

# UNLEARNING TO MAKE ROOM FOR LEARNING

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I never set out to homeschool. Honestly, I had never heard of it until right before I was pregnant with our first child. When the decision was made to try homeschooling our children, I started off with the only pattern I knew of; I simply brought the school system into our kitchen and spread it out over the table. It's not a bad place to start, especially when you aren't sure where or how to begin this journey. And, it is a journey! It's not a checklist, it's not a to do list, and it's not just an academic schedule. With my oldest just graduating this past month, I am more excited than ever to share with families gems we have learned (and are still learning!) along the way. This journey has so many facets, so many mountains and valleys, and so many memories to be made. Yes, it does include reading, writing, and arithmetic, but we have learned that homeschooling embodies much more than just traditional academic subjects.



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While we started with a style of bringing the classroom into our home, I gradually realized there was so much more to our day than adding and phonics. I started to recognize that I was trying to implement teaching all the subjects at a specific grade level to each of them. Did they do this worksheet of math facts? Did they sound out these short vowels five times this morning? Do they have all the mountain ranges and rivers memorized? That is how the school system operates mainly because one teacher is in charge of educating twenty-five plus kids. There needs to be a system in place to create order, but that doesn't mean it is the best method of learning. I was beginning to understand that I needed to unlearn from my years in the educational system in order to best help my children learn all that God had for them. This was a process. It can look different for different families, in different seasons and with different personalities/learning styles. I decided to call up all the friends I knew that homeschooled and ask them what their favorite resources were and why . . . Then it hit me, "God, these are YOUR children. You have a perfect plan for their lives. You have created them and designed their gifts and talents for Your glory. Show me Lord, how best to raise them in a way that helps them reach their goals that You have planned for them." With that prayer, things changed.



I sat down with my husband and talked about what our end goals were for raising these children we were blessed with. We gathered our kids together to share with them our new, focused thoughts. We desired for them to love the Lord with all their hearts, minds and souls, and to love others well. We wanted to create in them a lifetime love of learning, of discovering this amazing world God created. We wanted to equip them with the tools of knowing how to learn something or how to find out the information that they needed. If they had a desire to always grow in their knowledge and sought the wisdom from God on how to apply that knowledge, then the rest of "schooling" would look very different.



My older two children are eighteen months apart, which allowed me to combine most of their subjects. With the exception of math and what I required from the older one with writing, we started learning together. This was the game changer. This is where my "unlearning" made room for learning. This is where we began to discover the wonders of the world through reading together and discussing together. We let our conversations guide us into hours of applying biblical truths to all areas of history, literature, character development, science, life skills and personal lessons. As I let go of what I thought had to be accomplished in an eight hour period and let God be my teacher, He then instructed me on how to specifically guide these little people He had entrusted to us. This new way of learning led us to understand how every discovery was threading all of God's world together. Excitement grew! Their hunger and opinions started to be articulated in ways that they began to identify in themselves some of their unique giftings and interests. With the new freedom of discovery as the method of learning, each child began to shine as they headed down a path of exploration.



Just like adult life, every day isn't fragrant with sweet smelling roses and birds singing on our windowsill. There are the mountain top moments of excitement and then there are valleys of trudging through the muck . . . but this too, is learning. Teaching our children how to do the mundane with joy and grateful hearts is just as important as learning how to add, multiply and read. Likewise, there is great value and reward in pushing through the difficult and unknown. Just because it's hard, doesn't mean we avoid it. Instructing through example and modeling desired behavior is equally valuable.

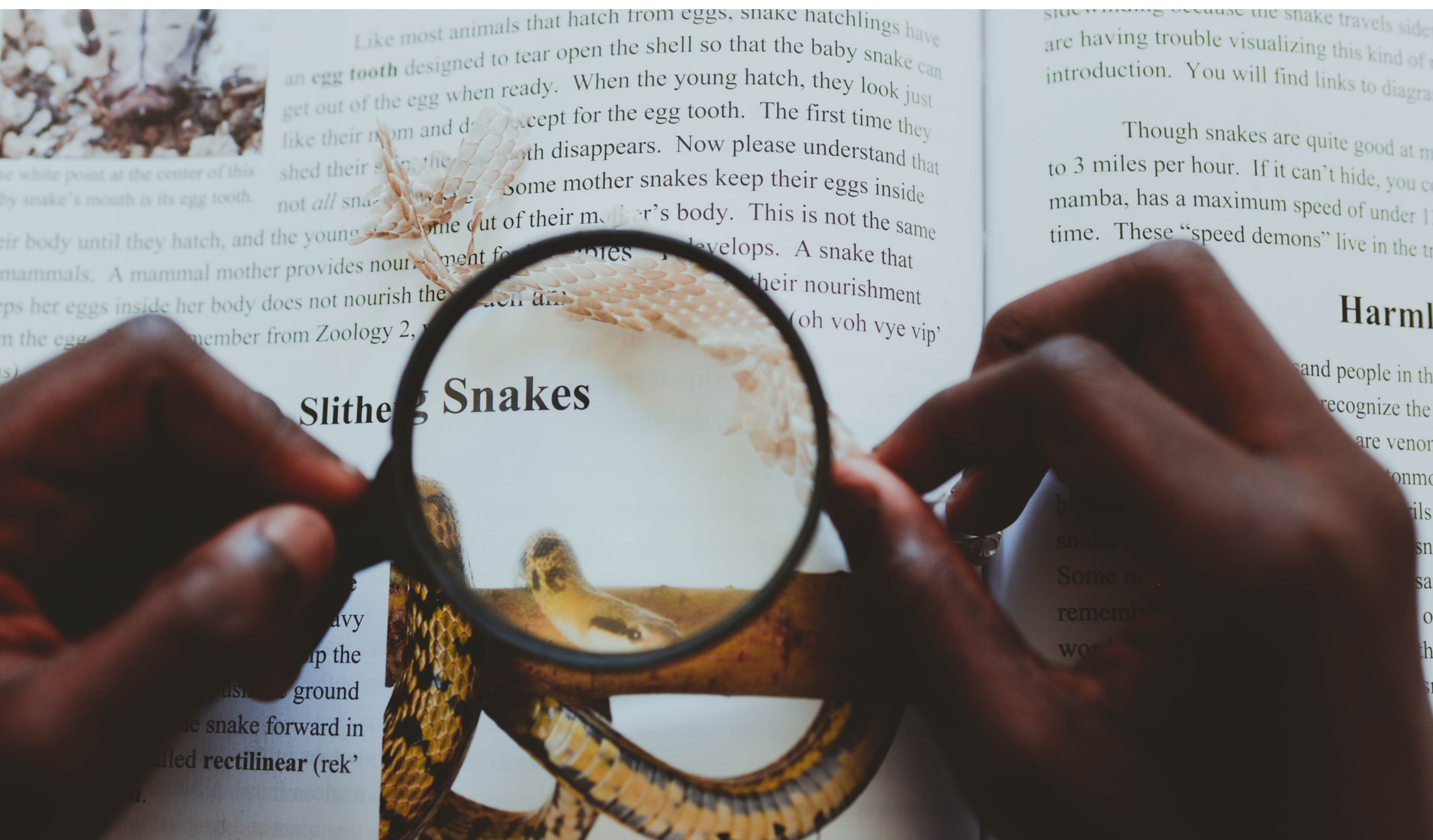


My help comes  
FROM THE  
Lord  
WHO MADE  
heaven and earth

PSALM 121:2



As my older children have grown through the freedom of learning, my husband and I have been amazed by how their natural talents have surfaced. As they entered the early teen years, each one started a more purposeful, direct shift towards the bent that God had designed for them. They had the time and courage to try things they thought might interest them. They researched and created. They failed and they grew. With all the experience came an excitement to try more, to stretch their abilities and discover new ones. This is the fruit we are blessed to witness. There is great joy in watching your children learn, discover, create and serve.





We adopted our youngest son when he was five. I was so excited to start his education with a different mindset, implementing all that I had learned with the older two. Again, God pulled me aside to remind me to seek His direction. Remember back towards the beginning I mentioned: different seasons, different personalities and learning styles? This truth still applies. So I lean on God, ebb and flow with how our family rhythm is for the season. Keeping all the foundational goals in mind, we learn together. Because he is so young, we explore like new adventurers, treading through some familiar and some uncharted territories. We are in wonder. We are in awe. It is so exciting to be living in a position of constant learning while watching our children be amazed by the world that is laid before them. So, if need be, unlearn to make room for learning so that your grand adventure unfolds.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zsanae Miller is blessed to live life along with her husband and best friend of twenty-one years. They have three children (one who just graduated) and are enjoying helping them grow into the people God created them to be. Homeschooling for the past eleven years, she is passionate about sharing within community to encourage one another along in this journey.

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## **ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER**

Ashlyn Miller is an eighteen year old photographer and entrepreneur. Her trips to Haiti, France and Iceland have inspired her and her career, but she craves for more adventures! Not only is she talented with a camera, Miss Miller is also an avid artist, videographer, and writer.

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