriculum fair and purchased my books. I did everything I understood a prudent homeschooler should do. A few months passed as we pursued our system, until the latest how-to books arrived. These were filled with new ideas and new systems, so I changed approaches, altered goals and bought new curriculum. In preparation for the state mandated annual achievement test, I focused on the checklists. I "taught to the test," because I wanted my children to measure up. To secure the best possible education for them and the best possible outcome from them was my quest!

However, despite my knowledge, purchase and use of the newest and best that the world of home education had to offer my children, uncertainty pursued me. Like a wave of the ocean, I surged upward with each new approach to learning, then sank down as my hopes were not fulfilled. With the second year rolling to a close, my plight became apparent to me: I was awash in a sea of curriculum confusion.

One early June day, I looked with distress at yet another new strategy to implement for the next year in front of me. Why was I not at peace? In our homeschooling efforts, had I not been trying to serve God and obey Him? Overwhelmed, I hastened away from the house, and swiftly walked down our pasture lane. Striding furiously along, I wept, "Lord, something is not right with my homeschool planning process. I don't know what to do next!" I stopped under the welcoming shade of an old cottonwood tree. The tranquil beauty of our meadow stretched before me, the hills and the river beyond. The words from a psalm came repeatedly to mind. "Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am God." I sat quietly, the Creator ministering to me through His creation. A portion of another psalm came to mind, giving voice to my heart, "Show me Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Guide me in Your truth and teach me. My hope is in You all day long."

My heart was pierced as He revealed to me the futility of my human efforts. I had been researching and planning so hard, but, instead of submitting to God, I had been maneuvering Him carefully into my plans. I had been hurrying along on my own timetable, not waiting for His leading. How could I have received counsel from the Lord under those limitations? I needed a discerning eye to see through the fog of popular homeschool choices. I needed a purified set of goals, a new standard with which to judge progress. I no longer wanted to do it my way.

The words of Romans 12:2 gripped me; I was not to adapt myself to the pattern of the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. Only then could I know His good and perfect will. In my heart, the Lord counseled me to take my focus away from my favorite authors' and speakers' insights, and away from my own understanding, as well. Those human props must be set aside before the Spirit of God could do His transforming work in me.

It was a precious summer. Every morning I would get up early and search the Word, then work in the garden with a fervent and unceasing prayer in my heart. The rhythmic routine of weeding and cultivating, pruning and harvesting gave my mind room for meditation. Day after day, I focused on what He was revealing to me from His Word, enlightening me on purpose, on

education, on learning and on my children's gifts and abilities. I became a student of my children, desiring to know them intimately, purposing to know their hearts, their hopes, their dreams.

The cultivation of the Word in my heart bore its fruit. I began to know what was necessary for my children. They needed to understand what they were learning, not just master the content. They needed to possess the tools of learning, so they could learn for themselves as a way of life. Most of all, they needed to long for the Lord. Academic requirements needed to become secondary to spiritual goals, for pursuit of discipleship in Jesus Christ would vault them far beyond what man could ever offer.

As I planned for my children's studies, I allowed time for the Lord to confirm within me the course of action for each child, determined by their particular needs. Waiting was not easy, since I am a "do it right now" type of person. September came, and I was concerned the children might "get behind". I need not have worried, for the Lord provided richly during this interim. They happily did projects in topics of interest to them, with limited guidance from me, learning more than I could have imagined. I decided that I could go ahead and use many of the books I had previously purchased. However, instead of letting those books be the substance of our education, they now became merely tools in our toolkit of learning. The how-to books and academic guides showed themselves useful, but they were now subjected *first* to the illuminating light of God's Word, speaking to my prepared heart.

While acquaintance with Christ and the renewing of my mind is an ongoing process, that summer of concentrated time, separated to God's Word, was the change that made the difference in our homeschooling lifestyle. As the years go by and adjustments are made for the changing needs of our family, He continues to show Himself to be our reliable and primary source of direction.

Watching expectantly what the Lord is doing in the lives of my children, I quietly marvel at my Teacher, my Guide, my Provider. The joy is unspeakable. Nothing, nothing in this world can compare with walking in the Light.