



To embrace, encourage, and empower through a network of Christian educators.

Christmas Can Be a Fun Time for Homeschooling

By Tracy Gosnell - Homeschool Representative

After Thanksgiving, my children have a hard time staying on track with their school work. With family visiting, and all of the various events of the season taking place, the last thing my children want to do is memorize the periodic table of elements. So this year, why not try something new? Take a look at how Christmas is celebrated around the world, and incorporate this into the learning process.

Approaching the Christmas season, as well as other holidays in this way, is a great way to get your children involved with geography, social studies, researching, writing, and even doing math. Have everyone in the family pick a different country (geography/social studies), and learn about the Christmas traditions both new and old celebrated in that culture (research/writing). Ask the children to list some Christmas traditions your family celebrates, and they can research to find out in which country this tradition originated. Holidays also provide many opportunities for children to display their talent as they express their own understanding through the decorating that takes place. Research of a tradition may provide an opportunity for having fun in this way as well.

Next add some "spice" to math by making a few traditional Christmas treats to enjoy, or to give to family and friends. Cooking is a great way to help teach, or reinforce fractions (math), and to make great memories with your children. For your older children, have them double or cut the recipe in half to give them a little more of challenge. No one ever said math had to be dull and boring, and the learning process becomes more of a delight once they are able to taste the results.

For more ideas on celebrating Christmas around the world, encourage your family to go to these websites.

<http://www.whychristmas.com>

<http://www.the-north-pole.com/around>

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/Christmas-Around-the-World-Lessons-and-Activities.shtml

May this Christmas season be a fun and memorable time for your homeschooling family. Merry Christmas, and may the Joy of the Lord Jesus fill your home.



Nazarene Educators Worldwide Council Meets in Kansas City

During the weekend of November 21-23, council members of NEW met in Kansas City for their annual meeting. The council spent the majority of their time together planning for the upcoming year, including plans for NEW's presence at M15 and other areas where Nazarene Educators can be an impact for Christ. The council members wish each of you a very Merry Christmas!



Fun Ways for Kids to Enjoy Reading!

By Lance Howard - NEW Vice Chair & Public School Representative

If you are interested in helping your child enjoy reading and literacy, then you need to help them read in ways that make sense and they enjoy. One resource for parents that tries to help in this area can be found at PBS Kids (where they have children's programs that help support and encourage learning and reading for children).

I have summarized some ideas from articles by Jennifer Cooper.

One article sites 10 ways to help raise a confident reader:

- 1) Read aloud to your kids.
- 2) Have your kids read to you.
- 3) Have lots of books around the house.
- 4) Let your kids catch you reading.
- 5) Allow the kids to choose their reading topics/materials.
- 6) Read daily.
- 7) Challenge the kids to read at their next level.
- 8) Bond over books and stories.
- 9) Avoid always quizzing them regarding their reading.
- 10) Limit their "screen time" on the TV, phone, video game, tablet, phone, etc. and encourage them to read instead!

Another article sites ways to help a child who dislikes reading:

- 1) Start reading things they like.
- 2) Start small and grow into more challenging books.
- 3) Practice shared reading by reading together (taking turns aloud or silent).

(More information and details can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language>)

So remember, reading can always be made fun. Give it a try today!

Find ways for kids to have fun with literacy using these great tips, activities and resources:

- How to Raise a Confident Reader
- What to do When Your Child Hates Reading
- Literacy Skills Everyday

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language>



The End of Innocence and the Value of an Education

By Beth Clayton Luthye, NCM Communications

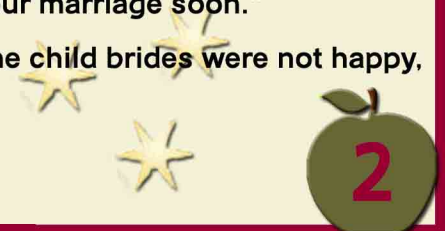
[Editor's Note: Sometimes students in middle and high school become discouraged and want to end their education. Perhaps they need to know there are areas of the world where young people, especially girls, are denied the opportunity to receive an education. Nazarene Compassionate Ministries is trying to make an effort to help girls receive an education and learn skills to make a living.

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As 13 year-old Mita watched other young girls from her village get married one by one, she was afraid the same fate awaited her. Mita's mother wanted her daughter to go to school, but her father refused. Her younger brother went to school, but every time Mita brought up the subject of education, her father declared, "You are a girl. You do not need to go to school. We will arrange your marriage soon."

Mita used to weep silently. She knew that most of the girls who had become child brides were not happy, but Mita had no control over her own future.

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Seeking to Make Conferences Non-Confrontational

By Becky Ramsey - Public School Representative

I remember being at my mother's house the night before parent-teacher conferences. I sighed deeply, regretting that the next day I had to face these parent-teacher conferences.

My mom looked at me and asked, "Do teachers dread those conferences too?" And I answered with a resounding, "At least this teacher does!" She asked, "Why would a teacher dread a conference? Isn't the teacher the one who has the possibility of giving out the bad news?"

I told her that what I dreaded was the possibility of having some type of a confrontation with a parent. And because of that possibility, I do all in my power to prepare for conferences and avoid a cause for a conflict. And I want the parents to feel at ease during the conference.

The first thing I do to help set the mood for conferences is to lessen the "feel" of the classroom. I bring a nicely scented candle to light and to make the classroom smell fresh and inviting. I usually set out some interesting articles to read by the chairs in the hallway, in case a parent has to wait because of another conference running over in time. I often arrange for my senior class to offer a coffee and donut fundraiser in the hallway to make sure that every parent is not hungry when they enter any teacher's classroom! All the other teachers thank me for distracting the parents who have been delayed and had to wait, because they are much happier once they have been fed!

Because I now teach in a Christian school, I can begin every conference with prayer. It is amazing how many tense situations can be diffused quickly when the Holy Spirit enters our conference at the beginning. But even when I taught in public school, I prayed over my classroom before my day of conferences began and prayed through the list of parents I was scheduled to meet. I asked God to be with me in each situation. Visualizing Him in the seat beside me always helped me when there were difficult conversations to be covered.

Another thing that has helped me to keep my conferences on track and on time was for me to prepare a conference report form for each parent ahead of time to use during the conference. I would provide the information that was pertinent to each child, listing the most positive information at the top of the form. I would show places where I felt the child had made improvements, goals that he or she had reached, and specific instances that I felt that the parents would want to know. I also broke down the quarter grade into how it had been calculated—daily averages, quiz averages, test averages, and project grades. I will also inform the parents of any upcoming projects of which I want them to be aware. Then I ask the parents if they have concerns they would like to discuss. Only then, after the parents have had a chance to bring up problems, do I bring up a problem if it has not been addressed by the parents themselves.

I have found that by approaching the conference with the positive aspects first, and allowing the parents to bring up their concerns next, the parents are more than willing to listen and work with me if there are additional problems. I always make a copy of this conference report so that I can give the parents a copy of the report that they can take with them. That way, if they have questions later, they can refer to the report as they call or email me.

Even though I dread conference day, I really have never had difficult conferences. In fact, my biggest trouble is keeping on schedule and getting parents to keep to their fifteen- or twenty-minute scheduled time. I guess that I must have made it too comfortable and welcoming in my room. They just want to stay!





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The End of Innocence and the Value of an Education

**By Beth Clayton Luthye,
NCM Communications**

Mita's story is common for millions of girls around the world, particularly in Bangladesh, a country with one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. There, 29 percent of girls are turned into wives before they turn 15, and 65 percent are made to marry before they turn 18, according to UNICEF.

Some people call child marriage a cultural norm. Others call it a violation of human rights. Girls have no choice in the matter, and they are often married to much older men. A young bride's schooling ends, and she has no opportunity to learn skills that can lead to an income. Typically, women are then seen as a burden because they don't contribute financially. Physical abuse is common. Further, young mothers have more complications resulting from pregnancies and childbirth, and infant mortality is far higher among mothers under 19.

Moyna was 12 years old when she was married to an older man. As a teen, she gave birth to a daughter, Joya. Soon after, Moyna's husband left her for another woman. With no family to support her, she started working as a day laborer in the rice fields. She earns about 1,000 taka (\$12.50, USD) a month. Sometimes, she receives food as payment, which helps a little.

"I had a hard life," Moyna says. "I want to give my daughter food and clothes, but I have no ability to give them. Sometimes we have no food at night or for breakfast."

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Christmas Traditions

by Melodee Simmons - Childcare/Preschool Representative

All around us are the reminders of the coming season. Decorated trees, twinkling lights, festive wreaths, and many more things let us know the Christmas season is here. I love all the Christmas traditions.

We were able to attend our son's church the first Sunday of Advent. We enjoyed the lighting of the first candle, one of the traditions of the season. We all have traditions we do every year. What are some of your traditions? You probably have traditions at home and church that add to the season and help you remember the true meaning of the season.

I have always thought it is important to teach traditions to children. It gives them a foundation to stand on and a sense of continuity with the past. Think about the traditions you can start in your classroom.

I let the children make decorations for the class tree. Then, just before the holiday, the children take their ornaments home for their own tree. We make chains out of red and green paper, one ring for each day until Christmas. The end ring is covered in silver foil to represent Christmas day. Each day, the children remove one link and count the days left until Christmas.

It is fun to have a "Pajama Day". Let the children wear their pajamas and pretend it is Christmas Eve. Make stockings and let the children hang them up. During naptime, put a candy cane or a cookie in the stocking for the children to find when they wake up. Before naptime, read the Christmas story from the Bible and "The Night Before Christmas." Let the children leave a snack for Santa. When they wake up, they will find only crumbs. It's also fun to let the children help you write a note to Santa. Then Santa can leave a note you can read to them later

Children enjoy nativity sets of materials that they can handle and move the pieces. Children love to tell the story of Baby Jesus. The angels proclaiming "Don't be afraid, Jesus is born!" is something young children can learn to repeat, and what a message they are sharing!

Of course, there is the music of the season. Don't you love to hear songs of the season playing wherever you go? Children love music, even little ones will move to the rhythm. Two songs the children can learn easily are "Away in the Manger" and "Jingle Bells." Parents love to hear their children singing new songs.

This is a wonderful season to start some new traditions and renew some old ones.

Have a wonderful Christmas season.



Dreams and Visions

By Beula Postlewait - NEW Council Member

"I'm dreaming of a white Christmas" (Irving Berlin)

"'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there. The children were nestled all snug in their beds While visions of sugar plums danced in their heads" (Clement Clarke Moore)

These words from a well-known song and poem are often heard at Christmas. They remind me that adults and children are affected often by dreams or visions.

Luke 1:26-38: Mary, the mother of Jesus, had an angelic visitor who came in person to tell her that she would be the mother of the long-awaited Savior.

Matthew 1:18-25: Joseph had not experienced the angel's visit to Mary, but he was visited by an angel in a dream. The angel told him to take Mary as his wife (rather than divorcing her), because the child she carried would be the Savior of the world. Joseph was obedient to God's message, and Mary became his wife.

Matthew 2:1-11: The wise men from the East who studied the stars saw a special star. They believed this star represented a new king for the Jews. They traveled to Jerusalem where they thought the child would be born. They learned from Herod and the Jewish leaders that the prophets had predicted that Christ would be born in Bethlehem. The wise men followed the star to the home where they found the Christ child, and they worshipped him.

Matthew 2:12: The wise men were warned in a dream to return to their home without going back to report to Herod. They listened to the warning and returned to their homes.

Matthew 2:13-16: Joseph received a warning in a dream to take the family to Egypt quickly in order to escape the murderous wrath of Herod. They left during the night and stayed in Egypt until the death of Herod.

Matthew 2:19-23: An angel appeared to Joseph in another dream to tell him it was safe for him and his family to return to Israel.

You may not experience a life-changing dream, vision, or angelic visitor. God reveals His will to us in many ways. God's Word is one common way. I pray that you will be as open to God's will as Mary and Joseph and the wise men were. What a privilege (and awesome responsibility) Mary and Joseph had as the earthly parents of God's greatest gift—His Son, Jesus, our Savior.

Dr. Jim Upchurch and the Nazarene Educators Worldwide Council would like to wish you, your students, and your family a wonderful Christmas season. Encourage them to remember the real meaning of Christmas—the birth of Jesus, God's Son, our Savior.

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The End of Innocence and the Value of an Education By Beth Clayton Luthye, NCM Communications

She continues, "I don't want my daughter to marry young. If she can be educated, she can get a job and make money. I want her to have a different life than I had."

Thanks to a Nazarene Compassionate Ministries child development center (CDC), Joya has that chance. Now, nine-year-old Joya goes to the CDC every day, where she receives a nutritious meal and an education.

Moyna never got to go to school as a child, and she is illiterate as a result. She beams with pride when she says, "My daughter reads to me sometimes." She adds, "I want her to be happy."

When asked what will make her happy, Joya quietly answers, "I want to be a teacher one day."

Pray for the millions of girls around the world whose families are faced with this situation. Pray for your students that they will understand the value of an education for them.

This article was written by Beth Clayton Luthye and appeared originally in the Winter 2014 edition of NCM Magazine. It is used by permission. To see additional articles or to communicate with Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, go to their website, www.ncm.org.

