

The Old Schoolhouse

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Homeschooling *the Rebel* Part 1



Deborah Wuehler

Homeschooling the Rebel, Part 1

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Introduction

"I won't do it!" my child screamed after being asked to sit down and start the day's math assignment.

"You will too!" I resolutely stated right back.

"I will not!"

Some days were worse than others, but all were equally miserable. The older siblings would complain and take up my offense. Younger siblings would cry because Mommy was crying. All the while, the smug little hard-nosed rebel sat defiantly on the bed screaming and shouting to his (or her) heart's content. It was a struggle not to allow bitterness to rule my spirit. The daily strain upon my heart, soul, and body were wearing me down to the point I wanted to pull away from everything and everyone. I would cry out to God. "How long, O Lord?" I lived in the comfort of the Psalms. After I cried, I would read and pray. I HAD to in order to face my child again.

I had only read about this kind of child, and now I had one.

How did we end up here? We analyzed everything from birth. Was it the fact that this child was born screaming? Maybe it was that time at 3 that I intervened, thinking Dad was too harsh. Or was it because in public he was well behaved, so I let slip his passive rebellion at home? Was it his early mental maturity trapped inside a childish body? Was it because he was sandwiched between six other siblings? Was it medical? (Indications of ADD were present—not hyperactive, but rather the ultra-slow, highly-distracted side.) It was probably the combination of all of these things that enabled this sweet little child to erupt into a full-blown rebel. Yelling, screaming, throwing things, you name it. I had only read about this kind of child, and now I had one. What in the world was I to do?

Recognize the Triggers of Rebellion

We both desperately needed help, so I started to research. I learned to recognize the triggers of these angry responses and my contribution. I began to look at what happened before the flare-up and recognize the signs of an impending eruption. Was I angry with him? Was he provoked by a sibling or maybe jealous for my attention? Was he distracted? Was his schoolwork too difficult or too easy? Did he get enough sleep? What was he eating? Getting to know the triggers helped in warding off the explosions. Follow me as I share with you what I have learned in dealing with a rebel.

Getting to know the triggers helped in warding off the explosions.

Be a Disciple, Make a Disciple

Discipling was one of the keys to eventually opening our rebel's heart. As we continued to disciple and pour the Word of God into our child, we began to see things change. Here are some suggestions:

- Be a good disciple of the Lord yourself! My goal is for my rebel to follow Christ as I follow Christ.
- Draw your child in close. We had to pull our rebel in as a shepherd does with a wayward lamb. We took him with us wherever we went, and he stayed by our side as much as possible.
- Be to her what you would have her be. Exemplify patience and kindness. You will begin to see your child's heart soften and your own heart change toward her.

As we continued to disciple and pour the Word of God into our child, we began to see things change.

- Be a good disciple of the Lord yourself!
- Draw your child in close.
- Exemplify patience and kindness.
- Have other godly influences in his life.
- He needs to be close to the authority figure.
- Disciple her in prayer.
- Invest time you do not have, reap fruit you did not expect.
- Teach your rebel the Word of God.
- Teach him that God disciplines those He loves.

- Have other godly influences in his life: teachers, friends, and godly pastors and speakers who reinforce what you are teaching.

- He needs to be close to the authority figure. He should go to work with Dad or become his shadow when he is home.

- Disciple her in prayer. Show her who to run to! Let her see your vulnerability. She usually sees your strength. Let her see your tenderness. Allow her to follow you to Jesus.

- Discipling takes time. Invest time you do not have, and you will reap fruit you did not expect.

Teach What Is Good

- Teach your rebel the Word of God. Help him define rebellion. Lead him to Scriptures relating to "rebellion," "fools," and "stiff-necked" people.

- Teach him that God disciplines those He loves.

- Teach her the cycle that is repeated throughout history: idolatry, bondage, repentance, deliverance, and rest. Idolatry is turning away from God's commands to our own self-rule; this leads only to bondage. If we repent, we are delivered and find rest (read the book of Judges).
- Teach him God's plan for protection offered in authority. When we step out from under the authority placed in our lives, we are left unprotected.
- Teach repentance by modeling repentance toward the child. If I show any signs of anger or unkindness, I ask for forgiveness quickly.
- Teach the order of godly government. God has given us the duty to govern our own households. Children lacking self-government must be governed. God's beauty and order is displayed in godly government.
- Creation is governed by order, not chaos, and it declares the glory of God. Teach the foundation of our faith based on the order of a literal, six-day creation. God also created our rebel to declare His glory—

- Teach her the cycle of idolatry, bondage, repentance, deliverance, and rest.
- Teach him God's plan for protection offered in authority.
- Teach repentance by modeling repentance toward the child.
- Teach the order of godly government.
- Teach the foundation of our faith based on the order of a literal, six-day creation.
- Teach him that self-control is placing himself under God's control.
- Go over what Christ did on the cross.

teach her that she can glorify God if she stays under His authority structure.

- Teach him that self-control is placing himself under God's control. He will soon realize that he can't control himself; this is when you can show him his need for God's control.
- Go over what Christ did on the cross. Christ can free us from the power of sin and the penalty of sin. Lead your child to the cross at every turn.

Homeschooling

If you are dealing with major rebellion from your child, you may need to adjust your educational goals for the time being. You may need to step back and let your child excel at a lower academic level rather than struggle where he "should" be. I had to re-focus my standards on the basics: Bible, math, and language arts. You can also help your child with the following adjustments:

I had to re-focus my standards on the basics: Bible, math, and language arts.

- Provide lots of good reading to cover the rest of the school subjects, such as good biographies that exemplify people strong in spirit.
- Look for curriculum choices that don't frustrate. Don't hesitate to change curriculum that is boring or overkill.
- If writing is too hard, have him dictate to you and then show him his work.
- Allow her to choose topics of study. Find out what she delights in and continue in that direction until the desire ceases.
- Have him read a Proverb and ask him to tell you what it might be saying to him personally. What did God mean when He wrote it? How can he apply it to his life this day?
- During peaceful times, have her read the Bible or a good character book to you and discuss it together.

- Scripture memorization changes hearts. Write the same verse every day until it is memorized. Feel free to do so with her.
- Let him play his instrument before doing his schoolwork. It can help soothe and set the tone for other work to follow. If it doesn't distract, play calm praise music quietly in the background during school time.
- Separate siblings. This eliminates many distractions and potential trouble. Try to make a place of solitude for your rebel. Have the other children respect that privacy.
- This is the kind of child that needs to be "doing" something with you. Our child flourished when we worked together and balked at independent study. Stay with her until she is confident and successful.
- Give him something to look forward to when he gets his assignments done. Have a good book, special project, or free time waiting for him as a reward. Rebels can be highly motivated by rewards.

Consistency

Provide clear, strong guidelines in all areas—personal, school, chores, etc. The child must know what is required of him, and requirements must be clear. Print them out. Have the same rules, the same school assignments, and the same chores every day. Give him a daily schedule or checklist to visually keep him on track and monitor progress. Be consistent in all of these areas:

Have the same rules,
the same school
assignments, and the
same chores every day.

- Have a consistent bedtime. This child may have an earlier bedtime than his siblings, since he may need more sleep.

- Have consistent meal times. We eliminated sugar and provided snacks between meals to keep blood sugar level issues at bay. This helped the intensity of emotion to decrease.
- Be consistent with discipline, and be sure consequences for each offense are consistent. Allow input so that the child knows you are being fair.
- One of our rules is no breakfast until morning chores are finished. Our rebel can't handle more than two assignments at any one time. We keep our instructions as few and simple as possible and try to keep him focused on the task at hand.

Discipline

Drastic rebellion sometimes calls for drastic measures. We employed all of these disciplinary tactics at one time or another:

- If he caused trouble with siblings, he was not allowed to play with them for a time and was assigned to his room. He could play quietly or read books of our choosing.
- Some think we are too harsh, but they have never seen the rebel who lives at our house.

- For disrespect, disobedience, or angry outbursts: loss of privileges such as computer time, playing or talking with friends, going on field trips, or participating in classes or any form of entertainment for a given length of time (rest of the day, week, etc.).
 - If the morning went badly or if he had an eruption the previous day, he went to work with Dad with a backpack full of school books. He followed Dad around on the weekends frequently.
- We have had to say no to many activities. For the most part, people understand. Some think we are too harsh, but they have never seen the rebel who lives at our house. They only know the sweet child who goes out in public. Only after a year's worth of

many painful cancellations did our child begin to realize his loss and our commitment to keeping our word. Only then did we begin to see a real change.

- We have had a tendency to ride the rebel hard and forget about the other children. Stay consistent in enforcing the rules with all of the children so that no "respector of persons" or bitterness is fostered.
- Don't drag out the discipline. Take care of it quickly. When it's over, allow her the grace to start over. Don't bring it up again. Always pray together afterward.
- If he cannot control his emotions, he is grounded to his room. I have him read the Word and pray before he is allowed to come out so that he will have an acceptable attitude.

Change the Way You Respond

This type of child tends to be extremely intelligent and to push the boundaries wherever possible, employing manipulative strategies. Rebels are also good at blame shifting. How should we respond?

When I react harshly to disrespect or disobedience, the battle escalates.

- When I react harshly to disrespect or disobedience, the battle escalates. My grievous words stir up anger in both of us. I have to be quiet and calm, purposing to be kind. Falling into anger and bitterness against the child does no good, as our anger never produces the righteousness of God.
- Continuing to repeat a command only frustrates both of you. If the argument is over a command you've given, don't continue repeating the command. Set aside the physical action you want done and take the spiritual action of dealing with the heart issue of rebellion.
- Don't entertain an argument or try to have the last word. Stop yourself in the middle of the battle. Drop it and allow the Holy

Spirit to intervene. Rebels love to battle, so this will make them angry. You may need to isolate the child until he has calmed down.

- Don't take personal offense. The rebel is not the enemy; we are doing battle with the enemy of her soul.
- Instead of pointing out all her faults, share your own struggles with her. Come up with word pictures or analogies to show her the effect of her actions.
- He feels like a failure, so watch him closely with the purpose of praising him. Find the good, however small. Praise any attempt at obedience or kindness. Praise for the lack of meanness.

Love Your Rebel

Your child needs to see and feel your love, and not only when it is manifested as correction.

Your child's wayward actions may be his way of trying to get your attention.

- Don't pull away from her physically. She needs to be reassured of your love for her every day.
- Discover his "love language." Plan dates whenever possible. Your child's wayward actions may be his way of trying to get your attention. Be proactive and give him undivided attention regularly.
- Teach all the children to love and not to engage in conflict with or provoke each other. Teach them to love their enemies and to find a way to bless and not curse them. Teach boys to honor and protect girls. Teach girls to love and respect boys.
- Love is patient and kind—but is Mom patient and kind? Allow God to fill you with the same love that He has for your child. She needs to see love from you even while she is yet a rebel.

Stay Grounded

ReBELs are very draining—spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically. We need to stay grounded in the Word and in prayer.

- We need times of refreshing at regular intervals. Get away to a quiet place and rest. Spend time in the solitude of prayer and Bible study.
- The Word. This is a heart-wrenching, iron-sharpening, full-out battle, and we need to keep our armor on. We need the belt of truth. Untruth comes forth from the child regularly. Read the truth, speak the truth, and memorize it together.
- Prayer and fasting. We are in the trenches of warfare for the soul of our child. We need to be vigilant and proactive and one step ahead in prayer. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against every evil thing that exalts itself. Spend time fasting and focus on the spiritual battle—not just the outward rebellion.
- We need to die to our pride, our anger, and our unrealistic expectations.

This is a heart-wrenching, iron-sharpening, full-out battle, and we need to keep our armor on.


Have a Future Vision

We need a future vision as we are raising the next generation. What will these rebels have to face in their future that will take this kind of strength of character? If persecution comes to your rebel for his faith in Christ, what kind of person will he need to be? Obviously, God is raising up an army. Remind your child to fight the good fight he was created for. Remind him that he is fighting the wrong fight when he is fighting God's authority (you), and tell him that God made him strong for a reason—he is to be God's warrior. Give her a cause to stand up for, something to fight against, and help her use

her strength for good now. We need rebels in the Kingdom of God to stand against sin and to stand for righteousness.

Be a Rebel

Homeschooling a rebel is extremely difficult, and we are still working through it all. Yes, we still have eruptions, but much less frequently. We have learned how to pray, repent, and start over. More importantly, the strong will has carried over into spiritual battles. This will be the time to form a stronger prayer life, a stronger sense of what is right and wrong, and a stronger love for the Lord and His Word. Rebels don't give up easily—be a rebel, Mom, and don't give up on your child. You will both learn to turn to the only One who can truly change hearts: Jesus Christ.



Rebels don't give up easily—be a rebel, Mom, and don't give up on your child.

I can hear you asking, Will my child ever change? I am here to tell you that there is a God and that He is more interested in the heart and soul of your child than you are. Jesus Christ Himself intercedes to His Father on your child's behalf. Join Him in prayer as you intercede for the heart of your child. Don't give in to discouragement; be encouraged with new vision for your child. You are not alone in having the special blessing and calling of raising a rebel.

*"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."
(Galatians 6:9)*

Further Resources

I highly recommend the following resources:

- ✓ *Homeschooling the Challenging Child*, by Christine Field
- ✓ *No Greater Joy*—free monthly newsletters
- ✓ *Winning the Heart of a Rebel* and other resources on anger by S. M. Davis
- ✓ *The Five Love Languages of Children*, by Gary Chapman
- ✓ Doorposts—many resources taken from the book of Proverbs
- ✓ *Homeschooling with a Meek and Quiet Spirit*, by Teri Maxwell
- ✓ *The Heart of Anger*, by Lou Priolo



Deborah Wuehler is the Senior Editor for The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine. She resides in Roseville, California, with her husband Richard. They are the parents of eight children: three teenagers, three elementary, a preschooler and a baby. They have been homeschooling since the birth of their firstborn who is now graduated from high school. Many of her articles can be found on www.Crosswalk.com, and many other homeschooling sites. She is a group leader in her local homeschooling support organization and she loves digging for buried treasure in the Word, reading, writing, homeschooling, and dark chocolate! Email her at senioreditor@TheHomeschoolMagazine.com.

Appendix

How to Begin Homeschooling

1. **Discuss With Your Spouse:** Educating your child at home is a huge decision and should be one that is made with your spouse. Do not begin unless you are in agreement about this decision. You will need the support of your spouse not only at the beginning, but also throughout the year.
2. **Research the Homeschool Laws Applicable in your Area:** Be fully aware of the legal requirements before you begin and especially before you take a child out of public school. For the U.S., each state's legal requirements can be found on the www.HomeschoolLegal.com website. Internationally, refer to www.HSLDA.org.
3. **Research Styles of Home Education:** There is no single right way to educate your child at home; however, there are many differing philosophies you may want to consider.
 - **Charlotte Mason:** Based on a method introduced by nineteenth-century educator Charlotte Mason, this approach includes nature studies/journaling, narration, and living books.
 - **Classical:** Based on Dorothy Sayers' *The Lost Tools of Learning*, in which child development is broken up into three "stages" of learning commonly called "the Trivium."
 - **Delight Directed:** This puts the learning in the hands of the child, based on his or her interests. Parents help facilitate this type of learning with appropriate instructional materials.
 - **Eclectic:** A mix of philosophies and curricula to accommodate each child's abilities and interests. Parents choose from any method or style only those components that fit their specific needs.
 - **The Principle Approach:** An approach based on the principles of our Founding Fathers and an emphasis on God's Word as the basis for every subject.
 - **Traditional Textbook:** Normally uses a full-range, packaged, textbook-type curriculum that also may include a scope and sequence, testing, and recordkeeping.
 - **Unit Studies:** All or most core subjects are covered while studying any one topic or unit of study, using a variety of resources and supplemental activities.
 - **Unschooling:** A relaxed setting where learning is directed by the child. Parts of this philosophy are based on research by John Taylor Gatto and John Holt.

- 4. Find Support:** After finding your style of choice (or a mix of more than one choice), you may want to choose a support group that reflects that specific style or just a general homeschool support group in your area. Meeting with other home educators offers encouragement as well as knowledge and assistance with your homeschool questions. Often, organized classes or activities for your children are offered through support groups as well. For information about homeschool support groups in your area, check these listings:

U.S.:

www.TheHomeschoolMagazine.com/Homeschool_Nations/State_Listings.php
www.HomeschoolLegal.com

UK:

<http://www.home-service.org/>
<http://www.heas.org.uk/>

New Zealand:

<http://www.che.org.nz/>
<http://hef.org.nz/>
<http://www.ahe.org.nz/>
<http://www.homeschoolers.wellington.net.nz/>
<http://community.library.org.nz/cgi-bin/display.pl?id=296>

Guam:

www.HomeschoolBlogger.com/guam
<http://www.tumon.com/ghsa>

Australia:

<http://www.hea.asn.au/hea/>

Canada:

www.shbe.info
www.machs.mb.ca
www.aheaonline.com
<http://nshea.webcentre.ca/>
<http://www.eho.org/support/canada.asp>

- 5. Gather Resources:** Some families start with a complete curriculum package, while others start with a notebook and a library card. Choosing your resources depends on your style or method of education and your own interests. If you are financially burdened, there are free homeschooling resources on the web, as well as discounted, used books in abundance.

You Can Do This! Parents around the world are taking back their God-given responsibility to educate their children, and you can too. We have developed two downloads to help you get started:

- ✓ [Homeschool With Confidence](#)
- ✓ [Simple Recipes for Successful Homeschooling](#)

Disclaimer: The above information is not intended as legal advice and should not be construed as such. Please check the legal requirements in your area.

To a Homeschool Mom **By Amelia Harper**

He gave this gift with gentle hands,
A treasure rich and rare;
But sand and rock and rugged stone
Obscured the gem so fair.

“I give this gift to you,” He said,
“To polish and to prime;
The future lies within your hands,
So make use of the time.”

Some others placed their precious gifts
Within another’s care,
Because they knew the craft took time—
And time they could not spare.

But you were not content to trust
This task to other hands.
You sought to teach yourself the craft
That such a task demands.

For, you said, “No other hand
Can craft this gem so fair;
My loving eyes can better see
The treasure hidden there.”

So carefully you chipped away
Till brilliance sprang from stone.
You shaped each facet, smoothed each face,
Until the task was done.

Some days you feared that you would fail;
Some days, you saw success.
But still you labored on with love
And gentle tenderness.

Thus, soon the gem He gave to you
Reflected Light sublime;
And then you knew no other task
Was better worth your time.

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