

## Part One

### *What Is a Child?*



*I saw the angel in the marble and I carved until I set him free*

Michelangelo

Look at the images of the bucket and the gift. Can you tell what they have in common? I have chosen to begin with the insight that answers the question, *What is a Child?* because I believe it is the most important insight you could possibly understand as you raise your children.

If you are a homeschooling parent, your idea of what a child is will determine which one of two different paths you will take to accomplish this task. Whichever path you take will most likely determine the path your child takes in his or her life.

Until you grasp the important difference as illustrated in the above two images you will default to what most adults believe about education.

Let's look first at the path illustrated by the empty bucket. I call this *the path well traveled* because, for generations now, educators have used the phrase "empty vessel" (or, sometimes, "blank slate"), to describe children. It follows, then, if a child is truly an empty vessel, the duty of adults is to fill up that vessel as the child grows up.

How is this “filling” accomplished?

### *Filling the Bucket: The Scope and Sequence*

In order to understand the typical path to adulthood, it is critical to understand the concept of *Scope and Sequence* because virtually all education is driven by that concept. Just knowing what *Scope and Sequence* is will help you decide if you want to raise your children according to that path (i.e. filling your empty child’s bucket) or if you want to take another path.

**The Scope.** Educators have spent generations determining how much information a person must learn in order for him to be considered educated enough to be done with school (graduate). This is commonly called the *Scope* and it means *the totality of all the information your child should be taught*.

**The Sequence.** The *Sequence* is *how that huge amount (Scope) of information will be broken down into small enough parts for the child to always remember it (be educated)*. This is accomplished by—

- Placing all information into distinct subject categories (Math, Science, Language Arts, etc.).
- Beginning each subject with its simplest concepts and moving through grade levels to its ever more complex concepts.
- Teaching small enough portions for the average child to remember what is being taught. This latter is accomplished with chapters, 45-90 minute classes, and tests.

Educators say it will take the average child 12 years to work through the entire Scope of information during which time he will have learned approximately 11,000 concepts. If the sequencing is done properly, and if the student can continually demonstrate proficiency, each concept will build on the previous ones and will prepare the student for each successive concept.

If you are the parent of a public schooled student, this is how your child is being educated. I believe it is the responsibility of every parent of a public schooled child to look closely at the *Scope and Sequence* being followed by your child’s public school.

Ask yourself the all-important question, “Public schools have 12 years to educate my child. How are they doing so far with their other students?”

If you are not asking this question, you are not being a responsible parent. If you *do* ask this question and your answer turns out to be “not a very good job,” you must do something about it, at least for the sake of your own children. If your conclusion is negative, you will be agreeing with the following statement by the former Superintendent of Schools for Australia, Isabella Adams, who said,

*I am convinced that school no longer prepares students for the real world. The world has changed but our schools have not.*

Do you believe schools know what they are doing as they fill empty vessels with graduation-ready information which is meant to prepare them to take a job or move on to college so they can take a “better” job?

A few days ago, I received the following email from the mother of a public schooled child:

*Last week, my daughter’s school (which is considered one of the best schools in the nation), held meetings with the parents and told us that the way they teach may be hurting the future of our children. They are asking for parent input on re-shaping the education system. They told us they are failing our kids. They told us that they can’t help this generation....*

I was amazed at the honesty of this school!

In my opinion, the real reason institutional schools are failing students is that they cannot admit to the fact that their worldview—that a child is an empty vessel—is simply wrong!

The worldview I wish to share now is so different, should you grasp it—and should you believe it—your entire homeschooling journey will be radically different. So different in fact, it will have little resemblance to what a child will encounter in the world of the public school’s *Scope and Sequence*.

My premise is that a child is neither an empty vessel nor a blank slate. To state what I consider to be the most important insight in this book:

**Each child is a unique creation of God, and God has placed within that child very specific giftings and callings. God, then, sends the child into our time-space world to be raised by the adults He has chosen, and who are responsible for discovering what God has put within the child. Having begun to discover the child’s giftings and callings, parents must then provide the child with the tools and the time to become proficient in those giftings and callings. The purpose is to allow the child to grow up to express what God has put within him or her. This brings glory to God.**

Again, if you understand—and believe—what I have just said, your entire homeschooling journey will be unique! And, unique for each child you homeschool.

To accept this premise raises some important issues:

Although most Christian parents say their child is a gift *from* God (to them), parents rarely understand that the child *has been gifted* and that these giftings are not for the child's benefit, but for the benefit of the rest of the world. As the child expresses his or her giftings and callings, others are blessed, the child is blessed, and the Father is blessed.

Parents rarely realize that *they have been specifically chosen* by God because they are uniquely qualified to raise and educate the children they are given, and that *they are uniquely capable* of recognizing and opening the gifts contained within each child.

The title of my previous book, [\*I Saw the Angel in the Marble\*](#), was taken from a story in the life of the artist and sculptor, Michelangelo, whose *Angel* is one of history's greatest artistic masterpieces. When asked how he was able to create such a beautiful creature out of an ordinary block of marble, Michelangelo responded,

*I saw the angel in the marble and I carved until I set him free.*

Michelangelo's response expresses what I am trying to say: Though each of your children may seem quite ordinary, within each child is something you must "see" and, having seen, you must "carve" until you set it free. As I understood this more and more during the years my sons were at home, I kept asking Him what He wanted me to do with the children He had given me to raise.

One day, God appeared to a childless woman and told her she would conceive and give birth to a son. The Lord also told her that her son would have a specific purpose for his existence.

When the woman relayed this news to her husband, he asked that the Lord reappear to them both. When God did this, the man asked God two questions.

It has been my passion for years to get every parent to ask these same two questions.

The son's name was Samson and it was his life-mission to deliver Israel from their mortal enemy, the Philistines.

The two questions Samson's father asked God (even before his son was conceived), can be found in Judges 13:12. The English translation doesn't provide the same emphasis found in the original Hebrew. Here is my interpretation of the father's two questions found in this verse:

First question:

***What will be the purpose of this child's existence?***

Second question:

***What is our responsibility in raising this child so he will fulfill that purpose?***

Can you accept the following ideas:

- God gives us each child He intends us to raise.
- We are to raise each child for a purpose which only God knows.
- If He knows whom each child is to become, doesn't it make sense to ask God the same two questions Samson's father asked?

Please don't be like most parents who, mainly from ignorance, fail to ask God these two questions. God is more interested in letting you in on why He created a child than you could possibly imagine!

Can we raise each child to go out into the world equipped to fulfill his or her individual life purpose? We can if we know what God knows. We can if we believe He will tell us. He will tell us if we ask.

If you have not yet asked, now might be a good time.

You will see just how specific we can get in asking Him about the details of our child's upbringing when you come across the story of my struggle with my oldest son's math education in a later chapter.

As we raise the children He has given us to raise, we must never forget that they are, and will always remain, His children. They will ultimately move from our parenting to His parenting. Isn't that what we really want, anyway?

"Our" children already have a Father who intends to take them back one day and Who expects parents to train the children to look to Him as Father the rest of their lives. Of course, we hope to always have a relationship with the children who grow up in our homes. But, they are not ours; they are His. It may seem silly to say it, but whenever I spoke to my children about their Dad, they knew I was referring to myself. And, whenever I spoke to my children about their Father, they knew I was referring to God.

### *The Other Path: Opening the Gift*

Modern, secular educators agree that today's public education is failing its students. One of the most popular reasons cited for this failure is that schools do not pay attention to the fact that every child is unique and, therefore, each child's education should be equally unique.

Considering the high cost of educating a child in an institutional school (around \$10,000 per year per student), providing each child with a uniquely individualized education is not possible. On the contrary, schools must spend their limited resources as efficiently as possible which, by the very definition of efficiency, means standardizing everything that can possibly be standardized. With few exceptions, all students of the same age learn the same information at the same time in the same way. Even the size of desks are pretty much standard. Children are considered generic,

empty vessels, and one size education *must* fit all or the entire process collapses under the weight of its cost.

In spite of the demand for efficiency in public education, I suggest that modern educators are on to something of great importance, and this is illustrated by the second image, above: the unopened gift.

My middle son once told me of a quote he had seen as a young person. It said,

*If I will spend a few years doing what others will not do, then I can spend the rest of my life doing what others cannot do.*

We understood that, in essence, every child is a genius—not compared to other children—but in his or her own way. Einstein said it best:

*Everybody is a genius; but, if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.*

It might be fun (and even helpful) to look at some homeschooled young people whose parents have decided to raise their children intentionally in the manner I have been, and will be, suggesting. If you are reading this as an e-book, click on each name and see what happens to kids whose parents have begun opening *the gift that they are* (otherwise, simply Google each name):

- [Sho Yono](#). At age 21, Sho became the youngest person to graduate with an MD from the University of Chicago.
- [Christopher Paolini](#). At age 19, Christopher became the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Eragon* and *The Inheritance Series*.
- [James Williams](#). At age 14, James won the National Geography Bee.
- [Calvin McCarter](#). At age 10, Calvin became the youngest person ever to win the National Geography Bee. (What was Calvin doing the first 10 years of his life?)
- [Jackie Evancho](#). At age 10, Jackie took the world by storm when she appeared on *America's Got Talent*. She has now sung before millions, including world leaders.
- [Akiane Kramarik](#). By age 10, Akiane was being called one of the world's greatest artists whose paintings are so valuable she is considered "the most successful living visual art child prodigy in the world".

We marvel at these children because each one has received international notoriety. We assume they have some special ability our children don't possess. On the contrary, what is truly special about each one is that their parents have allowed their unique genius to flourish unimpeded by the irrelevant demands of what passes for an education.

With this in mind, we gave our sons the time and the resources to become proficient (and now they are becoming world-class), in what they love. Requiring them to spend those 12 years

becoming educated (according to the world's standards) would have robbed them of both the time and the resources to fulfill what God had placed in them to do with their lives. I only wish we had known this when our daughter was growing up. Fortunately, her Father took over and raised her to be the amazing person she is today.

If you are already educating your child at home, is the Public School-style *Scope and Sequence* you are using driving your child's education, or is the child's individuality driving his education?

### *Train Up a Child...*

In the earliest years of homeschooling, a particular scripture was often quoted by parents and conference speakers:

*Train up a child in the way he should go and, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.* (Proverbs 22:6)

Whenever this scripture was quoted, the speaker made sure everyone understood that the literal meaning of *the way he should go* was actually *according to his way*. Another way to restate this is *on the path he should be traveling*. The emphasis is that each child has a specific way (path, track) he or she is supposed to be traveling. Institutional, *Scope and Sequence*-driven schooling sees children, not as individuals with an individual path, but as a group, all of whom have only one common path, and that path leads to employability.

With all the emphasis on *according to his way*, no one was explaining what it meant ***to train up a child***, even though scripture emphatically tells us this is what we parents are supposed to be doing.

Simply stated, *train up* is one Hebrew word that means *to narrow*. In Proverbs 22:6, this word is translated *train up*, while, in every other instance where it is used in scripture, it is translated *to dedicate (to a specific purpose)*. While Solomon's Temple was being built, it could have ended up having any number of uses. However, when Solomon *dedicated* the building, its purpose became narrowed to that which it was intended all along: God's Temple.

Unique? Narrowed? Dedicated? A very specific road (or track) each is to travel? No generic children being put on a common path leading to employability?

When we narrow the focus of each child's education to fit the path he was created to take—when we dedicate him (and therefore, his educational pursuits), so he will become, not employable, but prepared to be who he was created to be—we are stating that we refuse to derail the train(ing up) of our child with educational irrelevancies that waste precious time needed for the acquisition of expert performance.

Why is it so necessary for each of our children to acquire the ability to “expertly perform” in the areas of their giftings and how, as homeschooling parents, are we keeping them from acquiring this ability?

Along with these questions, a couple of relevant questions to ask now are—

*If I accept this insight, will my child be able to find employment?*

and,

*How will I know that I have covered it all?*

In the same chapter of Proverbs that speaks of training up a child, God makes an amazing promise that not only will help us answer these questions, but also may help change how we homeschool. Here is God’s promise:

*Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men. (Proverb 22:29)*

How much more simply could a promise be stated!

Each of my children gravitated toward certain areas of interest. As I saw this, I began to give that child the time and the resources to learn more. Of course, this meant taking time away from what I call *the irrelevancies of an institutional education*. I admit that sometimes the child had moved on to other interests even before I had obtained the resources I thought he needed. At other times, the interest he showed in a certain pursuit merely took him toward an even more long-lasting area of interest.

As we raise our children, we should ever be pursuing the discovery of each child’s giftings and callings.

Most homeschooling parents will give more thought to what they will use to teach a subject than they will give to why they are teaching that subject in the first place, or to why they are teaching it *now*. They just assume that what was done to them in school is what should be done to their own children. When this goes on for years, children eventually decide that an adult will tell them what is important in life and what they should be learning. Finally, children will come to believe that what they have a heart to do is not important and they will eventually disconnect from their own heart’s purpose. When I ask a public schooled teenager, “What do you want to do with your life?” nearly all answer, “I don’t know.” Sadly, they are telling the truth.

*Isn’t This Simply Narcissism?*

I just read an article suggesting that following one's dreams is anathema to following God. In other words, Jesus' comment to "deny yourself," meant that whatever you have in your heart to do is probably worldly and should therefore be rejected as self-centered, not Kingdom-centered.

Why should "following your dreams" and "following Christ" be mutually exclusive?

When you meet an individual who is actually doing what God has gifted him to do, you meet someone who is truly Kingdom-centered.

There are two kinds of miserable people in the world: Those who spend their lives trying to increase their personal, worldly happiness and those who have never discovered the gift God has made them be to a world desperately needing to see someone experiencing the joy of the Lord.

Let us help our children discover the giftings and talents God has put within each of them. Let us respect those giftings and talents. Let us give our kids the time and the resources to become proficient in what God has put within each of them. Let us send our children into a world that needs to see someone expressing God's giftings and talents and expressing "the joy of the Lord as their strength."

What could be more appealing to a world that has found no real joy in living self-centered lives?

I leave this section with a quote by Howard Thurman:

*Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.*

### *A Final Word*

Is there a way to see within your child's heart to understand what God has put "in there"? Yes, there *is* a way; one I learned from a homeschooling family years ago and which I have demonstrated all over the world. It is called *The Dream Poster* and, even though I explained it thoroughly in my first book, I will include it in a later chapter for your benefit.

Part Three is the heart of this book. It is a long section demonstrating how you can create your family's personal *Scope and Sequence*, one that will open *the gift that is your child*. However, before I go there, I want to share what a true education is in the following section, *The 6-C's of a True Education*.

## For Further Consideration

- The images of a bucket and gift illustrate the two main philosophies regarding the nature of a child. Can you explain each philosophy and why knowing this is so important?

- What is your idea of what a child is? Has it become clearer to you after reading this section?
- Do you place information into distinct subject categories in your homeschooling?
- Putting your children in a grade means something about your idea of education. Are your children in a grade? If so, why?
- Do you plan for your child to take 12 years to complete his or her education?
- Do you believe public education knows what it is doing? Do you follow their *Scope and Sequence*?
- Have you asked your child's Father the two questions Samson's father asked Him? Do you really believe He will answer you?
- Do you give more thought to what you will use to teach a subject than you give to why you are teaching that subject? Or why you are teaching that subject at this time?
- Do you believe your child will be happiest if he or she is fulfilling the gifts God put within him or her? Are you fulfilling your gifts?
- Contact me with comments or questions: [ChrisDavis@PioneerHomeschooler.com](mailto:ChrisDavis@PioneerHomeschooler.com)

**The book is available at Amazon, click on the picture, below:**



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Raising Children Intentionally

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Chris Davis