THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE TRADITION



Bob Woodson is the president and founder of The Woodson Center. Founded in 1981, the center helps neighborhood leaders and community-based organizations address problems through innovative solutions.

Bob Woodson: A Legacy of Neighborhood Empowerment

Over his long years working with committed grassroots leaders, Woodson has learned the principles that uplift people and communities

CATHERINE YANG

ob Woodson was a young social worker in Pasadena, California, in the 1960s when he witnessed something no one had told him was possible.

A young ex-gang member had completely changed his ways, and he told Woodson that though he changed his character, he still had the experience of a gangster and looked the part, too, and this was what allowed him to have an advantage on the streets. He and several other ex-gang

66

I've seen how people who are spiritually rich can prosper under the worst of circumstances.

Bob Woodson

members did youth outreach, and they commanded the respect they needed to have an influence, but a positive one.

"I saw how these young gang members were still able to entice their peers who were in that troubled life to pursue peace," Woodson said. "I worked closely with them for 10 weeks ... and I marveled at how effective they were.

"That was my first revelation—as a young social worker, what I saw on the streets was nothing like what I learned in the university. I had a sharp contrast between what I learned in the university about human

change and growth and development, and actually being in a laboratory where people that others had given up on then were dramatically transformed and redormed

matically transformed and redeemed. "I said, there's something going on here that I didn't learn in class."

He found himself on the lookout for other stories and remedies that brought transformation and redemption, and he saw similar principles. "Then the rest of my career I spent validating and re-validating that approach."

Continued on Page 4

A Raised Glass: Here's to Some Admirable Young Women

Maddie Spear said, ""One constant prayer that I pray daily is the following—'Lord, I am available. Do big things with this life you have given me."

JEFF MINICK

In late September, I received an email from a 19-year-old Epoch Times reader living in Missoula, Montana. Maddie asked whether she might write me with some ideas about life and her future plans, and I agreed to read whatever she sent.

she sent.

A day or two later, up popped a 2,300-word email chock full of Maddie's thoughts about male-female relationships, family, faith, technology, and half-a-dozen other topics. A list of 10 questions followed her missive, each of which deserved a lengthy answer. After suggesting a phone call rather than a written reply, which would have taken me hours, I found myself speaking to this delightful young woman. We covered a broad range

of topics, and during that conversation,

the idea for this article was born. Many people today, fearful of being shunned or even losing their jobs, are reluctant to share their views with others on such matters as religious faith, political convictions, and hot-topic issues such as abortion, gender, or even the nuclear family. Most of us have heard of the "shy voter" phenomenon of President Donald Trump supporters, people who conceal their politics from strangers but speak loudly in the voting booth. We hear less about the silencing of young conservative women attending college or working a job, who feel constantly pressured to keep their opinions to themselves.

Continued on Page 2



A Raised Glass: Here's to Some Admirable Young Women

Continued from Page 1

Questions

Wishing to give a voice to such women, I interviewed four young women, including Maddie, to discover what they were thinking. There was Maddie, of course, with whom I spoke in a second phone call; Jessica, 22, who lives here in Front Royal and works as a dental assistant; her sister Rebecca, 29, mother of two young daughters and coach of the local college's cross-country team; and my own daughter Katharine, 37, a homeschooling mother of seven who now lives in Pennsylvania.

What, I wondered, were the priorities of these four women? What were their thoughts, as Maddie asked me, on the role of the female in society? What values did they share in common? What approach did they take to a culture that frequently denigrates stay-at-home moms, large families, and in some cases, the family itself?

Here are some of their observations.

Faith and Family

When asked what they valued most in life, all four women put their religious faith at the top of the list. That faith not only helps carry them through the daily skirmishes of life, but also guides them in larger ways. After interviewing Rebecca in November, for example, we talked briefly of the election mess, a conversation she ended with a reminder that "we just have to remember God is in charge." In her email, Maddie wrote: "One constant prayer that I pray daily is the following—'Lord, I am available. Do big things with this life you have given me.'

Second on their list of values was the family. All four women grew up in intact families with a mother, father, and siblings. Jessica and Rebecca have four other brothers and sisters, Katharine has three brothers, and Maddie has an older sister and two younger sisters whom her parents adopted from China.

In her email, Maddie wrote at length about the importance of the family, not just to the individual, but also to the culture. Eventually, she hopes either to found an organization or work for one that promotes strong families. Here are just a few of her words on the matter:

"My passion for family grows stronger every day. I would love to be a part of something that takes action on this issue. Right now, I have obligations at home. I own a business, tutor kids, and will not be totally untied until the summer of 2021 However, I want to GO next year. I want to either join in on something, or start something of my own. Now, as a precursor, my thoughts are in complete disarray. However, as I said, thoughts and dreams are a start. The adventure that I would like to embark on, or be a part of, would promote first and foremost, the values of family and define the roles of a male and female. If I was to start something completely new, the name would be 'All Great Change,' derived from the great Ronald Reagan who once said, 'All great change in America begins at the dinner table."

Feminism and Motherhood

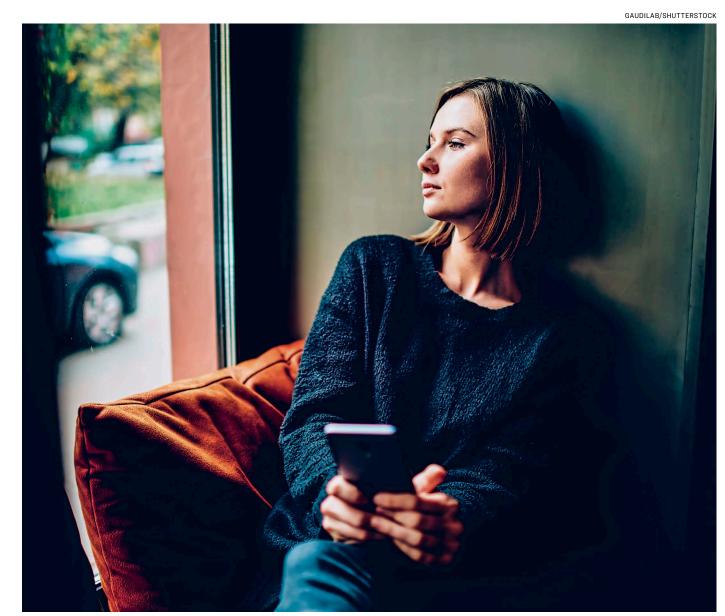
Both Maddie and Jessica addressed femi nism and what it means to them. "A lot of girls my age, at least in college, struggle with what feminism really means," Jessica said. "A lot of them think you have to be like a man to be equal."

Maddie wrote: "We are strong, capable, and needed. However, we are not to trample over the passions and strengths of a man. We are to complement them. Many women today are not asking for equality, they are asking for dominance."

Katharine and Rebecca are stay-at-home moms who spend most of their time with their children. Katharine homeschools six of her seven children—the oldest goes to a private academy a two-minute walk from their house—and tries to instill in them the values of faith, discipline, and hard work. Rebecca tells me that when she's out in public with her two little girls, someone may say, "Wow, you've got your hands full." Her usual response "I'm really, really happy" sometimes brings a look of envy from women her age.

Education and Passions

Katharine and Rebecca are graduates of Christendom College here in Front Roy-



Many young women may feel the pull of marriage and motherhood as well the societal pressure of having a career.

Spears advises

women, "Stand

other young

strong, and

present your

loving way."

convictions in a

For some mothers,

homeschooling may be

part of the daily routine.

al, and Jessica graduated this spring from Thomas Aquinas College in California. Maddie has earned an associate's degree in general studies from her local community college and is now taking a gap year to mull over her future. Meanwhile, she is teaching middle school students various subjects, using the basement of

her parents' home as a classroom. All four women believe strongly in the value of a good education untarnished by leftist propa-

As for their other inoys running, nonstic health, and cooking. Like her sister, Jessica is a runner and also a reader of historical novels and survival

stories. Katharine also follows the holistic health path, frequently takes her children to daily Mass, and raises her flock of chickens. The last four years have roused in her a passionate interest in

Maddie lives on a six-acre "mini-farm" with her parents and siblings, which her family tongue in cheek calls "The Spear Ranch." She has hunted with her father since she was 9, mostly going after elk and deer, and loves hiking as well. When we spoke, she was about to depart for a week-long hunting trip with her dad.

Inspirational Advice

When asked what advice she might give to female contemporaries such as herself, Maddie said: "Be confident in your convictions and principles and morals. When they signed the Declaration of Independence, our Founding Fathers were signing a death warrant. They



What approach did they take to a culture that frequently denigrates stay-at-home moms, large families, and in some cases, the family itself?

terests, Rebecca en- believed in their convictions. Stand in a loving way."

> Jessica said, "A woman should look at her feminine virtues rather than trying to be like a man."

"Be courageous in your vocation," Rebecca told me, "even though it can be looked down on by society, like motherhood. A lot of young women feel that call and that pull to marriage and motherhood, and it appeals to them, but because of social pressure they feel they have to get a job. In my life, the most alive I've ever felt is to be a mom."

"Women, embrace your femininity," Katharine advised. "Men, embrace your masculinity. We should let men be men and women be women. If we did that, we'd see some enormous changes in our

My Takeaway

Interviewing these four women was a delight less for what they shared with me than for the enthusiasm, joy, and strength I found in their voices. They know we're in tough times, but they don't allow these challenges to diminish them or lead them to despair. Here are women passionately in love with their families and with the world, who can still take pleasure in the laughter of a child, a hike in the mountains, a glass of wine, and a well-prepared meal.

Although this mess we call an election had darkened my thoughts, these shining lights-Maddie, Jessica, Rebecca, and Katharine—chased away that darkness, at least for the time being. Their example brought me to my feet and walking on the path again. These women inspired me, and I hope by sharing their stories and thoughts you will also find that same inspiration.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C., Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.

A Foster Family's Journey

Parents of 6 who fostered over 30 kids adopt 2 boys with cerebral palsy

LOUISE BEVAN

After five of their six children left high school and moved out of the family home, an Alabama couple made a huge decision they decided to become licensed therapeutic foster parents.

Willie and Teresa Smith's fostering journey began in 2003, and hit an emotional peak on July 22, when the couple adopted two special boys: Kristopher and Lucas.

In a stroke of serendipity, their adoption date was also Teresa's birthday, and the boys happened to be their "awesome gift" that made their family complete, reported AL.com.

Teresa and Willie, the founder and pastor of New Covenant Church, have fostered more than 30 children through Alabama MENTOR, a home and community-based services provider specialized in therapeutic foster care.

The Gadsden-based couple discovered they had an aptitude for taking care of children with profound special needs after fostering a boy post-kidney transplant.

Kristopher was 6 years old when he first arrived at the Smiths' home in 2015. He has cerebral palsy, is quadriplegic, blind, and uses a G-tube to take his food. He also had hydrocephaly and a seizure disorder and needed round-the-clock care, the Alabamabased news outlet reported.

The Smiths were overwhelmed, but it took mere hours for the couple to fall in love with Kristopher.

Two years later, Lucas arrived. Then 14, Lucas also had cerebral palsy and persistent muscle spasms.

"They wanted us to keep him for a weekend," Teresa told the AL.com. "We picked him up Friday, and by Monday I was begging to keep him.

Both boys underwent an extraordinary transformation under the Smiths' roof.

Lucas weighed just 38 pounds when he arrived. Over the course of three months, he almost doubled his body weight. At 17,



the gregarious teen was crowned "prom prince" by his peers at Gadsden High School. Kristopher, now 12, is loving and affectionate and no longer has seizures. He has also developed a particularly close relationship with his adoptive father.

"Their bond is incredible," Teresa said. Taking care of Kristopher and Lucas is no easy task, but the Smiths hail routine and teamwork as the magic formula. They rise at 5:30 a.m., deliver thrice-daily medication, four feedings for Kristopher and six for Lucas, plus baths and regular diaper

"I asked my husband one day, 'What did we do before the boys?" Teresa said. "They are a joy, a blessing to our family."

The Smiths moved into a bigger home in spring 2019 to accommodate Kristopher and Lucas's needs, the AL report said. Their extended family, including 22 grandchildren, fully supported Willie and Teresa's decision to adopt.

Teresa said that the boys' adoptive siblings "absolutely love their little brothers." One of the couple's daughters is a nurse **Both boys** underwent an extraordinary transformation under the

Smiths' roof.

at Kristopher's school; one of their sons is a coach at Lucas's. While occasional stares or cruel comments from strangers still occur, the Smiths rally around their boys to ensure they feel loved and protected at all times.

Willie and Teresa Smith (C) holding Kristopher. Also pictured are their grandchildren, as well as

their adult children and their spouses.

"We love these boys," Teresa said. "When people see us, they say, 'They have to be your kids.' They literally look like they belong to us."

Alabama MENTOR State Director DeAnna Hand praised the Smiths for being "an exceptional family."

"Their dedication and committed care is inspiring to many," Hand said in a statement. "I've witnessed the boys light up with smiles and coos as Teresa talks with them. It warms your heart immediately!"

Willie and Teresa have had such a rewarding experience as foster parents that Teresa now co-leads training classes for the Alabama MENTOR program, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps.

Teresa told AL.com that Kristopher and Lucas have enriched their lives. "They're helping us realize how blessed and fortunate we are," she said.

FROM A READER

Mary's Christmas

It was December in southeast Kansas and a thin layer of snow was on the ground. My stepmother was busy making cookies and sprinkling Christmas colored sprinkles on top of them when my 7-year-old sister, Sylvia, and I came bounding through the front door. And as usual, we were hungry. There's something about being in school all day that works up a good appetite.

All that evening I was bothered by thoughts of that little red-headed girl who 'wasn't having Christmas.

Mom handed us a couple of cookies and poured a glass of milk for each of us. Our preschool sister and kindergarten brother joined us for a snack. As we sat around the table, Sylvia eyed one of her Christmas cookies, examining each side of it, and then said matter-of-factly, "Mary isn't having Christmas."

"What? Who is Mary?" I asked.

"You know," said Sylvia. "She rides our school bus and sits by me sometimes. I asked her what she wanted for Christmas, she said she wasn't having any." No one knew what to say at the moment, and so Sylvia continued. "Mary has

pretty red hair, but I think she forgets to brush it, and her teeth, and the other kids don't sit by her. I think it's because she's ... kinda different."

Our mom questioned us about Mary and her family, and where she lived, but we didn't know very much. We only knew there were other children in the family and that they got off the bus along the road where there wasn't a

All that evening I was bothered by thoughts of that little red-headed girl who "wasn't having Christmas," as Sylvia had said.

The next morning when we left for school, Mary was still on my mind. We had only moved to Wichita from the farm and lived in the area for a short time. However, I knew that our principal knew everyone in the community, so I made it a point to talk to him during

As the principal walked by me at the lunch table, I asked him, "Do you know of a little red-headed girl named Mary who rides our bus?'

"Yes," he responded. "She's one of the Pearson kids who live off the road a little ways. Why? Is there a problem?"

I explained to him what Sylvia had said and asked him if he thought they might be a family that needed some help at Christmas. The principal told me the Pearson family probably did need assistance and seemed glad that someone had thought of them. I then told him that our family would do something and that I would give their name to the Christian Dorcas Society in town, because they always helped others at Christmas time.

That day I found a big box at the grocery store a few blocks from our house. Later that night we all discussed what should go into the box for the Pearson family. It was just a few days until

Christmas and we began working to wrap gifts and fill the box. Our sister, Rose Marie, chose some toys and games that were age-appropriate, along with a cuddly stuffed teddy bear for one of the younger children. Even Larry, who was just a toddler at the time, watched what was going on and ran to his own little box of toys and began throwing some of

We all chipped in and began cooking and baking things to go in a box of food items that would make up their Christmas dinner. Mom asked Sylvia if she would like to add something special to the box that would be for Mary. "We could get her a pretty

them into the box.

hat with gloves to match," suggested Mom. "We could get her green, like

her eyes!" remarked Sylvia. "Green it is!" announced Mom. That weekend we made a few pur-

chases with money we had saved in our piggy banks. I bought a children's Bible and marked the story about the birth of Jesus with a bookmark.

The next day was Christmas Eve, and after work, we and our parents loaded the boxes into our car. We had received directions on how to get to the Pearson house from the principal, and we were putting our coats on to leave when Sylvia said, "Mom, I don't want

"Why not?" I asked. "Don't you wan to help take the gifts to Mary?" "Maybe Mary will hide her face,"

Sylvia said with a worried look. Mom seemed to understand what Sylvia was feeling, and asked, "Are you worried that Mary might somehow be shy or uncomfortable know-

ing that you told about there not being

a Christmas for her family?" Although our parents didn't think there would be a problem, they told Sylvia she didn't have to go along.

We drove up the old dirt road and found a little house in a clearing in the woods. Our dad got out and went to the door while we stayed in the car. A very old, friendly dog met him as he got out of the car, and a man opened

> the front door as dad walked toward the house. As Mr. Pearson stood at the open door a small child peeked around the doorjamb and waved at us. Dad talked a moment and then handed him the packages. When dad turned to leave, Mr.

Pearson said something else, causing dad to turn around and shake his hand.

We all enjoyed Christmas a little more than usual that year and learned that it is definitely "more blessed to give than to receive." When school started again after

Christmas break, and the bus made its stop to pick up the Pearson kids, Mary was wearing the green hat and gloves. When she got on the bus she sat down next to Sylvia, hugged

her, and gave me a big smile, saying, "We did have Christmas!" That was all she needed to say. Her smile said the rest. And we did learn

later that the Dorcas Society took the Pearson family a gift box of food and a toy for each of the children. Is there any way you can help put a

smile on someone's face this Christmas? Think about some way you might give the gift of love that was given to us so many years ago that first Christmas. After all, whose birthday is it?

• • •

—Allen Stark

An unex-

pected

• • • $\bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$ • • • • • • $\bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$



Bob Woodson: A Legacy of Neighborhood Empowerment

Over his long years working with committed grassroots leaders, Woodson has learned the principles that uplift people and communities

Continued from Page 1

Implementing these success-based local methods is the foundation of what the Woodson Center does. The Washington-based nonprofit, originally called the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, was founded in 1981 to help empower local organizations to help their communities and has changed lives with initiatives such as the Violence-Free Zones that help troubled schools improve student behavior and training that has the larger policy community, and he decided equipped thousands of people to improve to do it by applying free-market economic their own communities.

These communities that governments and organizations so want to help in fact contain the personal credentials than what [people] great untapped resources, but they are often produce, but in a social economy we care ignored. Woodson founded his organization very little about outcomes and only inputs,

The Interest of the Poor

In the early 1960s, Woodson was an activist and organizer with the civil rights movement, but over time he grew disillusioned.

"I was leading demonstrations in the early '60s and we were picketing outside of pharmaceutical companies and when they desegregated, they hired nine black PhDs, and when we asked them to join our movement, they said they got their jobs because they were qualified, not because of the sacrifice we had made. This happened a couple of times," Woodson said.

Again and again, he saw that the interests of the middle-class civil rights movement leaders didn't align with those of low-income communities. Worse, the policy victories brought about by those leaders hurt low-income communities, and the middleclass leaders and their families weren't the ones who had to suffer the consequences of their policies.

"There's always been this bifurcation in the black community over the way forward, but the will and wishes of the middle-class leadership always prevailed to the detriment of low-income people," Woodson said.

In Boston in the 1970s, for instance, there was debate over desegregation. Low-income neighborhoods said they wanted their local schools strengthened, but civil rights leadership wanted busing to desegregate schools, and that's what they got.

"They were bused in many cases from exterior superior black schools to inferior as they maintain their disability, their value white schools," Woodson said. "But none to him is maintained. So we have structural of the civil rights leaders had their children disincentives for ending poverty."

"So they have been the bane of my existence, because many of the middle-class leadership advocates policies and programs for which they don't have to suffer the consequence of their advocacy. Like the left saying, 'Defund the police'—they don't live in those on doors and asks people who they turn to neighborhoods, they live in safe and secure neighborhoods.

to the poor." Woodson didn't see anyone representing low-income communities and leaders in

In order to

got to look

beyond the

superficial.

Sometimes

by the

the time

to look at

Bob Woodson

the interior.

LESSONS FROM

LEAST OF THESE

ROBERT L.

WOODSON, SR.

"Lessons From the Least

of These: The Woodson

Principles" by Robert L.

Woodson, Sr.

we're blinded

exterior and

we don't take

gain a sense of

reality, you've

"People on the left exploited them and used them to promote their agenda, and people on the right were ignoring them," Woodson said. "Both the left and the right talk about the poor as if they have no agency—everything they do or propose is always imposed on the poor from the outside."

Woodson set out to create an intermediary institution to bridge low-income leaders with principles to the social economy.

"In a market economy we care less about who serve the poor," he said.

"It's been that way for the last 60 years and it's elitism more than racism, the assumption that uneducated, untutored people are unwise, and therefore incapable of making informed decisions for themselves; that's the general assumption of people on both the left and the right, and therefore the poor must be rescued from themselves."

The status quo is that we've had 60 years of failed social policies and \$22 trillion spent on the poor without having alleviated poverty. Woodson says it isn't because we can't solve these problems, but we have incentivized not ending poverty. It has become an industry, and the bulk of funding goes toward organizations serving the poor, and not the poor

"So they ask not which problems are solvable but which are fundable," Woodson said. "If your job right now was dependent on having 20 people dependent on you and your services, what motivation would you have to make them independent if everyone who left your care meant diminishing your income? So it doesn't matter how compassionate you are, your strategic interest is at odds with the strategic interest of the poor."

He laughed and recalled his friend in Wisconsin who is currently working on building a cabin. "His electrician's a drunk and his carpenter has one leg. But their value to him was their skill," he said. "But if my friend was a disabilities director their value to him would have been their disabilities—as long

The Harbormasters

What truly works instead is when one taps into resources that are indigenous to the community, Woodson said.

When he goes into a community, he knocks in times of crisis.

"If you assume that a community is lack-"It has nothing to do with the interest of the ing of any resources you will never ask these poor but had everything to do with what's kinds of questions," he said. "You've got to convenient to who are providing services find the harbormasters, people who know

the terrain of their community." He takes the term from political scientist James C. Scott's "Seeing Like a State," which describes two types of knowledge: "episteme," or the academic knowledge you can learn in a university, and "metis," the local, tactical, common sense type of knowledge. It's comparable to how no matter how learned a sea captain you are, when you get to port, you need to turn the vessel over to the local harbormaster who possesses that tactical knowledge, Woodson said.

"They know all the personalities, they know the strengths, the hazards, and you've got to go in and find them. But if you don't believe that a community has capacity or agents of potential uplift, you'll never go looking for it," Woodson said. "If you can look beyond the signs of pathology and go in and still look for signs of strength, you will find it."

So he knocks on doors, and in a short amount of time, the same names will keep popping up. Soon he will have in hand the names of three pillars of the community. Then he talks to those three, and gets 10 more names, and then 50. These are people who solve problems, people who run the moral centers of the community, people who know everybody else.

Woodson has written a whole book about who these change agents are; he calls them the "Josephs," a reference to Joseph from the book of Genesis, who was betrayed by his family and sold into slavery and suffers but doesn't become bitter. Woodson looks for those who refuse to succumb to their circumstances, and those who may have done so but through the grace of God are redeemed and become grassroots healing

"The two [types of 'Joseph'] became powerful witnesses of how transformation and redemption are possible," he said. They're invaluable to their communities, because they show those around them that success from these same roots is possible.

A Spiritual Need

At the root of it, these aren't truly economic problems but spiritual ones, Woodson

"I saw people who were rich and spiritually poor, and yet I've seen people who are materially poor and who are spiritually rich," he said. "And I've seen how people who are spiritually rich can prosper under the worst of circumstances."

Just as one might see the trash on the street and the run-down buildings of a neighborhood and dismiss it as a community with no resources, one might look at the Mercedes parked in driveways of another community and mistakenly believe people living there are well off, Woodson said. Yet in some of these well-to-do-looking communities, such as Silicon Valley, the suicide rate of teenagers is six times the national average.

"In order to gain a sense of reality, you've got to look beyond the superficial," he said. "Sometimes we're blinded by the exterior and we don't take the time to look at the

Woodson has seen spiritual healing lead people to redemption countless times in his career, beginning decades ago when a good friend of his rehabilitated an entire

Leon Watkins, who died in 2018, spoke about how many young people view their gang life in the same way they would a faith, and you'll get nowhere with them by dismissing it. Many gang members came from religious families and turned away from the faith they were born into because they saw people speaking good words and doing bad deeds, and so sought out identity and community and the opportunity to rise in ranks elsewhere: the gangs.

Watkins knew these young people—many who were really still kids—held deep pain, but also buried dreams. He knew the way to get through to each was to treat him as an individual, so he would "come to believe he has a future and that he is worth something."

Woodson knew Watkins decades ago when a gang was terrorizing Watkins's neighborhood; eventually Watkins got fed up and put up wanted posters, which caused the gang to search for him. Finally, he agreed to meet them: 5 p.m., behind his house. They agreed, and two trucks full of armed young people showed up.

"He said, 'I want to talk to you about your life," Woodson said. And then Watkins proceeded to sit on a trash can for three hours just listening to this gang leader.

"The next day he had him in Bible study, and in five days he had the whole 26-member gang in Bible study," Woodson said. "He turned that group around from terrorizing that community, to they then helping rebuild it. I had the chance to witness this with my

Woodson, Watkins, and others who do this work make lifelong friends and relationships with people who become like family. There are people Woodson says he's known since they were 16, who are grandparents in their

"Because all of us, when we met these young people, we said if you commit your life to peace, we will commit our life to you," Woodson said. "I have 25 young adults who are like an extension of my family."

"I would say that 80 percent of my closest friends are ex-something," he said with a laugh. "They've got letters in front of their names, not the back of them. And they have become my extended sons."

In all of his years working with low-income communities, he's only known of one suicide, Woodson added. One young man was new to the organization, but two days later he left and shot himself.

Woodson immediately called up the young people in the organization from across the country for an emergency retreat that lasted the weekend.

"The theme was, 'What do you do when your well runs dry?' I realized I had to feed into them as leaders, and say to them, you just put yourself on your agenda as well," Woodson said. The way training in his organization works is that every trainee is a teacher, too, bringing their own stories to the table, and Woodson says everything he has learned has been from the people he served.

One young man in the group was an associate pastor, and he told the group he had had a busy schedule traveling all over the country, stopping home just long enough to get a change of clothes sometimes. Then one day, he came home to find his motherin-law's car parked outside, and knew there was trouble. He went inside to find his wife calling for a divorce and demanding he leave or she would take the children and leave.

"He went back and humbled himself and begged his wife for forgiveness, but more Woodson said.

"I have been the recipient of hundreds of lessons like that," Woodson said. "I tell people, you show me a tired, frustrated organization and I'll show you a tired and frustrated person—because we have to give over to people things that we do well, not just the things we don't like. That's another part of my training with my groups: Give over to others things that are fun to do."

Woodson has compiled the lessons he's learned over the decades working with these neighborhoods into a new book "Lessons From the Least of These: The Woodson Principles," out this month.

"That will guide people in understanding themselves, and guide people into understanding how to help without injuring with the helping hand," Woodson said. It's filled with stories of what he's witnessed, and the core of it is 10 principles he believes we need, principles such as transparency, humility, trustworthiness, and honesty.

Retirement is on the horizon, he added, probably within the year. He looks forward to handing the organization over to someone younger and guiding them, though retiring doesn't mean he will stop living by the principles that have guided his work for decades.

"I tell people, you retire from a career, you expire from a calling. So I will expire from this," he said with a laugh.

That said, he is looking forward to some more time for golf, and perhaps visiting Wales. "I listen to Welsh music, and I love listening to bagpipes and my wife, it drives her crazy." He collects Welsh music, too, and says he can name all the bagpipe regiments and would love the opportunity to visit Wales one day and see them play.

"I've been blessed to participate in this exchange, from having touched the lives of hundreds of people who've left their imprint on me; I'm able to be a conduit," he said. "I am who I serve. I have no ambitions, no desires, nothing."

It's a way of life he wholeheartedly recom-

"The best way for people to become healed is by serving others," he said.



World War II veteran Mel Hughes, 95, and his wife Vera Hughes, 90.

A 72-Year-Old Love Story

LOUISE BEVAN

Photos of an elderly couple who fell in love 72 years ago have gone viral for their testament to a universal message: True love transcends time.

London-based photographer Sujata Setia met World War II veteran Mel Hughes, 95, and his wife, Vera, 90, while running a photography masterclass in Wales.

Sujata, 38, has been in the industry for six years since a passion project taking pictures of her daughter turned into a profession. In an email interview, Sujata said that listening to Vera and Mel's life story was incredibly fulfilling.

The studio owner, Elaine, had invited the elderly couple to pose for a photo series that the test of time."

The Hugheses married on March 29, 1952. The couple's granddaughter, 31-year-old Laura Iwanski, said they met a few years after the war.

"My granddad was working as a plumber and he was called out to the veterinary practice where Nan worked," Laura said. "In her own words, she said, 'It was love at

first sight. I knew I wanted him to be mine, and look where we are now!" Laura said. Mel is a World War II veteran, having served alongside the Royal Engineers between 1943 and 1947.

"He was very fond of his father, and regularly says that he remembers one particular day in 1943, his father's birthday," Laura said. "Amongst the birthday cards in the post, there was a telegram."

The telegram was a call to service for Mel, who recalled that bidding farewell to his father at the train station was the first time he had ever seen him cry.

"Fast forward to 2020," Laura said, "despite the COVID restrictions, nothing would stop Mel from paying his respects at Armistice Day. He is proud of his medals, and will always remember the fallen, with a salute, every year at every opportunity."

Sujata claims that Mel and Vera were initially perplexed by the photo project, but upon seeing the final images, they were ecstatic. So were social media users

The passionate photographer shared some of her favorite images on the Instagram page But Natural Photography, where they racked up thousands of likes. "I teach my photography students to al-

ways look for stories that can give us hope and a promise, that love can be eternal," Sujata said.

The photographer hailed the Hugheses as a couple worth emulating.

"They have been through many trials in life together and yet they are one," Sujata

"The way they look after each other, the way they joke ... and most importantly respect each other," Sujata said. "All of it gave me so much hope that true lasting love does exist."

Another huge reward for Sujata was seeing her students inspired to photograph their own grandparents, in celebration of their longevous lives and loves.

Laura said her grandmother often talks about her grandfather with grateful tears in her eyes. "As for my grandad, he is a man of few

words," Laura said. "But it is crystal clear how absolutely devoted he is to Nan ... actions more than words."

Mel and Vera had two children together, Clive and Cheryl. Laura's mother, Cheryl, sadly passed away in 2013. "Losing a daughter was one of their many

tough obstacles," Laura shared, "but they remember her with fondness." At 90 and 95 years old, the Hugheses are

munity. Laura's 2-year-old son, Myles, is the apple of his great-grandparents' eyes and was even born on Vera's birthday. Myles calls his grandpa "Gagga," just like Laura did when she was a child.

The Hugheses have struggled during the UK lockdown, missing contact with family and their volunteer work at a local theater. But Laura says the pair are simply taking each day as it comes; their best advice has always been never to give up on your partner.

"They inspire me every day ... I just feel so privileged to be their granddaughter," Laura said. "They are not 'just' an elderly couple, they are two 'antique' young people in love."

"True love for me is 'companionship.' Love is not so much in words as it is in deeds," Sujata said.



and Vera Hughes on their wedding day in 1952.

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

LIFE & TRADITION



Growing Family Inspires Singer's Christmas Album

Singer-songwriter Elizabeth Chan, who writes exclusively Christmas music, releases her 9th album

ANDREW THOMAS

EW YORK—'Tis the season, and many Americans are trying their best to look forward to Christmas. It's been a tumultuous year, and some festive cheer certainly is in order. Singersongwriter Elizabeth Chan's latest Christmas album "Celebrate Me Home" is her



7 years old, she has been obsessed with Christ mas music.

(Top) Elizabeth Chan

has been producing

Christmas music for

(Bottom) Elizabeth

Chan's latest album

"Celebrate Me Home."

the past decade.

ninth record, and will hopefully lift spirits this holiday season.

Ever since Chan was 7 years old, she has been obsessed with Christmas music. She vividly remembers listening to Christmas tunes in the backseat of her father's car or at home, and she told her parents that she wanted to write Christmas music when she grew up. They weren't terribly enthused and urged her to become a lawyer or doc-

"I just knew from a very young age that I loved Christmas music, and that it was something that just brought me so much ov," Chan said.

Chan is the daughter of Filipino and Chinese immigrants, and it was her Filipino mother's side that celebrated Christmas. The holiday has never been about gifts for her; her favorite memories are from being with her extended family laughing and enjoying each other's company.

'That was the magic of Christmas. Just being together, and the closeness and the ve and the family," Chan said.

Career and Family

Chan's childhood Christmas memories have heavily influenced her songwriting. Artists often produce Christmas albums, but she makes Christmas music exclusively. Her love for her family, home, and the spirit of the holidays are her muses. Her 5-year-old daughter has gotten involved in music, too, and wrote her own Christmas song, which is on this latest album.

Chan has been writing and producing Christmas music for nearly a decade, and her perspective on the holidays has evolved over time. When she first started, she had just gotten married. Now, she's a mother who just welcomed her second daughter into the world this fall.

"I think as I've grown my family, I've also grown as a composer and someone who writes about Christmas music because my family, my home, and my family life are really the inspiration," Chan said.

Early Beginnings

Early on, Chan had followed her parents' wishes, attending a competitive university and pursuing a traditional career. She worked diligently, but she reached a point in her career when she realized how unhappy she really was. She had a great office, received excellent compensation and benefits, but struggled to accept that this would be the rest of her life.

"I had zero passion for what I was doing, and I really had this kind of existential crisis," Chan said.

Chan wondered if the paycheck was worth her unhappiness. She thought about what made her happy, and Christmas music came to mind. She wanted to pursue writing and producing Christmas music, this new career.

"I had to give myself the opportunity to be the person I wanted to be, and figure it out," Chan said.

Christmas Year-Round

Chan took her career one day at a time, and nearly a decade later she's produced nine Christmas albums. She's found her calling and her passion, but not every day is easy. She's not only had to develop her musical talent but also learn how to be an entrepreneur in the entertainment business.

Writing during the pandemic has heavily influenced her latest album "Celebrate Me Home." March normally would have been the time to develop plans for recording and producing her next record, but the pandemic led to closed-down recording studios and prevented her from working closely with other musicians. In the middle of all of this, she also discovered that she was pregnant.

"I started to doubt whether I would be able to come up with a Christmas record this year, and that made me really sad," Chan said.

Tragically, some of Chan's relatives succumbed to the pandemic. She struggled to think about how she would write Christmas music while she was experiencing so much hopelessness in the world. Moreover, she had her pregnancy to think about. She had been accustomed to feeling joyful and writing music, but watching her family members fall ill presented a creative block.

I just knew from a very young age that I loved Christmas music, and that it was something that just brought me so much joy.

Elizabeth Chan

Chan came to change her perspective through her song "Celebrate Me Home," a reinterpretation of the Kenny Loggins classic. She had never produced and wrote in such a remote fashion, but was nevertheless determined.

"I just so wanted to get the song out in the way that I felt it, in the emotion that I felt it, that that's how I ended up cobbling together my album," Chan explained.

Chan looked at her pregnancy and unborn daughter as inspiration. She focused on her, and the fact her family was about to get bigger. Her family has always inspired her, but she didn't expect them to be so uplifting this year. The music video for the song, which captures some of the quarantined times at home, also features her pregnancy and her newborn daughter coming home.

Chan feels that a lot of Christmas music this year doesn't acknowledge the struggles we've all been through this year, and she wants her album to convey a sense of hope. She knows it's a lot to ask for people to be happy and forget that we're living in a time of pandemic, but she hopes that people are kind to themselves.

"Instead of Christmas being the things that we wish we had, how about we turn Christmas and the holiday season into being thankful for the things we've got, and that's love, and family, and home," Chan said.



LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

Blenheim Palace: Prim on the Outside, Lavish on the Inside

Palace, in Woodstock, Oxfordshire—the cal figures, column shells, and pilasters. birthplace and ancestral home of Sir But inside, the highly ornate and decora-Winston Churchill—is a fine example of tive interiors are similar to those seen in the short-lived English Baroque style of architecture.

English Baroque wasn't as outwardly flamboyant as European Baroque. The exlimestone and slate; they were decorated called a palace.

England's national treasure Blenheim conservatively and adorned with classi-French palaces.

Despite its magnificent appearance and its being called a "palace," Blenheim Palace has never been home to royalty and teriors of English buildings were made of is the only English country house to be



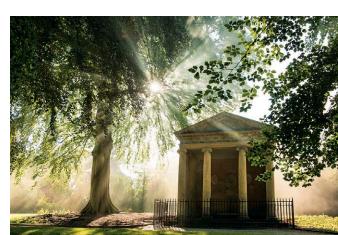
In 1704, the nation of England honored John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough, with a gift of land for his military triumphs over the French and Bavarian troops in the War of the Spanish Succession.

Dramatist and self-taught architect John Vanbrugh (with the assistance of notable architect Nicholas Hawksmoor) designed the country house. The building of Blenheim Palace, named after the Battle of Blenheim in Bavaria, began in 1705 and was completed in 1722.

In 1761, renowned English landscape designer Lancelot "Capability" Brown, known as "England's Greatest Gardener," modified and redesigned Blenheim Palace's park, which is enclosed by the palace walls. Brown's park is considered "a naturalistic Versailles."

Blenheim Palace and Park greatly influenced the English Romantic movement "characterized by the eclecticism of its inspiration, its return to natural sources, and its love of nature," according to the World Heritage website.





(Left below) The . Temple of Diana at Blenheim Palace, where Sir Winston Churchill famously proposed to his future wife, Clementine Hozier. (**Right)** The second State Room.







(Left) Blenheim Palace's magical Christmas lights. (Right) Christmas decorations add even more opulence to the murals that French decorative painter Louis Laguerre painted in Blenheim Palace's Saloon.

DEAR NEXT GENERATION: 'Learn a trade in a field you enjoy'

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

I come from hardy stock. Strong work ethic rooted in a strong love for God and selflessness toward others.

Both my grandmothers were single mothers in the 1940s. My maternal grandmother took over her husband's sales route with a tobacco company, and by the 1970s, she owned a tobacco wholesale business that serviced several counties. Her philanthropic heart was just as large. She decorated eggs, and every Palm Sunday, she opened her home and invited her community to see her eggs and donate to the first unwed mothers' home in her town.

I used to joke with my friends that our family spelled F–U–N with four letters: W-O-R-K.

My paternal grandmother was a Rosie the Riveter for a shipyard during World War II. She was known in my hometown as Big Mama. Though her frame was small, her heart was big. Well into her 80s, she still

• • •

walked to and from the grocery store while taking her famous fried pies to neighbors and nearby businesses.

And both these women were prayer warriors. Praying for just about anything and everyone to the God they loved. They prayed for me as they taught me about hard work. I used to joke with my friends that our family spelled F-U-N with four letters—

Like I said, I come from hardy stock. My parents didn't fall far from the oak trees under which they were raised. Though they were high on education, they also thought it was important to never shy away from manual labor.

It was 1976 and the summer before my high school senior year. My father sat his youngest child down for a father-daughter chat. He gave me the college talk. About money that wasn't much there. Leaving home. Choosing a career. And to my surprise, that career didn't necessarily mean a college degree.

He offered this advice, "I know you like doing hair—for yourself and your friends. My aunt and uncle owned a beauty shop, and I worked there when I was a little boy. How about you learn a trade during your senior year?" I liked the idea.

From an early age, my father had taught all of his children how to barter, so he encouraged me to go to the beauty salon



Julia Flanagan with her parents.

where my mother got her hair done and ask if I could work for them for free. Yes, he said FREE. I was a little shell-shocked, but I kept my composure and listened. "In exchange," he said, "ask them if they will teach you how to cut, perm, color, and style hair."

Long story short: I did whatever the ladies told me to do-sweep the floor, answer the phone, clean the bathroom, etc. And in exchange, they kept their end of the bargain. At the end of nine months, I had a trade! And not a dime had changed hands. I gained skills that not only helped me get through college (yes, I earned a degree, and not just one but three), but also have saved me thousands of dollars on hair care, have allowed me to improve people's self-esteem at homeless shelters, and have allowed me to make a side income when

times were tough and I needed a second

job to make ends meet.

Over the years, I have appreciated my sturdy stock gene pool and sage advice offered by my elders. And today, I am a psychotherapist and career coach. I often give young people the same advice my father gave me. No matter how much book learning you get, you will always find work to do with your hands in helping others. So, open a book. And learn. And ask to learn a trade in a field you enjoy in exchange for your labor. You'll be amazed at how far you can go!

—Julia Flanagan

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations?

We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or

Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001

• • • •

State-level data show just how dramatic the surge in homeschooling has been

KERRY MCDONALD

any families took one look their school district's remote or hybrid learning offerings this fall and said, "No, thank you." That's the message gleaned from national and statespecific data on the surging number of homeschooled students this academic year.

Prior to the pandemic and related school closures last spring, there were just under 2 million homeschoolers in the United States, representing about 3.4 percent of the total K-12 school-age population. According to recent polling by Education Week, that percentage has more than doubled to 9 percent this fall, or nearly 5 million homeschoolers. This estimate mirrors related polling from Gallup in August suggesting that 10 percent of U.S. students would be homeschooled this year.

State-level data show just how dramatic the surge in homeschooling has been, particularly in areas where many district schools continue to be closed for full-time, in-person learning. In Massachusetts, for example, the Boston Globe reported last month that 7,188 students statewide transferred from public schools into homeschooling this year, compared to only 802 homeschooling transfers

In North Carolina, homeschooling filings nearly tripled, with more than 10,000 parent forms submitted over the summer, compared to about 3,500 in 2019. In fact, so many parents in North Carolina completed their online intent to homeschool forms during the first week of July (when the system began accepting filings for this year), that it crashed the state's nonpublic education

In New York City, homeschooling increased by nearly one-third this fall. More than 10,000 students withdrew from the city's public schools this year for homeschooling, compared to about 2,500 student withdrawals in 2019. In Vermont, homeschooling applications were up 75 percent compared to 2019, with similar patterns seen in neighboring New Hampshire. In Wisconsin, homeschooling filings more than doubled this year, and in Connecticut, more than six times as many students have

According to the Education Week survey, it's lower-income families who are more likely to choose homeschooling during the pandemic. This challenges the continued criticism that "pandemic pods" and other family-centered learning models are only options for more privileged families. Indeed, as The New York Times pointed out in July in response to these criticisms, "the population of home-schoolers—before the pandemic was less affluent than average.'

Public School Enrollment Plummets Driven in large part by new homeschoolers, public schools across the country are

experiencing plummeting enrollment. For instance, in Arizona, public school enrollment is down 5 percent compared to 2019, and in Massachusetts, it's down 4 percent.

In addition to the homeschooling surge, some families have opted out of their district school for private and parochial schools that have been better able to meet parent demand for in-person learning during the pandemic. A new analysis of private school enrollment finds that 70 percent of private schools surveyed experienced either increased or constant enrollment compared to 2019. Of those indicating that their enrollment remained the same, it was due to already being at capacity.

Declining enrollment in public schools has some people worried. State funding of public schools is often directly related to the number of students enrolled in these schools. With the recent public school exodus, states such as Texas and California have decided to freeze enrollment at pre-pandemic levels to maintain school funding rates. But many parents and taxpayers may be getting frustrated that public schools continue to receive full funding while, in many cases, not offering their full education services for students. This could partly explain why parent support for school choice has soared during the pandemic.

According to a recent RealClear Opinion Research poll, support for school choice policies that encourage funding to follow students instead of schools has jumped 10 percent since April to 77 percent.

Sustained Surge in Homeschooling

With a COVID-19 vaccine on the horizon, hopes of returning to normal life are higher than they were at the start of this academic year. Many of the families who recently withdrew their children from a district school in favor of homeschooling or private schooling will likely return to their district when the pandemic ends and standard schooling resumes. But some families may find that they prefer their new learning options.

Some of the now nearly 5 million homeschoolers and their parents may discover that they weren't so fond of standard schooling after all and appreciate the left the public schools for homeschooling freedom, creativity, and flexibility that homeschooling offers

Parents I have interviewed told me they had considered homeschooling for a long time but had lacked the catalyst to give it a try until now. Seeing their children flourish outside of a conventional classroom could lead many of these parents to continue homeschooling post-pandemic. As an article in The Atlantic stated: "CO-VID-19 is a catalyst for families who were already skeptical of the traditional school system—and are now thinking about leaving it for good."

Once life returns to normal, new homeschoolers may also discover that real homeschooling is much better than the



According to the Education Week survey, it's lowerfamilies who are more likely to be choosing homeschooling during the pandemic.

Local homeschooling groups will regain their full vitality and sociability. Museums, libraries, and local businesses and organizations will return to offering their suite of homeschooling classes. Daily activities will take place more often outside one's home than inside it, and homeschoolers will once again be deeply connected to the people, places, and things of their com-

considering

homeschooling

give it a try—

This fall, millions of new homeschooling parents have realized that their children can learn without school. When the world reopens to them, they will find that homeschooling is even better than they imagined.

Kerry McDonald is a senior education fellow at FEE and author of "Unschooled: Raising Curious, Well-Educated Children Outside the Conventional Classroom" (Chicago Review Press, 2019). This article was originally published on FEE.org

Ten Christmas presents standing in a line;

Robert took the bicycle, then there were nine. Nine Christmas presents ranged in order straight; Bob took the steam engine, then there were eight. Eight Christmas presents—and one came from Devon; Robbie took the jackknife, then there were seven. Seven Christmas presents direct from St. Nick's; Bobby took the candy box, then there were six. Six Christmas presents, one of them alive; Rob took the puppy dog, then there were five. Five Christmas presents yet on the floor; Bobbin took the soldier cap, then there were four

Four Christmas presents underneath the tree; Bobbet took the writing desk, then there were three Three Christmas presents still in full view; Robin took the checker board, then there were two. Two Christmas presents, promising fun, Bobbles took the picture book, then there was one. One Christmas present—and now the list is done; Bobbinet took the sled, and then there were none And the same happy child received every toy So many nicknames had one little boy

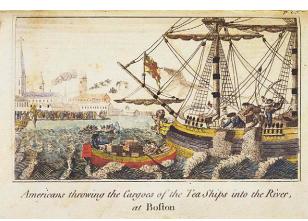
know how to play. RALPH WALDO EMERSON

It is a happy

talent to



A PARTY IN BOSTON



A 1789 illustration of the Boston Tea Party event by the British engraver W.D. Cooper.

🦰 n Dec. 16, 1773, American patriots disguised themselves as Indians and boarded ships carrying tea along the Boston Harbor. They protested the heavy taxes, such as the Tea Act, being imposed upon them by England without allowing for any government representation. The rebels threw 342 chests of tea into the harbor. This act of defiance became known as the Boston Tea Party and was one of the key events that led to the American Revolution and America's eventual independence.

By Aidan Danza, age 14

FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

WHY DID THE

TEDDY BEAR

TURN DOWN DESSERT?

DIRT: TYPES OF SOIL **INCEPTISOLS** Inceptisols are very common soils, lacking any kind of layers. They are **ANDISOLS ARIDISOLS** moderately developed, and occur **GELISOLS** These soils occur in dry These soils are generated by almost everywhere. hese soils occur mostly in the areas, including deserts volcanic ash. Surprisingly, they Arctic and Antarctic. They are have a capacity to hold organic and the like, as well as permanently frozen, restricting Antarctica's vallevs. material and water, making irt may sound like rather a boring topic, plant growth them very fertile. **ULTISOLS** but soils are actually a These soils are very old, weathered very interesting branch **HISTOSOLS OXISOLS** soils that formed in humid areas. of science when you get Their subsoil layer (layer of soil Histosols are dark, wet soils that occur in ENTISOLS These soils also exhibit almost no layers, and subtropical regions. They swamps and the like. They are made up topsoil) contains a lot of clay. other than a topsoil layer. They usually sandy, silty, and loamy) of of decaying organic matter. Because of contain iron oxides, quartz, and Ultisols can also be quite acidic. occur in areas where sediment has beer this, they are often very fertile farmland clay minerals, and are very old it all. Here are the different recently deposited. Entisols are a catchwhen drained. These soils are also very and weathered. types of soils you'll find all group: whatever doesn't fit into any mucky. around the world. of the other categories is an entisol. **SPODOSOLS** Spodosols are generated by the **VERTISOLS ALFISOLS** decay of conifer needles. They Vertisols are very rich in expansive Alfisols are very similar to are usually very acidic, so are clay, which expands when wet ultisols, but are less acidic, less not tolerated by most plants. and shrinks when dry. Thus, they weathered, and more fertile. They pose a problem to foundations and usually occur on forest floors. roadways, which can crack when the soil dries.

Reflecting on Homeschool

6 questions for a fresh start in the new year

BARBARA DANZA

The end of the calendar year beckons us to reflect on all that has passed and the new year to come. For homeschoolers, this occasion to contemplate and review comes at an apropos time.

At this juncture, most homeschooling

breath and taking a well-deserved break; perhaps many are catching some extra breaths during this last month of the year. As you pause to think about how it's gone and look toward the new year and a fresh start, here are some helpful questions to

Why Homeschool?

guide your reflection.

Start with the most fundamental question. Why are you homeschooling in the first place? Why have you chosen this significant responsibility to take on?

As you answer, you may find that your resolve is stronger than ever or that your answer has evolved over time. Get clear on your reasons and ensure that what you envision for the future aligns with it.

To What End?

What are your goals for the coming year? Perhaps you're hoping to have your child reading independently by summertime. Or you want to increase the number of nature walks you take each week. Perhaps you hope to help your child memorize multiplication facts. Perhaps you want parents find themselves just catching their to spend more time exploring subjects your kiddos are excited about and less time checking boxes. Perhaps you're putting together a college resume or portfolio with a specific course of study in mind.

Whatever your unique homeschool goals are, write them down and make sure your actions in the new year support them.

What's Working?

Even if you're ending the year particularly discouraged, be sure not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Identify the pieces of your homeschool—even the very smallest ones—that are working.

Think about things such as your morning routine, your daily habits, your weekly rhythm, the curriculum you're using,

how much time you're spending in the great outdoors, what extracurricular activities your children are participating in, etc. Consider the subjects that make up your homeschool and evaluate each one. Consider each individual child and his or her specific skills, talents, and strengths—and how you're encouraging him or her.

Think of all that is right with your homeschool and continue to enhance those aspects in the new year.

What's Not Working?

The next obvious question is to identify what's not working in your homeschool. Perhaps you've chosen a curriculum that has everyone frustrated or bored. Perhaps your child is struggling in one particular subject and it needs to be approached from a different angle. Perhaps you're over-scheduled. Perhaps you need more structure, or maybe less. Perhaps your family isn't getting enough exercise. Think carefully about what's not work-

ing and aim to get to the root cause of the

problem. If you can identify that, you can

come up with a solid remedy.

What Would This Look Like If It Were Easy?

I wrote about this question recently, and it's one I often pose to myself. It's helpful to remember that learning comes naturally to humans, that children yearn to learn, and that you need not overcomplicate this homeschooling endeavor.

What would it look like if it were easy? What are you doing to make this more difficult than it needs to be? How can you turn that around? Remove the strain, the frustration, and the notion that it's only good enough if it's hard.

What Would This Look Like If It Were Fun?

Not only can this be easy, but it can be fun! I'd wager that you've made some effort into making homeschool fun for your kids, but what about you? Are you having fun? What would this look like if it were fun for you? What would your children's experience be like if you were having fun, too? Perhaps this coming year is the year you find out.

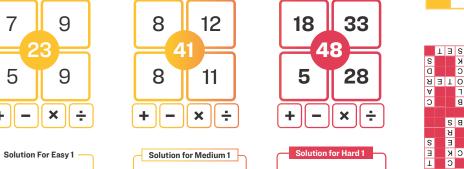
USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS

(+, - AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: $6 + (7 \times 3) + 1 = 28$ and $1 + (7 \times 3) + 6 = 28$

11-21-8×8

9+6×(L-6)

• • • •



33+58+2-18

 \bullet



- _ with steelies and aggies (7)
- Ancient calculator (6) Two-wheeler (7)

 \bullet

- Bath time companion (6,4)

11 5-iron and others (4,5)

- 18 Make pictures with light! (9)

2 Driverless racer, casually (2,3)

Game where players say "King me!"

3 It comes with a ladder (5)

Rollerblades, maybe (6)

10 "Hit! You sank my _____!" (10)

13 It has four knights and a couple

14 They may be wooden, with letters

15 You need them to play "Crazy 8" or

Barbie or GI Joe (4)

11 A model of the earth (5)

painted on them (6)

12 Big name in bricks (4)

queens (5,3)

"Go Fish" (5)

16 Like giant Legos (9)

17 Motor bike (7)

19 A proper one includes a creamer (3,3)

 \bullet

 $\bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$ $\bullet \bullet \bullet \bullet$



The Joy of Gifting

(From readers who gave the gift of The Epoch Times)

Real news for those seeking the truth.

"I gave a gift subscription of the Epoch Times to a friend who I thought would appreciate the honest reporting that I have found this newspaper to have. Personally, I really enjoy the paper"!

"It seemed perfect for my husband's birthday."

JENISE STEINMAN

LINDA NOCIS

"We love that we get unbiased, truthful information that we cannot get anywhere else. I also love the different sections of paper, particularly the opinion section and articles about eastern medicine, homeschooling, family and health."

MICHAEL DILORENZO

"It gives more than news, which takes us away from politics and gives us a variety of useful information—both for young and old."

SAL BERMUDEZ

"As young adults, my children need to be informed with independent, unbiased news, and most of all, content for a traditional growing family."

JOSEPHINE STEINDL

"I [...] and thought it would be great for both of my sons who are always looking for truthful news."

RICK ONOFER

"I find the articles very informative. My husband does not spend as much time online as I do, and I thought this would be a good way to share the content of The Epoch Times with him."

CONNIE BREDEMEIER

"Honest, objective, balanced, intelligent, thought-provoking news—just like the old days."

THOMAS ANDERSON

"It is so refreshing to get unbiased news—and actually get to form my own opinions."

ERIN E DOTSETH

"My brother enjoyed reading Epoch but couldn't afford it, so I helped."

ALICE CARR

"Real news for those seeking the truth."

BRUCE WALKER

"Provides independent and fair news to my family."

BILLY BELCHER

SHIRLEY FARRIS

"Knew my daughter and family would enjoy the unbiased news."

"Good reporting. The recipient is someone intelligent who appreciates all the work you do."

CAROL ROGALA

"My friend is very politically engaged, but I could tell she wasn't getting enough information from the WSJ and Fox News. **ET has the very best coverage** on the legal and Constitutional election challenges. My husband and I so appreciate the careful research and detail that go into the newspaper and daily emails. FINALLY... some Journalism again!"

BRUCE WALKER



Give the gift of Truth & Tradition at

ReadEpoch.com/Gift

Give the Gift of Truth and Tradition

THE EPOCH TIMES

You know that the truth doesn't just make you more informed—it can also bring you a sense of revitalized hope. But what about your friends and family who are still missing out?

This holiday season, our **Epoch Times** gift subscription can help you share this hope with your loved ones. Thousands of our most loyal subscribers—and counting—have already done so.

Through our journalism, you can prove to them that our nation's values remain strong. You can show them that there is a growing community that's willing to fight for these values. What else can bring more hope nowadays?

I have decided to give subscriptions to The Epoch Times as Christmas gifts to all adults on my list—the gift of information, the gift of knowledge, the gift of truth, [and] the gift of trust.

PAULA LABROT, CA

Yes, I'd like to give the gift of Truth and Tradition with a subscription to The Epoch Times

\$139 12 month

12 months (Save 31%)*

\$1**59**12 mor

12 months
PREMIUM (Save 38%)*

\$39 3 months \$**59** 3 months

PREMIUM

PREMIUM Premium gift packages come with a book set** and infographic poster (valued at \$56)

THE RECIPIENT WILL RECEIVE:

- WEEKLY PRINT NEWSPAPER ***
- UNLIMITED DIGITAL ACCESS[★]

ONLINE ReadEpoch.com/gift

BY PHONE **(917) 905-2080**

BY MAIL The Epoch Times 229 W. 28th St., Fl. 7 New York, NY 10001

To ensure your gift order is processed in time for Christmas, please use the online order form. Orders received by mail will be processed upon receipt.

| LEASE PRINT THE RECIPIENT' | S INFORMATION LEGIBL | Y AND INCLUDE APT, ST | E, OR UNIT # |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|

IRST NAME LAST NAME PHONE

ADDRESS UNIT #

CITY_____STATE____ZIP_____EMAIL*

M M Y Y

NAME ON CARD SIGNATURE

BY SIGNING THIS SUBSCRIPTION FORM, I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS AT **ReadEpoch.com/Terms**

I ALSO AFFIRM ALL INFO ABOVE IS COMPLETE AND ACCURATE.

*Based on the regular monthly price of \$16.90.

**A book set "How the Specter of Communism is Ruling Our World."

***The print edition is mailed out every Wednesday. Their first issue should arrive within 16 days of us receiving this form.

**We strongly suggest that you provide the recipient's email so they can access our self-service customer portal, our digital content, as well as our apps on iPhone and Android.

★ We strongly suggest that you provide the recipient's email so they can access our self-service customer portal, ou
★ ★ We use your credit card solely, and securely, for your gift subscription. We do not share it with any third parties.

• • • •