

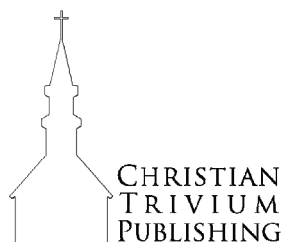
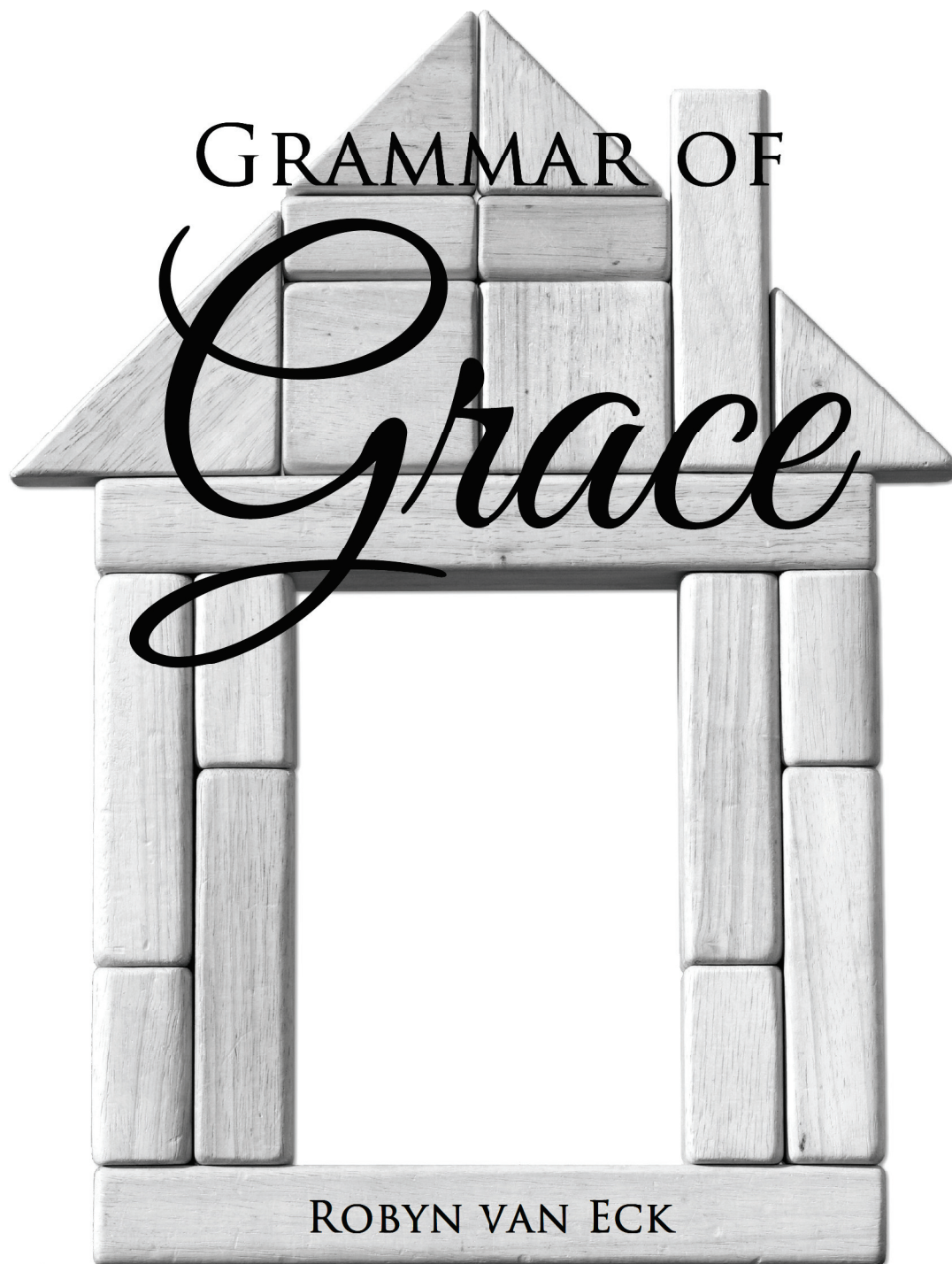
GRAMMAR OF *Grace*

Robyn van Eck

A thoroughly Christian core curriculum
Modeled on the Classical Trivium, for ages 5-12

If the foundations be destroyed,
what can the righteous do?
Psalm 11:3

This curriculum was written to help rebuild the foundations.



Grammar of Grace: A Thoroughly Christian Core Curriculum Modeled on the
Classical Trivium, for Ages 5–12
by Robyn van Eck

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<https://grammarofgrace.com>

Dedicated—

To Audrey, Lieve, Peter, and Jonathan—thank you for learning the different iterations of this, while Mommy tried to figure out how to do this thing. I promise I won't change the Timeline again!!!

To Audrie and Christina—you have been my cheerleaders, focus group, and friends; your encouragement, questions, and willingness to be guinea pigs have been invaluable. I think you don't believe it when I say it, but it's really true; if this book is good, it's due in large part to your help.

To Audrey, Lieve, Peter, Jonathan, Paul, Michael, Christopher, Roeltje, and all the van Ecklings to come—may you love and serve our Lord, and teach your little ones to teach their little ones to do the same.

To Roel—thank you for encouraging me and giving me wisdom in every bit of this. You are my favorite person in the whole world.

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My son, if thou wilt receive my words,
and hide my commandments within thee,

And cause thine ears to hearken unto wisdom,
and incline thine heart to understanding,

For if thou callest after knowledge,
and cryest for understanding:

If thou seekest her as silver,
and searchest for her as for treasures,

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord,
and find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 2:1-5

APOLOGY

απολογία

*I am afraid that the schools will prove the very gates of hell,
unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures
and engraving them in the heart of the youth.*

—Martin Luther

When you see the seven subjects in *Grammar of Grace*, you may be surprised. Where are the math worksheets? The science lessons? The creative writing assignments? What is this?? No two ways about it: This curriculum is a radical departure from the typical modern elementary school plan.

I want to explain the vision behind it. My tale is a bit of a dance between my own story and the history of education, as I was learning about it along the way. It begins with my background.

My Education

My parents sent me to a Christian preschool for one year, and half of kindergarten. From the second half of kindergarten, until I entered graduate school, I went to government schools (public schools).

In adulthood, I learned that these public schools—*my* public schools—were originally designed by Utopian progressives, who aimed to “reform” the existing education method. Their goals were to eliminate the Christian faith, weaken family ties, and create a less independent-minded populace.¹

But during my schoolyears I loved my teachers and thoroughly enjoyed the academic aspects of school.

Did you even know there *was* a successful education method, before governments opened up schools? Turns out, children in times past received something called a *classical education*.²

Classical education was patterned on a child’s natural development. During his early years, when he is naturally inclined to parrot everything he hears, he is trained in Grammar—in a word, memorization.³ As he matures, he begins to be a bit argumentative; the sinful part of that aside, he’s growing into his own understanding, and learning to question everything he’s been taught and work it out on his own. This is when the classical education curriculum fittingly assigns the subject of Logic. Finally, as a child grows into his youth, he begins to synthesize all he has learned and draw larger conclusions about himself and the world in which he lives. This is the age at which a classically-educated child is taught Rhetoric, or to interact and communicate with others effectively and persuasively.

I, like most modern children, never heard of a Trivium during my childhood; I went to public school, and lots of them. Our family moved around a lot, and I went to schools all over America—from Pennsylvania to California, from Hawaii to Tennessee, and even for a few years at Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba. For the most part, I received a pretty good modern education. But also, unbeknownst to my parents or me at the time, I received a classical education in three subjects.

First, beginning in kindergarten, my mother took me to AWANA, where, for four years, I memorized and recited verses, just like any classically-educated child of old.

¹ Bruce Shortt, *The Harsh Truth about Public Schools* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon, 2007).

² An English novelist named Dorothy Sayers delivered an essay at Oxford University in 1947 called “The Lost Tools of Learning”, begging educators to return the the classical education her generation and the ones before her had received. This essay has become something of a founding document for the classical education revival going on today; everyone should read it. The complete essay is available online at <https://www.pccs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/LostToolsOfLearning-DorothySayers.pdf>.

³ Progressives often dismissively refer to memorization as “rote learning”.

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Second, at the same time, I learned phonics, which is how classically-educated children were taught to read. This wasn't the phony phonics many public schools teach today, either, where they call it phonics but it really isn't; I got the real deal.⁴

Finally, I learned to play the flute, and, later, the oboe. The education revolution of the past 150 years has been slow to reach music, so when I learned to play, it was still being taught by the Trivium method.

Having learned these three subjects by the Trivium method, I had learned how to *learn*. The Trivium teaches any subject, every subject, this way: First, memorize the fundamentals; second, learn how and why those fundamentals work; and third, master the thing, so you can do it for others. You see the old apprentice-journeyman-master system there. When children are taught subjects with this method, not only do they learn the subjects you're teaching them, but they also learn this method of *learning*, and as they get older, they will teach themselves anything they desire to learn.

With that start, I thrived in the rest of my academic studies. I went through the modern education system, but also experienced a Trivium education, in those few subjects. This unusual combination meant that my experience in school was different from most of my friends'—although I wouldn't understand why til I had children of my own. I thought every subject was fun, and I did great in every class. Where the curriculum was lacking and my friends struggled, I unconsciously used the Trivium method and learned with ease.

As a young adult, I spent time back in the public schools teaching music lessons, and the difference between my public school experience and what was going on only a decade later absolutely shocked me; the decrease in academic vigor at supposedly top-notch schools and the increase in immorality among students were alarming. This helped to open my mind to look outside of the only system I knew.

When I began to have children, I started researching other educational approaches. I learned about the Trivium, and it resonated strongly with me—though I didn't know why at the time. My husband and I decided to give our children a classical education, following this Trivium. Once I got started, I soon discovered that I intuitively understood how my children's memory work would shape their thinking. As time went on, I realized more and more that the Trivium seemed so natural to me because I had experienced it myself—it was one revelation after another. These insights eventually took me from trying to follow good instructions in the dark, as it were, to applying the Trivium, at home and as a tutor in our local classical co-op, knowledgeably and skillfully.

But I'm getting ahead of myself; the story of how I went from reading books about this thing called Trivium and trying to follow those instructions to realizing I was a Trivium-educated child myself is intertwined with beginning to homeschool—and that began, as I'm sure it also did for you, with a vision for my children's education.

So here I've got to lay a little groundwork. Bear with me; this might seem a little tedious, but the story—and the philosophy behind this curriculum—will make a lot more sense if I take a minute and tell you where I am coming from.

A Vision

My husband's and my vision begins with the hope that our children will, sooner or later, truly understand and grieve over their own sinfulness, and throw themselves upon the mercy of their Creator. I'm guessing you're tracking with me on that one.

We also suspect it is possible, perhaps even likely, that they will encounter persecution, war, or other dangers that will require extraordinary wisdom and courage, not unlike the Early Church, the Reformers, or America's founding fathers; we want them to be equipped to handle those difficulties well, if it comes to

⁴ Sandra Elam, "What To Do When You're Told: We Do Teach Phonics", *The National Right to Read Foundation*, November, 1998.

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that. We are *confident* that they will encounter temptations and trials, at any rate, so we want them to be fully prepared not to fall away or be rendered ineffective when those challenges arise—but rather persevere and grow in sanctification and Godliness through them. We want them, above all, to keep the first and greatest commandment—to love the Lord their God with all their hearts, with all their souls, with all their strengths, and with all their minds.⁵

As such, we want them to know the Bible really well. In our best estimation, this means that they should be highly literate (it's a pretty deep book), preferably in the Bible languages of Greek and Hebrew as well as in English, and be able to think logically.

We want them to have a good knowledge of history, and to be sensible to beauty and art, all of which help one to understand the scriptures better and live life well. They should know the stories of men of faith and courage. They should have a basic understanding of how the world works—everything from mathematics to chemistry, from mechanics to agriculture. The Bible is written in such a way that the reader is expected to understand these basic aspects of human life, which are then used to teach eternal truths.

The Bible plainly says that all of the knowledge they need begins with the fear of God, so we insist on teaching that first and last, with no apology. But the scriptures also encourage that after that beginning we should pursue knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. My husband and I hope that our children's minds will become like well-watered, delightful gardens, teeming with life—in which new and beneficial things can be planted and grow, long after we are gone; where the walls are strong; and where harmful things are uprooted and kept out. So, as we began homeschooling, we realized that our overarching goal was to give our children a Biblical-Foundation-for-All-of-Life.

That vision clear in our minds, the educational approach that seemed to be the best vehicle to get us there was, as I told you, the classical Trivium. My own educational background, no doubt, had a role to play in our early interest in classical education, but the more I learned about the Trivium, the more convinced I became that this was more than personal preference.

A Biblical-Foundation-for-All-of-Life and the Trivium are a natural pairing. Indeed, the Trivium with a biblical foundation was *the* scheme of education in Western Civilization throughout the Christian Era, until the last century. The biblical foundation bit may have been stonger or weaker in different centuries, but this was the ideal, regardless.

Classical education reached a high point with the children of the Reformers. Their insistence on teaching their children to read and write so they could read the Bible for themselves—as well as their emphasis on the original Hebrew and Greek scriptures—resulted in an explosion of learning, discovery, and the spread of the Gospel, the blessings of which you and I enjoy today.

The Trivium is suited to a child's growth and development; it seems to be the organic method for teaching children. It is how children naturally learn, how parents naturally teach, and remnants of copywork have been found stretching back into ancient history. The Apostle Peter is referring to copywork when he says that Christ leaves us an *example* that we should follow.⁶ When Solomon writes in the Proverbs about knowledge, understanding, and wisdom—two of these (knowledge and understanding) are the very subjects of the Trivium (grammar and logic), and wisdom and rhetoric are not-so-distant cousins.

Nuts & Bolts

These were the sorts of ideas my husband and I had in mind, as we began to homeschool. I figured—with the abundance of Christian curricula we have today and the revival of classical education that is going on—it would be easy to find a curriculum well-suited to our notions.

⁵ Luke 10:27

⁶ 1 Peter 2:21

The nuts and bolts ought to be straightforward enough: In the grammar school years, the children should learn by memorizing, and they ought to memorize the sorts of things that would cultivate their little minds like those lush gardens; the texts ought to be *life-giving*. The children should memorize lots and lots of scriptures, the only thing that is Living and Active, powerful to the salvation of their souls.⁷ The scriptures would also teach them vocabulary, grammar, and excellence in language arts. Add to that a timeline of world history and the classical languages, or Latin, at the very least.⁸ And they should memorize some of the best examples of the English language in our literature, particularly selections that inspire character and virtue.

This seemed to be the general idea I was getting from the Classical education gurus on the homeschool circuit, so all that remained was to pick a great curriculum and get started.

I went to parent meetings, practicums, and conferences, where the speakers began and ended in prayer, filled their talks with scripture, and sharply warned about the importance of teaching our children a Christian Worldview. When the time came, I selected a curriculum that purported to glorify God, give my children a Classical education, and prepare them with a thorough Christian worldview.

When I began teaching the curriculum, however, things did not turn out as advertized.

Disappointment

The first cloud that appeared, faintly, on the horizon, was a closer look at the timeline my children would memorize. It flatly contradicted the Bible's history and timeline. At first I was deeply troubled, but I had committed to teach this in our local co-op; and I was assured that I was free to modify the timeline as I wished for my own children at home, given permission to share the problems I saw with the other parents in my class, and encouraged to point out the problematic parts to the higher-ups in the program, so my husband and I decided to stay the course.

As the year was beginning, however, I realized that this curriculum—which was *filled* with scriptures at every parent meeting I'd been to—did not have *any* scriptures for the children to study and learn (in English, that is; to be fair, in one year of the curriculum the children learn seven verses in Latin).

A Christian Classical curriculum, with a supposed emphasis on Christian worldview—and there was not a single scripture in the entire curriculum. What, exactly, *is* the Christian Worldview, if not the Bible?

The next thing that concerned me was that the very young children were to memorize their multiples of 2, 3, 4, 5, all the way to multiples of 15, before they were old enough to understand what they were memorizing. Along with that, there was no poetry or literature, but rather lists of prepositions, helping verbs, and the like for the children to memorize. In a Classical education, the children should memorize beautiful quotations, poetry, and especially scripture. When they are old enough to study formal grammar, they will *understand* what prepositions *are*, because they know our language well. Likewise for math, of course, in the study of which problems quickly multiply (wink, wink) when children are taught to perform tasks by rote that they do not understand.

As time went on, I further realized that our expensive curriculum taught history in values-neutral terms, just like the progressive education programs do. The Bible, of course, teaches in no uncertain terms that we must view history in terms of Right and Wrong: Someone either did good in God's sight, or he did evil in God's sight. Children, by their nature, will categorize the people and events they're learning about as Right or Wrong. When we teach them a summary statement like, "The Aztecs built a great civilization," the children's assumption, because that sounds like a good thing, is that these were Good people. The truth that many children never learn is that the Aztecs were bloodthirsty pagans, who committed atrocities, as a matter of daily life, to make your hair stand on end. The way God sums up people like

⁷ Hebrews 4:12

⁸ Miss Sayers' essay elegantly explains why of the study of these languages was a core component of the Trivium curriculum.

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that, when He's writing the history, is with pithy statements like, "They were exceedingly wicked and did great abominations in the sight of the Lord, therefore He slew them."

I came to realize that this curriculum may have been written by a Christian, but it was not a Christian curriculum. Moreover, it may have been using a Classical approach—emphasizing memorization during the early years, for example, but it was not Classical in the subject matter. It was taking some of the *ideas* of a Classical education, and using them to "improve" a typical modern educational program, but the foundation was definitely a typical, secular, modern education.

A Little Tweaking

As I encountered each problematic aspect in our program, I added the things I wanted my children to learn, to fill in gaps or to supplement weak spots. I started out by making a scripture memory plan. Clearly, that needed to be the first and most important subject, so I just penciled that into the margin of the curriculum. No problem.

But there was also the problem of the timeline using secular dates, with a few Bible names and events sprinkled on top, in a self-contradictory manner.⁹ If my children were going to be prepared to keep the faith in the face of the secular opposition of our day, they needed to have something better than a timeline that taught that the Bible's history is false! No, having struggled ourselves and witnessed firsthand the 80% exodus of Christian youth from the church,¹⁰ my husband and I could not knowingly teach this timeline to our children. So I took a deep dive into history, and put together a timeline that fully agreed with the only inerrant history book we have—the Bible.

I found a scripture catechism and added that. I wanted my children to memorize poetry, so I added that. I wanted them to hear Latin, Greek, and Hebrew *spoken* as natural languages; so I looked up the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew versions of some of our Bible verses, and we memorized those. I realized that I barely knew the timeless hymns of the faith—and that my children weren't learning them any better than I had as a child—so I added hymns. I replaced the values-neutral statements crafted by modern authors *about* history with quotations from important documents and noteworthy people *in* history, particularly quotations that would inspire my children to greatness for the glory of God.

As time went on, one by one, I rejected every subject in our expensive curriculum because it was either worldly in content, not classical in content, or both! In doing so, over the space of three years, I had written a full curriculum, of seven subjects, in four cycles, which, in my best estimation, would fill my children's minds with inspiring ideas; a strong starting point for the study of history; a wide range of vocabulary and beautiful language; an exposure to Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; and a very, very strong foundation for a lifetime of biblical understanding.

⁹ The Bible dates many people and events from history, and the dates for ancient history that you commonly see in history programs, books, museums, study Bible margins, and most Christian curriculums contradict the dates God recorded in the Bible. For about 150 years, secular history "authorities" have exhibited a bias against the Bible's dates, going out of their way to craft narratives and embrace unreliable sources that "disprove" them—thus "disproving" the Bible. For example, secular historians claim that the Mesopotamian civilization arose around 3500 BC, or 500 years after the Creation; this is a "fact" the curriculum we were using, with its supposed emphasis on Christian Worldview, teaches children. But the Bible says that Mesopotamia was founded by one of Noah's grandsons *after* the Great Flood, which occurred 1,600 years after the Creation. Our curriculum also taught that the Flood of Noah's time happened, but said the date was "uncertain", even though the Bible concretely dates it to 2349-2348 BC. Which dates is this "Christian Worldview" curriculum teaching students they ought to trust? (For more information, see "How Does Man's History Fit with the Biblical Timeline?" by Bodie Hodge, June 30, 2006; and "In the Days of Peleg", by Larry Pierce, December 1, 1999, both available on answersingenesis.org.)

¹⁰ Ken Ham, *Already Gone* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, April 2010).

Core Subjects

So, as I said, the seven subjects in *Grammar of Grace* will probably surprise you. The modern standard for an elementary education is Math, Science, Reading, Writing (meaning creative writing), and Social Studies (not history).

If it's a Classical curriculum, there will also be Latin; and if it's a Christian curriculum, there will also be some Bible.

Who decided that these were the necessary subjects for a Grammar School education? John Dewey—an avowed humanist who looked to “Science”, particularly Darwinism, to replace Christianity—rejected the Classical Trivium and designed the new core curriculum with which we are all familiar today.¹¹

He rejected the Trivium *method*, and he also rejected the Trivium *subject matter*. The curriculum you hold in your hands does not seek to take Dewey's core curriculum and Christianize it, or Classicize it. *Grammar of Grace* begins from a completely different starting point; it builds on a different foundation.

The Bible clearly states that the *fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*.¹² That is why I believe getting the methodology *and* the subject matter right is important, and that is why *Grammar of Grace* is a radically different kind of curriculum—because *Grammar of Grace*, in practice, treats the fear of the Lord as if it truly *is* the beginning of knowledge.

The Christian curriculums for children under age 12 that I have seen have the same subjects you will see taught at the public school down the street, and much of the very same material *within* those subjects that you'd get at the public school down the street.

Grammar of Grace comes from a different starting point, so it is different from the inside out. It's not Classical or Christian on the surface, but in the very warp and woof.

The core curriculum of *Grammar of Grace* is (1) Bible Reading, (2) Copywork, and (3) Memory Lessons in seven subjects:

- Bible Verses
- Bible Passages
- Scripture Catechism
- Foreign Languages (using Bible verses)
- History (important quotations)
- Timeline (accepting the Bible's dates as completely reliable)
- Poetry (including hymns)

When you read the Instructions, you will see that Math, Science, Reading, Writing, and Social Studies *are not at all neglected* in *Grammar of Grace*. However, they are taught according to the Trivium method, which is far less intensive for children under the age of 10 than what you typically see today. This approach prepares the student to excel at these subjects in the middle and high school years.

How Do You Remember That?

When I watch a movie, have a conversation, read an article, attend a lecture, or anything else, afterward, I remember a lot of the details. I thought that was normal, but after enough people in my life exclaimed in wonderment to me, “How do you remember all of that?!” I started to consider what might be going on.

¹¹ James Bascom, “A Brief History of ‘Progressive’ Education”, *TFF Student Action*, July 2015.

¹² Proverbs 1:7

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This was around the same time when I was discovering that I'd been Trivium-trained in a few subjects, and when I put those two puzzle pieces together, what I realized was a revelation to me.

When I learn something that strikes me as important or profound, I memorize it. I don't choose to memorize it; unconsciously, without even trying, my mind decides, "That's important," and automatically takes the steps so that I will remember it.

The first time I consciously caught myself doing this, I was blown away. I was reading an article online, and there was an important statistic or quote, and so I automatically read it again. And again. And then I looked up from the screen and tried to remember it without looking. And then I realized: I was memorizing this! Without even trying; my mind unconsciously memorized something that was noteworthy. And then I realized that I do this *all the time*.

This is the critical thing that the Grammar stage of the Trivium accomplishes by its *method*. It trains children *how* to acquire knowledge, for their entire lives. It trains their brains.

Engraved in Stone

But the other critical thing that the Grammar portion of the Trivium accomplishes, of course, is achieved not by the method, but by the specific material the child learns.

From my own experience, I want to describe to you how the things a child memorizes when he is young affect him. First, the words that he commits to memory at an early age will come into his mind throughout that week. Then, they will impress themselves upon his thoughts, in the weeks and months to come. He will believe them, and his understanding of everything else he learns after that will be sifted through a sieve made up of (among other things) those things he has already memorized. A child's understanding builds, year after year, idea after idea, each newly-learned item being built upon the knowledge that has already been established in his mind. Therefore, the earlier he learns something, the more of an impact it has on his understanding of *everything else he learns afterward*.

Finally, in the years of his youth and young adulthood, those words and ideas will have (unconsciously) shaped the development of his mind, and they are also still available to spring to mind (consciously) at appropriate moments. He will consider the things he memorized in childhood to be as natural and as immutable as the Sun in the sky. It will come as a shock—a *shock!*—to him, when in conversation with others, he learns that they do not know one of these things he has memorized from childhood; they seem as true and commonplace to him as concepts like hunger and thirst.

The words and statements that a child memorizes at a young age are, in a sense, engraved in stone upon his mind. Those words and ideas become part of the *foundation* of the formation of his mind.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.¹³

Having memorized so many scriptures from an early age, and memorized each of them at least twice, so that they moved into long-term memory, was like a shield to me when I encountered the assaults on the faith that came in our secular age. The faith was not a fuzzy idea I remembered from childhood, but concrete, black-ink-on-white-paper Words of God, that kept me from veering too far astray, even during my darkest days.

Now, imagine if, during times of challenge, hardship, or confusion, the concrete words I had memorized from an early age that floated often to the surface of my mind were ... a list of Latin noun endings. Or what the classifications of living things are.

¹³ Proverbs 22:6

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Are those things useful? Sure. But they can be learned quite easily when a young person is old enough to understand them, especially if he has been classically trained. And they will not do anything to build character or protect him from all of the evil and temptations he will encounter in this life.

A Classical education trains a child's mind, yes, but it also trains his *character*. A Christian education should train a child's mind; but it *must* train his character. It *must* aim to transform that child's heart; because God has revealed to us that that child has a terrible Problem: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" ¹⁴ Christian education must view addressing this problem as a higher priority than any other aspiration.

An Idol

In the early years of my motherhood, from time to time, a question would prick my conscience: If you could only teach your child to be Godly, or to be literate, which would you choose?

I love learning. I loved everything I learned in school, and I still love to learn about science, history, literature, languages, and anything else that crosses my path. When I considered this question, for several years, I reflected that being Godly should include being literate so we could read and understand God's Word, and happily concluded that a choice need not be made. But do you see what I did there? The thought of my child being truly Godly and yet uneducated in the eyes of the world was so repulsive to me that I could not bear it. I knew better than to choose literacy over Godliness, so I avoided that uncomfortable conclusion by refusing to choose.

But the Lord continued to soften my heart, until I realized this mistake, cast it aside, and now cry with conviction, *If I could only teach my children to be Godly or literate, I would wholeheartedly choose Godliness!*

Literacy has become an idol in our time, and many Christian parents believe we must follow the world's education methods, because giving our children the "right" education is considered more important than anything else ... even Godly character.

Isn't it ironic that, in a century of worshipping the idol of literacy, the literacy level in our country plummeted? ¹⁵ But if we let go of the world's idol, we find that not only have we chosen the better thing, but we will give our children a better education, after all. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." ¹⁶

Rather than Literacy, should not a Christian consider the primary goal of education to be Biblical Literacy?

Increase

I keep returning to the metaphor of a garden for a child's mind. For one, when we nurture the soil of a garden, it will grow all sorts of wonderful things itself. We can help the garden to be beautiful and productive, but the garden *itself* will grow and yield fruit long after we have worked to cultivate it. The analogy there is obvious.

But even better is this thought: While I am the one who prepares the soil in my garden, plants a seed, waters it, and cares for it, it is God who provided the seed, and it is He alone who can cause that seed to flourish and produce fruit. I must do many things to participate in this process, but I rely on God to bring the increase. So it is with my children's minds; I must plant the seed of the gospel and do many things to

¹⁴ Jeremiah 17:9

¹⁵ John Taylor Gatto, *The Underground History of American Education: An Intimate Investigation Into the Prison of Modern Schooling, Volume I*, revised edition (Oxford, NY and San Jose, CA: Oxford Scholars Press, 2017) pages 119-123.

¹⁶ Matthew 6:33

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encourage that seed to grow, but ultimately it is God who provided that seed, and only He can cause it to take root and thrive.

Remember the Parable of the Sower?¹⁷ I want my children to be the good soil. I cry with John that, “/ *have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*”¹⁸

I want my children to be well-educated, for the glory of God. I want them to do well in whatever earthly endeavors they pursue. I want them to be literate. But more than that, I want them to understand: “Let us hear the end of all: fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”¹⁹

That understanding is the gift of God. God alone can grant them His free gift of grace: “[I]t is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast himself.”²⁰ But, in His perfect wisdom, He has also required me to teach these things diligently to my children.²¹

So, with these things in mind, I wrote *Grammar of Grace* for my children. But perhaps this is just the sort of thing you wanted for your children, too.

May *Grammar of Grace* be a tool—in your family and mine—to nurture the soil of our children’s minds, to help us plant the seeds, water, and tend them ... and may we be ever mindful that “neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.”²²

¹⁷ Matthew 13:3-23

¹⁸ 3 John 4

¹⁹ Ecclesiastes 12:13

²⁰ Romans 6:23

²¹ Deuteronomy 6:7

²² 1 Corinthians 3:7

INSTRUCTIONS

The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord,
and the knowledge of holy things, is understanding.

Proverbs 9:10

If Classical education is new to you, you're probably wondering how a curriculum like this works. It's amazingly simple! The *Grammar of Grace* core subjects should only take about an hour every day—30 minutes for memory lessons, 15 for Bible reading, and 15 for copywork. Add in 30 minutes for phonics and about an hour and a half for reading aloud, and you're completely done in 3 hours every day—and most of it was sitting on the couch reading together. Yet you will be amazed at how much your children learn in that short amount of time! Before I get into the specifics, though, let's review what the Trivium is, and where *Grammar of Grace* fits into it.

Early in the Christian Era, Boethius and others codified the Classical education into seven subjects, divided into the Trivium, which was the basic education, and the Quadrivium, which was the higher education. These seven subjects were known as the Liberal Arts; they are:

Trivium:

- Grammar
- Logic
- Rhetoric

Quadrivium (university-level):

- Arithmetic
- Geometry
- Harmonics, or Music
- Astronomy

The Trivium was used to educate young people in the Christian West from about AD 500 to 1900. Before that, the Greeks and Romans followed the same basic method, even if they hadn't named it and set it down as a formal curriculum, and many authors will credit these ancient pagans as the source of Classical Education. However, centuries before that, there were Three Things Solomon told young people they should get at all cost in the book of Proverbs, which bear a striking resemblance to the Three Ways:¹

- **Knowledge:** The possession of information, like Grammar.
- **Understanding:** The ability to think about things rationally, like Logic.
- **Wisdom:** The ability to use the knowledge and understanding one possesses to discern wisely, and then to communicate that discernment effectively. The communication element of Wisdom is taught in Rhetoric.²

The Knowledge Stage (Grammar)

Grammar of Grace is designed for the Knowledge, or Grammar, stage. Beginning around age 5, children should be taught to *memorize* all sorts of wonderful things, called *lessons*, and to recite them, *recitation*; they should also be read to, and taught to read (phonics) and write (copywork).

The heart of this curriculum is over five hundred *lessons*, in seven subjects, designed to form good character, stimulate a love for beauty and excellence, and (of course) provide basic knowledge, creating a

¹ Trivium is Latin for "three ways".

² Harvey and Laurie Bluedorn, *Teaching the Trivium* (Muscatine, IA: Harvey and Laurie Bluedorn, 2001), pp. 87-88.

INSTRUCTIONS

OVERALL PLAN & MEMORY LESSONS OVERVIEW

foundation in the child's mind. The fear of the Lord must be the foundation of it all (see Proverbs 9:10, above). "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things"³

Note

Let me assure you that *Grammar of Grace* is not a magic bullet. There is a temptation we Christian parents often face, to imagine that if we follow a very good formula, we have a guarantee that our children will turn out wonderfully. Using this curriculum does not guarantee that you will pass on the faith to your children and teach them to do the same, throughout your generations. It is simply a tool that, I hope, you will find helpful in that endeavor.

Overall Plan

This is a four-year cycle; your child is to go through it *twice*. A child should begin at age 5, go through all four years, and then at age 9 begin his second time through. At age 10, Formal Grammar studies should be added to *Grammar of Grace* (see "Later Knowledge", on page 29).

The key to long-term memory work is bringing these things back to recollection, years after they were first learned. The second time through is the difference between the children having fuzzy recollections of this material throughout their lives and their having these things firmly memorized. Likewise for reading the Bible—many difficult parts make more sense on the second reading, because we have a better understanding of the rest of Bible, from our first time through. As Clement said (we learn in Cycle 2), "Explain the Scriptures by the Scriptures."

You'll find that it becomes a lifestyle, to spend a half hour each morning going over memory work together with the children, and fifteen minutes reading the Bible. The teacher may find it profitable, too.

Memory Lessons Overview

Each week, you will help your children memorize that week's lessons, found in the Weekly Lessons section. On New Lessons Day,⁴ introduce the new memory work by drilling the lessons in the first six subjects, seven times each, and then read (or sing) that week's English selection once. On the other days of the week, you will review these lessons plus the prior six weeks' material, every day. This takes about thirty minutes.

On New Lessons Day, you will notice that each lesson begins with a prompt which you should say; the children should answer you, saying the lesson as a response to the prompt. Use the same prompt every time. The children will copy you. Remember, the reason they quote scenes from their favorite movies or audios so perfectly is because they copy what they hear; put this into practice with their lessons. Say the lessons (beginning with the prompts) exactly as you would like the children to say them, over and over and over again. Keep the children interested. Use hand motions. Make them stand up for some things; let them sit down for others. Keep it peppy! Smile, act excited, and *keep moving* through the material.

On a regular day, when you're reciting seven weeks' material, go through it all in the same basic way: use the same prompts every time, move quickly, and Mama should usually say both the prompts *and* the lessons. Let the children color or trace maps while they recite—but only if they do a good job reciting! Teach them to smile, speak up, and generally exhibit a positive attitude while they do their work. If you have to miss homeschool for one day (or more) because your child's character needs work, that is the more important thing.

³ Romans 11:36

⁴ For the purposes of *Grammar of Grace*, your homeschool week can begin on any day of the week. For example, in our home, New Lessons Day is on Tuesday.

BIBLE

Bible Lesson

What does Matthew 10:28 say?
And fear ye not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
Matthew 10:28

Bible Passage

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, neither anything that is thy neighbor's.

Exodus 20:1-17

Scripture Catechism

15. What is the Bible able to do for us?

[T]he holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation ...
2 Timothy 3:15

16. What should the Bible be to us?

[A] lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.
Psalm 119:105

LANGUAGES

Greek

Παντα δι αὐτου ἐγενετο, και χωρις αὐτου ἐγενετο οὐδε ἐν ὁ γεγονεν.
ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ 1^{ος}3

All things were made by it, and without it was made nothing that was made.
John 1:3

OTHER SUBJECTS

- **Bible Reading Plan:** Cycle 1, Week 12
- **Phonics:** Until mastered, then reading
- **Copywork:** Copywork Book, other excellent texts
- **Mother's Read-Aloud:** 1-2 hours, choice readings
- **Arithmetic & Science:** Oral discussion or exercises
- **Music & Art**

HISTORY

Historic Quotation

What did Mordecai say to Esther when all of the Jews were to be killed?
[I]f thou holdest thy peace at this time, comfort and deliverance shall appear to the Jews out of another place, but thou and thy father's house shall perish: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time? —Mordecai

Timeline

Dido Founds Carthage (3121 AM)
Homer & Hesiod (3134 AM)
Cheops Builds the Great Pyramid
(r. 3166-3179 AM, a.k.a. Khufu)
Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, & Jonah
(3196 AM, all prophesying)

ENGLISH

Poetry

FAITHFUL SINGS AFTER RIDDING HIMSELF OF SHAME

John Bunyan (1628-1688)

The tryals that those men do meet withal,
That are obedient to the Heavenly call,
Are manifold, and suited to the flesh,
And come, and come, and come again afresh;
That now, or some time else, we by them may
Be taken, overcome, and cast away.
Oh, let the Pilgrims, let the Pilgrims then,
Be vigilant, and quit themselves like men.

BIBLE

Bible Lesson

What does Psalm 5:12 say?

For thou Lord, wilt bless the righteous, and with favor wilt compass him, as with a shield. **Psalm 5:12**

What does John 6:37 say?

All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me: and him that cometh to me, I cast not away. **John 6:37**

Bible Passage

THE CREATION

Then God said, Let the earth bud forth the bud of the herb, that seedeth seed, the fruitful tree, which beareth fruit according to his kind, which hath his seed in itself upon the earth: and it was so.

Scripture Catechism

49. How does Jesus Christ save?

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:3

50. Is Jesus Christ the only Mediator between God and men?

[O]ne Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 2:5

LANGUAGES

Latin

Nōn ex operibus iūstītie, quae fēcimus nōs, sed secundum suam misericordiam salvōs nōs fēcit, per lavācrum regenerātiōnis, et renovātiōnis Spīritus Sāctī.

Titum 3:5

Not by the works of righteousness, which we had done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of the new birth, and the renewing of the holy Ghost...

Titus 3:5

OTHER SUBJECTS

- **Bible Reading Plan:** Cycle 2, Week 6
- **Phonics:** Until mastered, then reading
- **Copywork:** Copywork Book, other excellent texts
- **Mother's Read-Aloud:** 1-2 hours, choice readings
- **Arithmetic & Science:** Oral discussion or exercises
- **Music & Art**

HISTORY

Historic Quotation

What did Patrick say about all he had become?

I am Patrick, yes a sinner and indeed untaught; yet I am established here in Ireland where I profess myself bishop. I am certain in my heart that 'all that I am,' I have received from God. So I live among barbarous tribes, a stranger and exile for the love of God. —Patrick of Ireland

Timeline

Heian Period in Japan (794-1185)
 Charlemagne Crowned Holy Roman Emperor
 (crowned 800, Charlemagne 768-814)
 Cyril & Methodius Bring Gospel to Slavs
 (862; Cyril 826-869; Methodius 815-885)
 Alfred the Great (r. 871-899)

ENGLISH

Hymn

DOXOLOGY

Thomas Ken (1637-1711)

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
 Praise Him, all creatures here below;
 Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

OVERVIEW FOR ALL LANGUAGES

Approach

As previously mentioned, the Foreign Language subject of *Grammar of Grace* is intended to let children hear and speak Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Dutch as a natural part of their childhoods. We are giving them an ear for these languages before they begin to study them formally ... just as they are familiar with English before they begin to study English Grammar. To be clear—this curriculum does not formally teach these languages, but merely provides an *introduction* to them.

The Foreign Languages subject of *Grammar of Grace* is modeled on the way children naturally learn their native tongues. When a baby is born, we do not begin by teaching him, “Mama; ‘mama’ means your mother. Milk; ‘milk’ is the food you are drinking. House; ‘house’ is the place where you live.” The idea is ludicrous! We simply speak to the children in English, and based on context clues and repetition, the child learns the language.

In the same way, it is natural for a child to hear and speak a foreign language, even if he does not understand the meanings of the words, yet. Many of us remember Ramona Quimby singing about “the dawnzer lee light” (“the dawn’s early light”), and can think of plenty of examples of that sort of thing, from our own lives! When we are children, we learn the sounds of words, the sounds of our language, *before* we learn the meanings. In God’s design, this is what is natural for children.

Children have an amazing aptitude for learning languages. I think of it as building a train track. When the Transcontinental Railroad was built, it required clearing trees and stumps, blasting through mountains, and bridging across rivers to lay the tracks; it took years to complete the railway. But five days after the Transcontinental Railroad was completed, the first trainload of passengers made the full trip from New York to San Francisco in only 83 hours.

Because children pick up languages so easily, when we let them hear and speak a little bit of these languages during their early years, it is as if we are able very easily to lay train tracks in their minds for that language, which the train of that language can roll along, later. The goal of the Foreign Languages subject of *Grammar of Grace* is to lay down some Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Dutch tracks in the children’s minds, when it is easy, natural, and fun for them.

Because we are taking this organic approach, we will not be memorizing vocabulary lists; in fact, we will not focus on learning what the words mean, at all. As you progress, you may find that the children (and you!) begin to figure out what some of the words mean. If that happens, that’s wonderful! If it interests you, you can even look them up in your interlinear Bible or *Strong’s Concordance*. But memorizing what each word means is *not* what we’re trying to accomplish, in *Grammar of Grace*.

This approach is different from the experience most of us had with learning foreign languages in school. When children hear language spoken, they innately pick up the words, the sound, the rhythm, the syntax—in a sense, the language as a *whole*. They won’t understand it all, as I said, but they *will* understand a lot of things that are intrinsic to the language, and that’s the “train track” we’re hoping to lay in their minds.

COPYWORK

1 Thessalonians 5:25

Brethren, pray for us.

Proverbs 14:34

Justice exalteth a nation,
but sin is a shame to the people.

Romans 10:4

For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness unto
everyone that believeth.

Romans 14:23

... whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.

Romans 12:21

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with
goodness.

Proverbs 21:31

The horse is prepared against the day of battle:
but salvation is of the Lord.

Job 19:25

For I am sure that my Redeemer liveth ...

Psalms 118:14

The Lord is my strength and song:
for he hath been my deliverance.

Proverbs 26:11

As a dog turneth again to his own vomit,
so a fool turneth to his foolishness.

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice.

Revelation 21:5

And he that sat upon the throne, said, Behold, I make
all things new ...

Proverbs 21:2

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes:
but the Lord pondereth the hearts.

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your care on him: for he careth for you.

Proverbs 21:3

To do justice and judgment
is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man bringeth a snare:
but he that trusteth in the Lord shall be exalted.

Matthew 10:30

Yea, and all the hairs of your head are numbered.

Proverbs 21:4

A haughty look, and a proud heart
which is the light of the wicked, is sin.

Psalms 118:24

This is the day, which the Lord hath made:
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

James 2:17

Even so the faith, if it have no works, is dead in itself.

Psalms 41:13

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel
world without end. So be it, even so be it.

Proverbs 16:31

Age is a crown of glory,
when it is found in the way of righteousness.

1 Corinthians 15:33

Be not deceived: evil speakings corrupt good manners.

Proverbs 21:23

He that keepeth his mouth and his tongue,
keepeth his soul from afflictions.

Proverbs 20:11

A child also is known by his doings,
whether his word be pure and right.

BIBLE READING PLAN

4 Cycles

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge:
but fools despise wisdom and instruction.*

Proverbs 1:7

If you only read one thing, you must read the Bible to your children.

This Book teaches the fear and knowledge of God, without which the child cannot *begin* to possess knowledge or wisdom. (See Proverbs 1:7, above.) It also teaches literature, history, mathematics, science, music, art, storytelling, character, beauty, and good sense. Children cannot understand who they are and what their place is in this world, until they understand Who made them, and Why He made them.

The *Grammar of Grace* daily Bible reading assignments are short: about fifteen minutes a day, four days a week, and only twenty-four weeks of the year. This will see you and your children read every word of the Holy Writ. Twice.

I usually read each day's passage without much commentary or discussion, because I don't want it to take much longer than fifteen minutes. (Ridiculous, of course; but temptations to prioritize other things will arise, and keeping it short helps me get our reading in, every day.) In spite of the lack of explanation, year after year, just as they first understood no English and are now fluent in it, they come to understand God's Word. My old pastor, Adrian Rogers, used to instruct new believers to read the entire Bible, saying, "Don't worry about the parts you don't understand; just obey the parts you *do* understand, and before long you'll be understanding the parts you didn't understand. Understand?" Over the years, I have found this saying to be true.

In Cycle 1, we read the history before the Kingdom Period in Israel, and the Law; in Cycle 2, the history from the Kingdom Period til the return from Babylon, and the Wisdom books. In Cycle 3, we read the Prophets, and in Cycle 4, the New Testament.

The book of Psalms is a songbook, and it makes more sense to treat it like a hymnal than a book of prose. Therefore, the psalms are spread throughout the curriculum, to be enjoyed every week. Likewise for the Proverbs, the book God gave us for teaching young people, of riddles and the sayings of the wise. We read about 10 verses from Proverbs, each week. All of the other books of the Bible are read straight through, from Genesis to Revelation.

Let me encourage you in this. When you decide to read the Bible to your children, you will encounter spiritual warfare! Some of it will be subtle, like feeling very tired, every day, right when it's time to read the Bible; some more obvious, like the dog creating a big mess during this time. You will surely fall behind at some point, or struggle when reading difficult passages in the genealogies, prophecy, or ceremonial law. Persevere! "For the word of God is lively (living!), and mighty in operation (powerful!)" ¹

Again, I say, persevere!

¹ Hebrews 4:12

BIBLE READING PLAN

Cycle 4

Week 1

Matthew 1 - 4; Psalm 108
Matthew 5 - 7
Matthew 8 - 10
Matthew 11 - 12; Proverbs 24:19-27

Week 2

Matthew 13; Psalm 109
Matthew 14 - 16
Matthew 17 - 19; Proverbs 24:28-34
Matthew 20 - 22

Week 3

Matthew 23 - 24; Psalm 110
Matthew 25 - 26
Matthew 27 - 28; Psalm 111; Proverbs 25:1-10
Mark 1 - 3

Week 4

Mark 4 - 5; Psalm 112
Mark 6 - 7
Mark 8 - 9; Psalm 113
Mark 10 - 12; Proverbs 25:11-19

Week 5

Mark 13 - 14
Mark 15 - 16; Psalm 114; Proverbs 25:20-28
Luke 1; Psalm 115
Luke 2 - 3

Week 6

Luke 4 - 5; Psalm 116
Luke 6 - 7
Luke 8 - 9
Luke 10 - 11; Proverbs 26:1-10

Week 7

Luke 12 - 13; Psalm 117
Luke 14 - 16
Luke 17 - 19
Luke 20 - 21; Proverbs 26:11-19

Week 8

Luke 22; Psalm 118
Luke 23 - 24
Psalm 119
John 1 - 2; Proverbs 26:20-28

Week 9

John 3 - 4; Psalm 120
John 5 - 6
John 7 - 8
John 9 - 10; Psalm 121; Proverbs 27:1-9

Week 10

John 11 - 12
John 13 - 15; Psalm 122
John 16 - 18; Psalm 123
John 19 - 21; Proverbs 27:10-18

Week 11

Acts 1 - 3; Psalm 124
Acts 4 - 6; Psalm 125
Acts 7 - 8
Acts 9 - 10; Proverbs 27:19-27

Week 12

Acts 11 - 13; Psalm 126
Acts 14 - 16; Psalm 127
Acts 17 - 19; Psalm 128
Acts 20 - 22; Proverbs 28:1-9

Week 13

Acts 23 - 25; Psalm 129
Acts 26 - 28
Romans 1 - 2; Psalm 130
Romans 3 - 5; Proverbs 28:10-19

Week 14

Romans 6 - 8; Psalm 131
Romans 9 - 10; Psalm 132
Romans 11 - 13; Psalm 133
Romans 14 - 16; Psalm 134; Proverbs 28:20-28

Week 15

1 Corinthians 1 - 3; Psalm 135
1 Corinthians 4 - 6; Psalm 136
1 Corinthians 7 - 9
1 Corinthians 10 - 11; Proverbs 29:1-9

Week 16

1 Corinthians 12 - 14
1 Corinthians 15 - 16
2 Corinthians 1 - 3; Psalm 137
2 Corinthians 4 - 6; Psalm 138; Proverbs 29:10-18

Week 17

2 Corinthians 7 - 10
2 Corinthians 11 - 13
Galatians 1 - 3
Galatians 4 - 6; Proverbs 29:19-27

Week 18

Ephesians 1 - 3
Ephesians 4 - 6
Philippians 1 - 4
Colossians 1 - 4; Proverbs 30:1-6

Week 19

1 Thessalonians 1 - 5
Psalms 139 & 140
2 Thessalonians 1 - 3
Psalms 141 & 142; Proverbs 30:7-14

Week 20

1 Timothy 1 - 6
2 Timothy 1 - 4
Titus 1 - 3; Psalm 143; Proverbs 30:15-23
Philemon; Psalms 144 & 145

Week 21

Hebrews 1 - 4
Hebrews 5 - 7
Hebrews 8 - 9
Hebrews 10 - 11; Proverbs 30:24-33

Week 22

Hebrews 12 - 13; Psalm 146; Proverbs 31:1-9
James 1 - 5
1 Peter 1 - 5
2 Peter 1 - 3; Psalm 147

Week 23

1 John 1 - 5
2 John; 3 John; Psalm 148
Jude; Psalm 149
Revelation 1 - 3; Proverbs 31:10-20

Week 24

Revelation 4 - 8; Psalm 150
Revelation 9 - 13
Revelation 14 - 18
Revelation 19 - 22; Proverbs 31:21-31



Rethinking the Content and the Method of Modern Education.

Grammar of Grace is a breath of fresh air in the education world. It rejects the content and method of modern education, and gives an ancient approach new life in a curriculum fit for Christian homeschooling parents of the 21st century.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt rehearse them continually unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou tarriest in thine house, and as thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7

There is a perfect harmony between this biblical command and the classical Trivium. The Trivium was the education method used by the Reformers and early Americans—when Christians made biblical literacy a chief aim for all people. This focus led to an explosion of literacy, learning, and the spread of the Gospel, unparalleled in world history.

Thus saith the Lord, Stand in the ways and behold, and ask for the old way, which is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. Jeremiah 6:16

Grammar of Grace seeks to return to that high point in Christian education, and offers a practical curriculum for homeschooling parents to that end. Its foundation is unapologetically the Word of God, along with History, Literature, and an introduction to Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

Daily memory work and Bible reading are the core of this old-fashioned curriculum, and siblings study the same topics together in the style of a one-room schoolhouse. Children will thrive in a routine free from worksheets and textbooks, and parents will be absolutely amazed by what their children can learn—and enjoy learning!

Grammar of Grace is truly a revolution in elementary education.

