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introduction...

We must put thought into our ways and be intentional.

This small book is meant to be a companion to the original, *...experiencing home... a guide to finding joy in your home*. The original book was written on the simple premise that all of us are given our homes to experience. We haven't just been given them to paint, clean and add on to or remodel, but to experience and enjoy. Additionally, we believe true joy can be found in our homes only through a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, our one true provider of complete joy. *...experiencing home...* was also written as a guide, a tour guide of sorts. It is intended to take you through your home, space-by-space, helping you discover the experiences that make those spaces significant in your life by asking questions and encouraging you to reflect a bit.

This book, *...experiencing home...as a homeschool family...*, is not a newer version or second edition to the original, nor is it meant to completely stand alone - although we think it can. Instead, we have written it for a specific audience: the homeschool family. Beyond our own personal relationships with Jesus Christ, there is nothing more important to us than the discipleship and education of our boys. We have been homeschooling for seven years and we are adding our third son to the mix this coming year. Therefore, we have seen the overwhelming impact of what educating our boys at home does to our home. As you know, homeschooling families spend *more* time in their homes than most American families. Additionally, we obviously live *differently* in our homes than most families.

The Rentfrow family works, schools, plays and rests together. As parents of this family we co-labor in raising our children and both significantly contribute to our homeschool, thus we both have much to say about homeschooling. We have written this book together and write as one voice throughout these pages, with the exception of Chapter 4 where

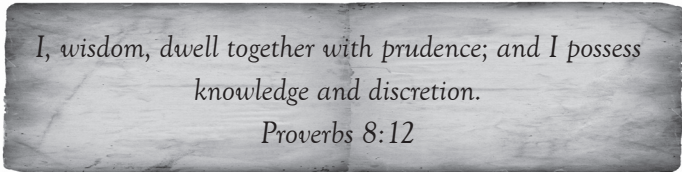
I (Jon) offer some basic design advice. As with any family, the two of us have different roles and sometimes drastically different perspectives, so occasionally we will interject examples from our own personal experiences. Our prayer for you as you read on is that our different backgrounds and personalities will bring you some insight into how you might better educate your children through a more intentional use of the home God has given you. To give you a better understanding of who we are and where we are coming from we would like to introduce ourselves.

I (Jon) have had the privilege and blessing of designing custom homes for people all over North America for about the last 15 years. Beyond the creativity for which I am typically hired, the most important role I have is to discover how a given family (my new client) lives in their home and why. The most crucial component of that discovery process involves the knowledge and skill of asking the “right” questions in order for me to most accurately understand their needs and start to mentally visualize their new home. As I begin to design their new home it is extremely important I create something that reflects their priorities, their

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lifestyle and, of course, their wants and desires. I really do enjoy trying to learn how people live and when dealing with a homeschooling family so many things are different.

I (Elisha) have the privilege of being the primary educator of our boys. My passion is researching learning techniques and teaching ideas, and then coordinating it with Scripture to plan our school years and develop curriculums for our boys. My education in engineering, analytical style and love of learning drive my approach – always attempting to look “outside the box” and to be unafraid in exploring and experimenting with different possible solutions. Homeschooling is my passion and I love the re-education I am receiving alongside my children, but more importantly I have enjoyed the challenges and growth it has brought into my spiritual life.



*I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; and I possess
knowledge and discretion.*

Proverbs 8:12

Proverbs 8:12 tells us that where we find wisdom we will also find prudence. We must put thought into our ways and be intentional. This doesn't just apply to big life decisions or conflicts, but in all things, including *how* we use our homes in our homeschool. As you have discovered with educating your children, if you are not intentional you will struggle to succeed. The same goes for the environment in which you teach. If you are not intentional, success will be difficult to find. There have been hundreds of studies done over the years about what makes for the most productive learning environment. These studies have included such things as room size, daylight, ergonomics (desk and chair shapes and sizes) and even anthropometrics (human body dimensions). However, even if you are well-versed in what the studies show, failure to implement the information garnered relegates it to little more than useless head knowledge and you reap no benefit. We pray this book aids you in becoming more intentional and more prudent in the ways you live in your home and homeschool environment.

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Finally, we are aware many of you may feel your home is too small for homeschooling. I (Jon) met a young lady some time ago who told me she homeschools her five kids in their 1500 square foot home. Yes, that is a small home by today's standards - but what's most important is that she still gets it done; she finds a way. Our hope is that we help you find a way to improve the teaching and family environment in your home - even in a small house. With that in mind, you will find a "Small Home Tip" at the end of each chapter which is meant for those of you who live in "tight quarters."

May God bless your efforts...we are praying for you!

Jon and Elisha

1

your home...

Part of maximizing our home is maximizing *God* in our home.

Over the decades we have seen needs of the family change, and thus house design has changed. For example, technology (like TV's and computers) along with bigger furniture and bigger cars require bigger living rooms and bigger garages. Alongside these changing needs, we have seen an increase in peoples' desires to self-determine what spaces they will have in their home - as well as changes in how they will use those spaces. Historically, our homes dictated the way people lived. When Sears, Roebuck and Company first started selling home plans in the early 1900's (and the entire materials package to actually erect the home) they were setting the trends and ways in which these new home owners would live. The homes were designed with formal living and dining rooms. The

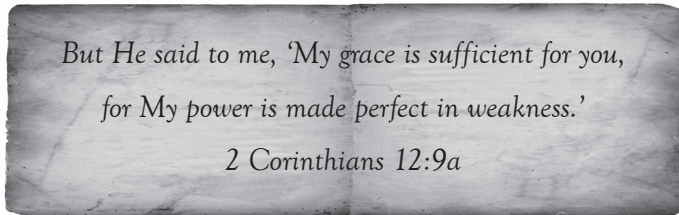
owners then bought furniture to furnish the space and then the space and furniture were hardly used. If your home was lucky enough to have a garage, it definitely didn't have great access directly into the home. One would pull into their garage or carport, exit the space and then enter the home through the front door. Nowadays we hardly use our front doors since we tend to pull into our garages and enter through our mud rooms - if we're fortunate enough to have one. These mud rooms have become extremely important with the way families live these days, to the extent these spaces are now being termed "Family Foyers." What is more obvious is the "Open Plan" concept (no hallways, fewer walls, blended main living spaces), as well as the removal of the formal living and dining spaces from people's homes, creating a much more casual home than the homes of the early 20th Century.

What does all of this have to do with homeschooling, you ask? Pretty simple, really. That same self-determination is now directed towards educating our children at home, which creates specific needs for

our homes. Our choice to homeschool means we spend more time in our homes and spend that time differently than any other type of family in the United States. “More” is obviously the case when you consider the amount of time you and your children are home in a given day or week and “differently” because fully educating our children at home requires a different environment than for kids who merely play and do homework in their homes.

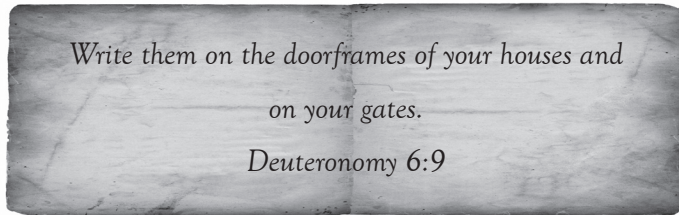
How often do you deal with feeling inadequate? Perhaps you’ve felt this way with your grey hair and your growing weight, or perhaps with your impatience and quick tongue? How about with your home? Do you often feel like it is too messy, too small, too outdated, too... (fill in the blank)? It can be very easy for us to step back and look at our homes and feel they will be inadequate for this adventure. The demands of home education on a home can be discouraging. However, God says, “I will not yield My glory to another” (Isaiah 48:11), which means all He has given is for His glory and benefit. Our home is no different. He has given us our

homes as a gift to accomplish the purposes He has set forth for us. This means if the Lord has revealed His desire for you to homeschool, then He will not only provide the mental stamina and finances, but also the space in your home to do so. We are called to be satisfied and content with what He gives us and trust that He knows what He is doing. When we do this, our anxieties are calmed and what we had perceived as inadequacies can, instead, be used for God's glory. All of that being said, we need to maximize all that our homes offer and utilize our homes prayerfully and thoughtfully.



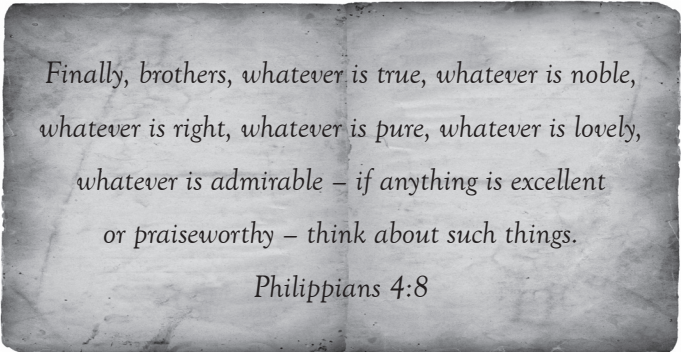
Part of maximizing our home is maximizing *God* in our home. Would you say that God is in your home? Or let us put it this way, do guests entering your home get a sense that God is magnified and glorified

in your home? As Christian homeschoolers, we have chosen to make God the center of our children's lives. God should not only be present in their education, He must also be present in the home in which they are being educated. Deuteronomy 6:9 tells us to mark our doorposts with His Word. This is a very tangible expression of identifying our home with the God that has provided it and protects it through the work of the Holy Spirit. Consider marking your home. Mark it with the things you identify yourself with, like open Bibles on the tables, Bible verses, Christian artwork or crosses on the walls, and even pictures of your family propped up on a counter.



In his book *Family Driven Faith*, Voddie Baucham talks about marking our homes to help our children remember the things that

matter. We want them to experience things that in the future - when they've moved away - will remind them of home. We want them to remember the faith that was instilled in them while being taught at home and that the place where they grew up was a safe, joyful and a God-honoring place to be. This remembering is critical in helping strengthen their faith, but also in the bringing up of multigenerations - a concept pervasive in Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78 and many other Old Testament passages. Voddie goes on to talk about us marking our homes based on our five senses - sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. Ponder what this means for you and your family. Here are some ideas to get you started. Hang the kids' artwork or their very best school work on your walls. Play "Philip- pians 4:8 tested" music in the house. Burn candles or open the windows for fresh air. Set out soft blankets or pillows for rest and reflection. Offer tasty, fun and memorable snacks or meals for special occasions each year, like an apple pie on test days or fondue at the end of semesters.



*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble,
whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,
whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent
or praiseworthy – think about such things.*

Philippians 4:8

As we continue to consider our homes and the role they play in our homeschool adventure, let us suggest another fun and family-engaging idea. A house blessing is an opportunity to dedicate to God both our homes and the activities that go on there. There are a lot of different ways to do this and there really is no wrong way to do it. Some churches or denominations have a very liturgical means of doing this, but you can also just do something as casual as inviting over friends and praying together. Robert Munger wrote a small book entitled *My Heart - Christ's Home*,

which is not completely based around the idea of a house blessing, but it is great for taking you through your home and helping you consider what Jesus may think of your home and how to use it. No matter the method or formality of the process, pray to God and ask Him to set apart your home and all its activities. Thank God for the gift He has given you. Purpose your home to be the best it can be for your family, but also for those that come and visit. Pray that your home would be a comfortable place for people, not just for aesthetic reasons, but so that your family is able to minister to their needs and show them the love of Christ.



If in your smaller home you are lacking wall space yet want to mark your home, consider using unconventional surfaces to do so. The Bible says to mark your “doorframes”, so how about stenciling your family’s favorite verse on the inner doorframe (trim work) of your front door so you and your guests see it every time someone exits? Or, how about writing the verse you and your kids are memorizing on a kitchen window or at the top of a bathroom mirror with wipe-off markers?

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my prayers, thoughts and ideas...

my prayers, thoughts and ideas...