

## What's Inside

### TECH TIP – p. 3

An easy way to preserve your satellite signal in the winter

### TEACHING TIPS – p. 4

Asking the right questions is an important aspect of a child's education.

### INSPIRATION – p. 6

Children—even those with special needs—can serve God at any age.



## Textbooks: Messages Subtle and Not So Subtle

Sometimes you can see a book's agenda by what authors put in and sometimes by what they leave out. How do you know what your textbooks are really saying?

I recently surveyed secular textbooks and found the following topics discussed: the oppression and subjugation of women by the male “Establishment”; the glorification of pop culture icons including rock/rap/R&B stars, humanist authors, and fierce feminists; the acceptance of evolution as scientific fact; the affirmation of the primacy of environmentalism. And it's not just the secondary textbooks that worry me. Secular elementary books routinely encourage students to “be your own person” and “think of yourself first.”

So what to do? To redeem our children's minds for God's glory requires us to acknowledge that “in him [in God] we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28), that whatever is done must be done “heartily, as to the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). This acknowledgment makes significant the use of explicitly Christian textbooks—those texts that do more than merely purport a “moral emphasis” or tack a Bible verse onto the title page. A thoroughly Christian textbook helps a parent to support the spiritual growth of her child and to equip that student for God's service.

Why are Christian texts so crucial? Foremost, Christian texts promote a biblical worldview. For example, when discussing the women’s rights movement of the ’70s, a Christian history text would not include a poem proclaiming disappointment as “a woman’s lot” or praise a woman’s “right to choose,” as I saw recently in one secular text. Instead, a Christian textbook factually discusses the positive and negative outcomes of the movement, basing all such evaluation

never mentions the God who made them all (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1–3). It is this absence of even an acknowledgment of God that is perhaps most telling—and most damning—for the reader. For how can a student, daily bombarded with humanism, materialism, hedonism, socialism, and pragmatism, withstand the unstated premise that “God can’t be too important since He isn’t mentioned anywhere in this scholarly work”? Here Christian textbooks can effectively combat an anti-Christian worldview.

*Using a Christian text, a parent can spend time teaching rather than unteaching.*

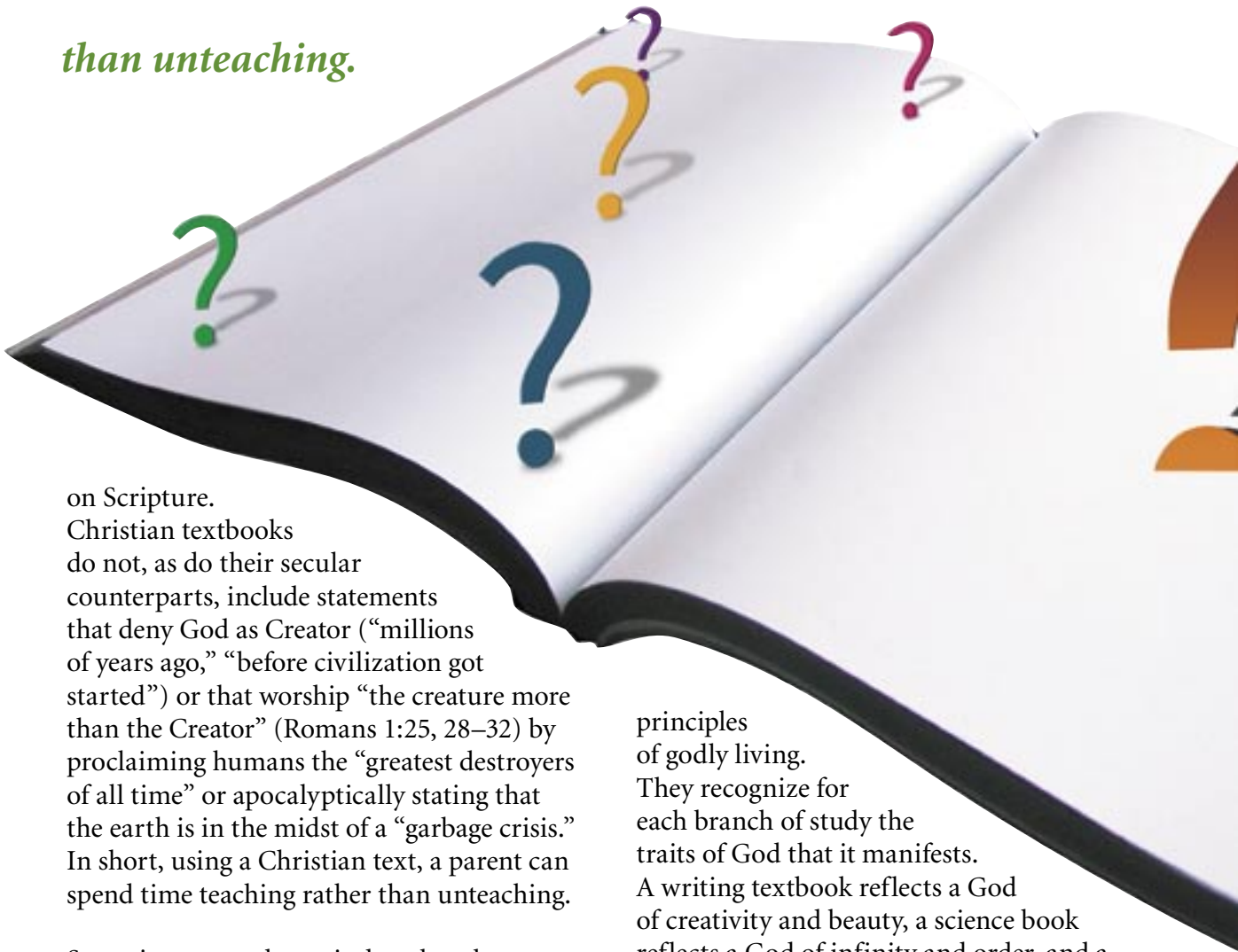
Christian textbooks emphasize the characteristics of God and



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BJU Press

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Greenville, SC  
29614-0060  
Home School Helper is  
published quarterly.  
U.S. subscriptions are free.  
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Send all correspondence  
and changes of address to  
Home School Helper, BJU  
Press, Greenville, SC  
29614-0060 or to  
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on Scripture. Christian textbooks do not, as do their secular counterparts, include statements that deny God as Creator (“millions of years ago,” “before civilization got started”) or that worship “the creature more than the Creator” (Romans 1:25, 28–32) by proclaiming humans the “greatest destroyers of all time” or apocalyptically stating that the earth is in the midst of a “garbage crisis.” In short, using a Christian text, a parent can spend time teaching rather than unteaching.

principles of godly living. They recognize for each branch of study the traits of God that it manifests. A writing textbook reflects a God of creativity and beauty, a science book reflects a God of infinity and order, and a Christian history text presents world history not as a series of random acts but as events

planned by an omniscient, omnipotent God. Students understand the conflict between righteousness and unrighteousness, how it is played out, and how truth and righteousness ultimately triumph. They read real-life examples of the principles of sowing and reaping and of the providence of God. Their text illustrates that God knows and plans the beginning, middle, and end (Hebrews 4: 12–14; Colossians 1:16–18) and that His ways are perfect (Psalm 18:30).

Christian textbooks further support and equip Christian students by encouraging discernment. Far from being merely a “lock-step” series of exercises, Christian textbooks go beyond the presentation of facts to give students the tools necessary to detect the differences in the wisdom that is from above and that which is earthly (Proverbs 1:7). The books encourage analyzing content, using biblical principles rather than blindly accepting anything presented. For example, in a Christian literature text students are asked to compare and contrast Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* with various biblical accounts. The book also examines scriptural principles governing the consequences of Macbeth’s actions and evaluates the advice of Sir Francis

Bacon’s essays in light of God’s Word. In effect, the text itself encourages students to discriminate between the good and the bad (or between the excellent and the merely good) and to choose the one over the other.

How can we best counter the philosophies that stunt our children spiritually and prepare them for nothing nobler than an increase in this world’s wisdom? With God’s help, we can use Christian texts to give our children access to a higher wisdom. But Christian textbooks, even excellent ones, are not the lone answer to our educational woes. For that, we must look to Christ alone: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all” (I Timothy 2:5–6). He is still the best answer—still our only Hope. Why use a textbook that undermines that Hope, subtly or not? 🙏

Kim Stegall is a former Christian school teacher and is currently an author at BJU Press. She and her husband, Jeff, have two children.

### TECH TIPS FROM BJ HOMESAT

It’s that time of year again! As snow, freezing rain, and ice fall across many parts of the country, precipitation may build up on your dish and cause you to lose your signal. If this occurs, clear your dish and the LNB feed-horn of snow and ice. Spraying or pouring hot water on your dish should easily remove the precipitation. To prevent snow and ice from building up, spray WD-40 or a deicing product on the dish. Inquire locally about other ideas for snow or ice removal and prevention.



# The Art of Asking Questions

Getting the right answers is not just your student's responsibility. Much of his success depends on the questions you ask him. And HOW you ask them.

Research on reading comprehension shows undisputed benefits from asking questions. Questions help students of all ages comprehend content, and students who use questions learn more subject matter than students who do not use questions. Questioning also helps students discover their own ideas; it gives them an opportunity to explore and to sharpen critical thinking skills.

This is not news to most home schooling parents. We all ask questions, right? And we certainly answer enough of them in a day! But even veteran home school teachers might need to question their questioning skills every now and then.

**1) Do we develop thinking skills by asking questions that require our children to think beyond the literal or factual level?**

- Use questions that require comparing, evaluating,

discerning. (Why? What if? What is the evidence? What are the alternatives? What are the implications? What do you think is right?)

- Prepare several higher-level questions for each subject.

**2) Do we wait for our child to answer?**

- Allow adequate response time. One study of traditional schools



*Christian home school teachers must not only set young minds to thinking but also direct their journey toward a biblical outcome.*

investigated the amount of time teachers wait after asking a question. It found that if students do not begin a response within one second, teachers usually repeat the question or call upon another student to respond. Five or six seconds of silence is not much to give in return for a good answer.

- Help your child restate answers. Sometimes we do not hear an answer because it was not stated in the way we expected. Consider the answer a moment. You will not look slow; in fact, your child will be honored that you think his words are worthy of deliberation. Ask another question or restate the answer,

in order to determine whether you understood. Take the time to help your child express his answer.

### 3) Do we help our child think toward the right answers?

- Use scaffolding techniques. If your child does not seem to have a good response, ask a lower-level question that offers more clues and definitive information, building up to the higher-level question.

- Demonstrate for your child how you arrive at conclusions by asking questions yourself. For instance, you might say that you read something in the newspaper and asked yourself, “Could that report be true?” Then you asked other questions: “How can I verify that report? Can I trust the source? Why do I question it?”
- Have the answers. Open-ended questions that are not resolved lead children to think that they must “work out their own solutions to life’s problems” and that they cannot “expect to find final answers to most serious questions.”<sup>1</sup> Christian home school teachers must not only set young minds to thinking but also direct their journey toward a biblical outcome.

If we help our children, they will not only learn course content through good questioning but will also learn how to ask good questions in order to arrive at answers for themselves. And isn’t that the whole point? 😊

Jim Davis is a former teacher and administrator for public and Christian schools. Dawn Watkins, teacher and popular children’s author, supervises BJU Press’s Marketing Communications department.

Endnote

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Education: Its Mandate and Mission*, ed. Ron Horton (BJU Press, 1992), p. 33.

# Joshua's Work

Ever catch yourself worrying over schedules, grades, and expectations for your child? Diane Brown eloquently shares some lessons about the goals that really matter—not the ones she taught, but the ones her son taught her.

I was reminded in a sermon recently that children—even special needs children—have a work to do for God. Our family personally experienced that truth less than a year ago.

In the middle of April, Joshua, our twelve-year-old son with Down Syndrome, was hospitalized. The initial diagnosis was that a virus had attacked his heart and affected other systems. Joshua saw numerous specialists, and on the fifth day he was flown to a medical university four hours away. We prayed fervently for Joshua and for the Lord's will to be done in his life.

At first we thought that God had sent us to Charleston for Joshua to get well. As time went on, however, we realized that we were on a mission trip. At the Ronald McDonald House, where we lived for seven weeks, we met people who were hurting just as we were. It was so natural to offer to pray with them and to hand them a card with a verse to encourage them. We found that by encouraging others we were encouraged.

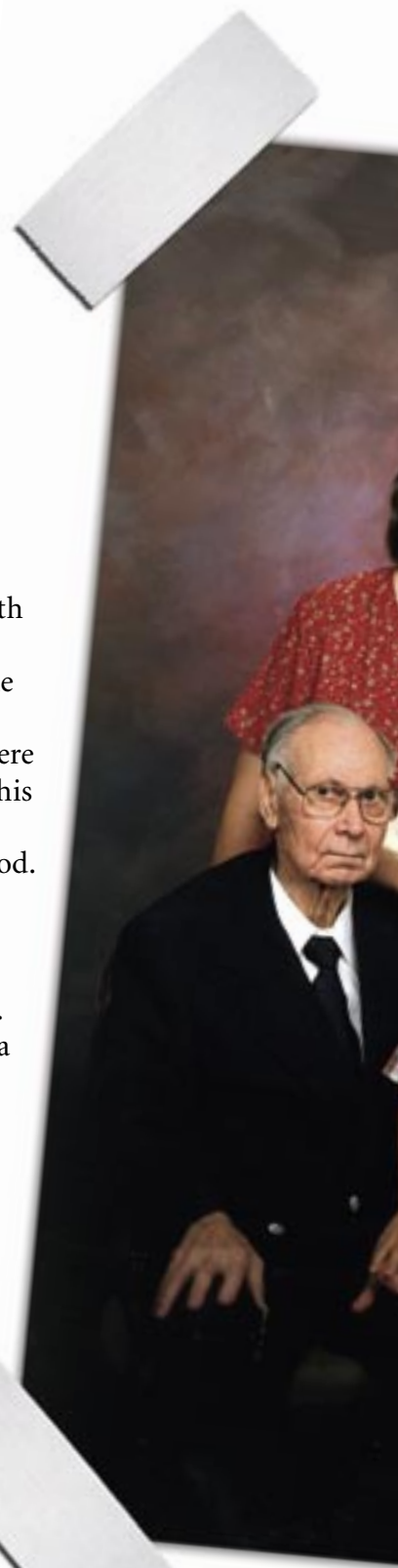
God also gave us opportunities to speak with the doctors and nurses. One resident remarked that having a critically ill child must be very hard, and that he could not imagine what we were going through. God opened the way for us to tell the young man about God's all-sufficient grace.

The nurses loved Joshua, and one night two late-shift nurses had to flip a coin to see

who would get to be with him. Through it all, his sweet spirit captured the hearts of everyone who took care of him. We were impressed that even in his weak condition Joshua was doing a work for God.

In the seventh week, complications set in, and a scan was ordered. During the MRI, Joshua experienced heart failure and, though revived, he slipped into a coma. We spent part of Sunday singing hymns with friends around his bed. When Joshua passed into glory on Monday morning, family members were not the only ones weeping. God had given us a precious gift to keep for Him for a while. Now God had taken that precious gift home with Him—Joshua's work for God on earth was done.

Remember, dear families, that your little ones with special needs like Joshua's have a purpose here on earth. It probably won't be





difficulty in some academic subject, think about God's two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . ." and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matthew 22:37–39).

These should be the first two goals for each school year. Help your child learn who God is, to love Him, and to know what Christ did on his behalf. Teach your child to show God's love to others by the way he thinks, talks, and acts.

We must never tell a child that he must wait until he grows up to serve God. Your child can be a testimony to others, and his life can be a tool that God will use to lead others to Christ. His example can encourage other believers with special-needs children who are just beginning to see God's hand in their lives.

May God bless you with knowledge and wisdom as you teach your children. And may you be sensitive to the work God has for them. 🙏

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*Diane Brown is the mother of three children. She home schooled her special-needs son, Joshua, for 6 years. In addition to having written other articles for *Home School Helper*, she also ministers to home school families with special-needs children.*

*Joshua and his family: Grandpa and Grandma Brown, brothers Jesse and Justin, Aunt Ruth, and Mom and Dad.*

that they will go to college, become astronauts, or hold any high-tech jobs. But we are all created to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7).

The next time you are frustrated because your child isn't reading well or is having



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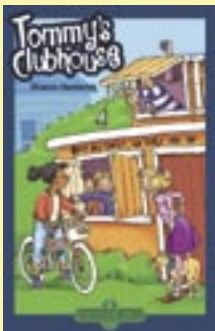
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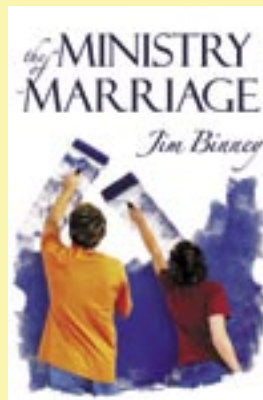
# What's New!

## ELEMENTARY LEVEL

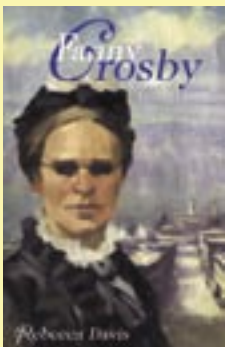


***Tommy's Clubhouse* by Sharon Hambrick**—This book for 6- and 7-year-olds tells how Tommy and his friends start a club that does good deeds in his neighborhood. This is book one of the Fig Street Kids series; softbound; 96 pages.  
**(199505, \$6.49)**

## FOR PARENTS



***The Ministry of Marriage* by Jim Binney**—A well-known Christian counselor shows the biblical plan for building a life together even if only one partner is pursuing it. The book emphasizes how applying biblical thinking brings miraculous results to even severe and prolonged cases of marital discord; softbound; 250 pages.  
**(196923, \$14.95)**



***Fanny Crosby: Queen of Gospel Song* by Rebecca Davis**—This is a moving biography for ages 7 to 9 of the nineteenth-century blind woman who wrote more than 9,000 hymns; softbound; 120 pages.  
**(196873, \$6.49)**