

# Ready to Homeschool — Six Month Countdown

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### **WEEK 6: WRITING PERSONAL GOALS FOR YOUR CHILD**

Verbalize what you are working toward. As a family, and each person. Episode 17 will touch on this again, but our focus today is to observe your child and take notes. Could use interest inventories, spiritual gift checklists, standardized test results, etc.

Tedd Tripp's book *Shepherding a Child's Heart* suggested this. I learned a different method from a friend in Arkansas, Trish Youmans. See the next few pages for an example.

Make blank copies — one for yourself, plus one for each kid (preschool age through high school age)

Plan some quiet uninterrupted time. Four to six hours would be ideal. Take your calendar or a note-pad to jot down OTHER distractions — assure your mind that you will come back to those items later.

NOT just academics. Become a student of your child.

Share your insights with your husband — he may or may not want to be a part of this exercise. Depending on your child's age, share with them too. Teenage years, you are handing them the reins. Part of being independent. Most beneficial when you can repeat this every year or two.

On Week 9, we will be discussing *For the Children's Sake* by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay. See the link in the comments for ordering information from Amazon, which will benefit me as an Amazon affiliate.

This project is one of those IMPORTANT, vision-developing activities that so often gets pushed to the side because of what's URGENT. As a mom (or dad, not trying to discriminate), you have an amazing opportunity to understand and guide your child. There are some in the world who would try to convince you that your responsibility is solely to put them to bed at night after reading to them for 20 minutes, and then feed them a good breakfast and get them to wear clean clothes, and make sure they go to the dentist every year.

OK... right, those are all good things, but SOUL-LEVEL care is so much more!!!

Taking the time to really understand who your child is, what they get excited about, what they are afraid of, where they would like to go if they have their choice, etc. Knowing these things show that you want a true relationship with your child, that he or she isn't just a puppet extension of your life.

And what a PRIVILEGE this is!!! If you have a good relationship with one or both of your parents, think of how much value you place on hearing their encouraging voice in your corner. Picture being that voice for your kids, now and as long as you can!

OK... so now that you know that I feel this is SO IMPORTANT, let's get on with it.

The goal is to spend some extended quiet time capturing a snapshot of your child's needs, characteristics, and strengths, with a willingness to consider anything that comes to mind, hoping to gain clarity on some goals for each child (and yourself) for the near future. Usually you can do this off the top of your head, but if your child has taken any kind of inventory or standardized test recently, that information might be helpful (but this inventory is a wider focus than just academics).

Look at the next few sample pages... The idea is to take the blank one and make a copy of it for each of your kids and one for you. Now refer to the sample. I did this for a fictitious daughter, thinking of some common characteristics, so you could see what types of things I'm referring to in each category. DO NOT attempt to fill in any goals until you have several things in all the other categories. Depending on how many kids you have, this will be easy for the first 30 minutes, as you jump from sheet to sheet, recording observations, character-traits, strengths, special interests, etc. Sometimes these categories seem to overlap and it's all fine... don't over-think it, just aim to get some observations recorded in every category EXCEPT goals.

For me, this time also includes prayer and soul-searching. Knowing that God knows my kids' futures, I ask HIM to show me things that are pertinent to what I need to know to keep them growing in His intended direction.

When your brain starts to slow down, take a break, a walk, a nap, whatever you need to be able to clear your mind and drink in the refreshment of being alone.

But do NOT go back home.... do not let yourself get distracted away from finishing the goals square. Come back to it after a short break, and look at each page with "refreshed" eyes. Even though my sample is based on a "fictitious daughter" and you are going to think this is all contrived, I swear that I did not have the goals in mind when I started. I looked over her weaknesses (or characteristics that I wanted to improve), and tried to imagine how to use relative strengths to shore them up, or piggyback, to bring improvement. So for the part about not saving money, I imagined her kind grandfather, whom she adores, being the one to give the guidance and time to improve it, even coming up with the idea that she could sell her BEST banana bread at a Farmer's Market to get some income to work with. HONEST! I didn't have that idea when I started. It came together from the various pieces in other boxes. Or the weak math facts but the love of poetry-rhythm == singing math facts. I know they make those! A dog who does tricks, plus a shy girl who needs to come out of her shell?? NURSING HOME visits!

Anyway... These sheets end up being HIGHLY personal, and I don't recommend actually sharing them (or the process) with your kids until they are teenagers (or adults, depending on their personalities). I think my kids found it a bit creepy that I was watching them this closely when I finally told them about this. But some of my best insights and goal-setting ideas have come from a quiet morning spent doing this. Not to mention how convicting the sheet is that I do for myself -- I can see areas that need attention, when I take the time to be honest with myself, but I also see areas of strength to celebrate or to build on in months to come.

Because of the sacrifice that it is to spend so much uninterrupted time on this project, and that quiet time is absolutely essential, this process only happened for me every two to three years. I know we all would have benefitted if I had done this more frequently. But my point is that even the rare times that I did this, I gained. My kids gained, even though they didn't know it. Taking the time to HEAR GOD for my family has made a HUGE difference in knowing which way to steer them when I had the chance!

My friend Trish Youmans in Arkansas is the one who explained this to me almost 20 years ago. I asked her where she got the idea and she couldn't remember if she read it somewhere or if she made it up. So I have no way to attribute it to someone past Trish, or even tell you if I did it "right" according to her. It seems too low-key to be useful, but I dare you to give it a try. The worst that can happen is that you have half a day to yourself.

Strengths

Desired Character Traits

Weaknesses

General Observations

Special interests/talents/skills

Suggested Goals

## Strengths

handwriting  
often smiling - cheering others  
up  
sings on key  
insightful comments when  
we discuss stories

## Desired Character Traits

servant-heart  
courage  
obedience  
compassion  
persistence

## Weaknesses

math facts  
following through on chores  
doesn't save money -  
spends it right away

## General Observations

extremely shy  
very close with grandpa  
notices  
~~at home with~~ rhythm of  
songs  
prefers being indoors

## Special interests/talents/skills

wants to try ballet/gymnastics  
trained the dog to do tricks  
loves poetry  
makes the BEST banana  
bread

## Suggested Goals

- 1) Ask Grandpa to help her  
establish good financial habits  
Summer? sell banana bread at  
Farmer's Market, manage profits
- 2) Set a goal of 6 weeks  
following through on chores to get to  
sign up for gymnastics
- 3) find math facts set to music  
and ~~play~~ listen 3x/week
- 4) visit a nursing home and  
interact with residents - 4x/

this summer  
Ask if we can bring the dog ☺  
and/or a favorite story