

Overcoming Hurdles

By Deborah Weuhler

How are those New Year's resolutions (to lose weight, get organized, or be more productive) going? If you are like me, they are not going very well. How about homeschooling? Feeling a bit depressed and discouraged? Are you having a hard time getting those things accomplished that you had decided were important? Do you feel like all those things you've wanted to implement will never get done because of unforeseen obstacles? I feel this way often. In fact, if truth be told, we all feel the same way at one time or another. We are already weary from the never-ending race, but then we have to all of a sudden jump a hurdle. There are many hurdles in homeschooling. When hurdles come, I often fall on my face. I have found that one or more of the following things sabotage my best laid plans—so let's talk about how to leap over these hurdles:

The Hurdles of Temptations & Time Wasters

So, you are sitting there with that nagging thought in your mind of the important things that need to get done today. Then, you see that thing that takes you away into a land of no stress or pressure. A land where kids do as they please while you sip coffee and read that book or browse that website or Facebook that friend. Ah, the bliss of those moments. Then reality hits hard again, and the guilt weighs you down as your "to-do" list has quickly become your "haven't done" list and now it is growing. Stop the cycle by disciplining yourself with limits. Leap victoriously over the hurdle of temptation and time wasters with discipline. Discipline yourself to use your time wisely, gaining eternal knowledge rather than wasting time finding out that second-cousin Susie gave her dog a bath and posted a picture. Discipline yourself to have a set time of working with your children on their schoolwork every day or to set down enough time to teach that new concept or to start that new curriculum or devotion, and then jump in. Don't wait! Discipline comes with self-control, which is the fruit of maturity in Christ. If we lack self-control, then we may have stopped growing in our walk with Christ—jump that hurdle by taking the time and discipline needed in order to know Him daily. Fools despise discipline, but great strides come through the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7, NIV1).

The Hurdles of Discouragement & Depression

We become mentally drained when we flounder through the day wondering how to start responding to the overwhelming voices crying for attention in our brain. This easily leads us into discouragement. Discouragement means something has caused us to lack courage. Depression can set in when we are discouraged for too long. Depression also can come as a result of chemical/hormonal changes in our bodies. We might find ourselves having a hard time getting out of bed, let alone engaging with our children. Days are long and we long to get back into bed. We feel that no one understands us, and we don't even understand ourselves. Our children's seeming lack of academic progress plunges us further into depression. If we can determine that the depression days are on a regular cycle, then we know that the cause of the depression is probably hormonal. Or if you've just had a baby recently, then depression often shows up. When we know that we are depressed for no other reason than a hormonal change, then we can encourage ourselves with the fact that this short time will pass and we will not have to worry that we are losing our minds or losing hope in life. It's a time to take it easy, study the Word, enjoy our children without guilt, and wait out the depression. Overcome the hurdles of discouragement and depression by speaking the truth. Why? Because discouragement and depression often tell us lies. Instead of relying on these passing deceitful feelings, we can find stability in the Word of God. We

must speak to ourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to help us through this time. Try to do simple things like get outside once a day or get a shower or take a nap. Your local health food store representatives can inform you about herbal helps for hormonal depression. Depression does not have to beat you down into thinking there is no hope. Find your encouragement in the Word of God and prayer. If you can't even feed yourself the Word, then listen to the radio or audio Bible teachings and worship music. Sometimes, list-making beats discouragement. Once you are able to write down what you need to do, and then get up and try doing at least two things on your list, you will start to feel better about yourself. Making a list is like writing your accomplishments down before you do them. Checking them off can take away the feeling of not getting anything done, and your brain will not be as weary but rather will move toward hope and joy. If hope is not coming your way quickly enough, then find your hope in God. Hide in Him. He will never disappoint. When you are tempted to look down in depression or discouragement, turn your face upwards to Him. Psalm 121 is a good starting point—try memorizing it:

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

The Hurdles of Chaos & Clutter

Chaos and clutter can suffocate the best attempts to stay sane. They muddle your brain and make you feel on edge, almost as if the chaos and clutter will overcome you. Instead of letting yourself drown in chaos or clutter, send out a lifeline. If you are on the opposite extreme of always taking care of chaos and clutter and you never get to the important things, then you need a lifeline too. Jump that hurdle with humility. You may need to humble yourself and ask a relative or close friend to come help dig you out. You might find a homeschooled high school child who would love to come and help you clean or cook or watch children while you find some organization. You might have your older children do the cleaning and organizing instead of schoolwork for a day or week, in order to get things back under control. Start small. Take one room and work on it for 20 minutes a day. Stick to it, and soon you will feel proud of your accomplishments. If you are on the opposite extreme and are Mrs. Clutter Commando, you may need to humble yourself and let the house get a little cluttered or the table get messy with school projects in order to get the important things done. Humility will let perfection go. Sometimes the reality of our busy lives forces perfection down a notch. Don't worry; God is close to the humble and gives us even more grace.

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble (James 4:6).

The Hurdles of Weariness & Burnout

Lack of motivation accompanies burnout, just as lack of sleep or peace accompanies lack of motivation—a vicious cycle made worse by added guilt. We have been running hard but now there is a brick wall of burnout that we must jump over. We are tired of the same old routine.

Leap over that hurdle by changing up the routine. What do you enjoy? Add it to your daily or weekly schedule for a while. What is your favorite subject you do with your children? Do it more. Make your kids happy by giving them "only half " days in which they have to

complete only half their work. Not only will they be happy, but you'll be happy to not hear the whining. Try a new way of teaching. Implement that unit study you've wanted to try. Try new recipes or at least cooking double several days in a row and freezing the rest. Do something

you have meant to get around to doing. Now is the time to mix things up a bit, especially when you feel like giving up. Do something that will lighten your spirit. Leap over the hurdle of weariness with the discipline of rest. Take a few days to catch up on sleep and rest. The renewal of rest just might be the refreshment you need to jump-start your engine. Where do we find true rest? It is found in our God, Who pleads with you,

"Come to me, weary one, and I will give you rest." He goes on to say, "Learn from me . . ." (from Matthew 11:28-29).

Rest comes by heading straight to God and learning from Him. You just might learn that He has given you everything you need **for life** in your knowledge of Him (2 Peter 1:3). And I bet you will learn that you can leap over any hurdle when you abide in Him. Wait on the Lord, and He will renew your strength:

But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint (Isaiah 40:31).

Weariness can come from trials. These trials are like resistance training. We are building muscle so we will be stronger the next time. Resistance training is good for the body and soul because it grows the spiritual muscles that are needed to leap over walls . . . and hurdles.

For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall (Psalm 18:29).

The Hurdle of Procrastination

I have the tendency to procrastinate on the hard thing of pressing through to the end, and instead take care of a million other easy things. I put off that hard task that will take time and concentration until it finally becomes urgent. This allows stress to settle in. One thing I've learned about stress is that it is unhealthy. To get past this hurdle, we need the discipline of perseverance. Sometimes we have to purpose to stop everything and work for a set time each day until we are finished. Sometimes we have to stop everything and get down to business. Sometimes we have to stop everything and get down on our knees in prayer. We all would feel so much better if we would get the difficult things off our plates. The key is to not take on too many difficult tasks; we must have balance. Don't say yes to another thing until all the hard things that are already on your list are taken care of. One too many things, and we are going to spin off the planet. Take one difficult task at a time and persevere and press through it. Run the race with patience and perseverance.

. . . Let us run with patience the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1). And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9).

The Hurdle of Fear

Fear is a lack of trust. Fear causes a loss of peace and keeps us up at night. It's a direct attack on our relationship with the Lord. He is full of tender mercy and longs to give us peace. Fear causes us to stumble because we are walking in uncertainty, like walking in darkness.

That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:74–75, 78–79).

We get past the hurdle of fear by letting go and trusting God. Great peace comes when our minds are not fettered by fear:

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee (Isaiah 26:3). Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble (Psalm 119:165, ESV₂).

Whatever hurdle it is that tries to sabotage the race of obedience, remember that your God is at work in you both to will and to do His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). He is doing the work, so you can rest in Him. Resting comes from walking in wisdom and confidence in what God says and Who He is.

. . . Keep sound wisdom and discretion: So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken (Proverbs 3:21–26).

Time is of the essence. Get up and run and jump those hurdles! You can do all things through Christ Who strengthens you and sustains you in the long race of keeping your children **Home Where They Belong.**

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Endnotes:

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