

I was raised with Bill Gothard's Advanced Training Institute homeschooling materials. They consisted of Wisdom Booklets (WBs) as the structured "education" for the thousands of families who chose to follow his fundamentalist christian beliefs. The WB's consisted of several categories such as, Linguistics, History, Science, Mathematics, Medicine, Law. Each booklet followed the scriptures of Matthew 5-7 and were created by a team of "leaders" who took each bible verse and assigned random stories that applied to that verse for each category. There wasn't an ounce of linear learning. Nothing built upon itself. The WB's were meant to be a schoolhouse approach for all children in the home. Everyone would read them together and have various exercises to do after each category was completed. With 54 WB's in existence, if your child started from a young age, they would work through these booklets possibly twice in their schooling years. Gothard had no problem with this as your child would see the information from a more mature viewpoint and therefore learn even more.

We spent more time using a biblical Lexicon, Thesaurus and Dictionary than we did other materials. My parents wanted us to be so pure for God and would keep us from a lot of the healthier homeschooling options on the market because they were seen as secular with worldly viewpoints. Gothard would constantly say that knowledge puffeth a man up (pride) but spiritual knowledge makes him wise. My brothers knew from a young age they would be denied a college experience. I knew pretty early on I too would not have a college experience but for very different reasons. I was a girl and my focus and motivation in life was to prepare to be the best wife and mother God wanted me to be.

We would resource information from other seminar created materials Bill Gothard had as well and often went to seminars as a part of our "education". My family used additional outside resources for mathematics and science from other bible following ministries/campuses like Abeka, Bob Jones University and Saxon Math. Unfortunately these books were used more as resources when the WB's didn't expound enough on a certain story or topic. I was around 13 when my dad was working with me on some math problems from the Saxon Math series. I'd always struggled with math and usually answered more questions wrong than right. He would become so upset and disgusted with me. One day he sighed and said, "You know enough math to cook and sew, you won't need any more than this.". I was so deeply hurt but also relieved I wouldn't have to sit at the table in fear and shame every afternoon. It wasn't until much later in life I realized I wasn't the problem. I wasn't receiving teaching from educators who knew what they were doing. The way in which the information was shared with me was so chaotic it made retaining information impossible. Every week was new information, usually way over our heads, and I was expected to engrain it into my head. My parents were not licensed educators. They were emboldened by their religious beliefs, Bill Gothard and other religious homeschoolers to seek out and go all in on this very new education "curriculum".

I went on to work at the headquarters for Bill Gothard and was put into situations I should have never been placed in. I was counseling mothers who were homeschooling with the same WB's I grew up with. It was awful hearing their heartbreak and anger at not knowing how to get their kids to learn. I constantly wanted to be honest and tell them, It's pretty terrible, you should try something else but I had been raised to tow the line, and so I did.

It wasn't until I was about 26 yrs old when I decided I wanted to go to cosmetology school. I had zero proof of an education. No diploma, no GED. My only option at the time was to pass a high school equivalency test. Truly one of the most humiliating things I've ever done. I did not feel emboldened and powerful doing it. I got a GED test guide and cried every night for several months as I read new information every single day. The panic attacks were terrible. I didn't know how to sit down and study and remember what I was learning. Thankfully I passed. but with the lowest grade possible. During cosmetology school I went through the same fears and shame as I was tested each month. I barely passed almost every test. It did nothing for my confidence and defeated me.

To this day I place my educational terror to how I was raised. As a female, I was meant to become a husband's helpmeet. To be his homemaker. I was not set up for any type of success outside of being a dutiful wife who would birth many children and keep a clean home for her husband. It was expected of me to homeschool my own children with the same WB's I was raised with. The deep rooted disdain I had for that way of life kept me from having children. Though I do not regret the decisions I have made along the way, I recognize my freedom to launch into the world as a young adult was taken from me. I have had to fight and claw my way through so many hurdles because of the decisions of my parents and the gall of Bill Gothard's Wisdom Booklets and Advanced Training Institute (ATI). It's time I can never get back and so much time spent trying to catch up.

Signed,
EJ