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Eureka! Average to the World, but Special and Unique to God

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Dear Friends,

Welcome to another edition of the HSLDA Homeschooling Thru High School email newsletter. It's hard to believe this issue begins the third year of the high school newsletter. To those of you who have been receiving the newsletter since the beginning, we are blessed by your readership. We love hearing from our readers, and we enjoyed meeting many of you as we traveled during this past homeschool conference season.

September is a month of new beginnings--the start of a new school year, new books, and perhaps a new baby or a new high schooler! The beginning of a school year is a great time to be reminded of the precious blessings our children represent. They are all different; they are created in the image of God, and they have each been given specific talents.

We promised you last month we would be on the hunt for average homeschoolers. Of course, average means different things to different people. We define average as those students who generally score in the mean when taking tests or those students who typically run in the middle of the pack. According to this definition, we found them!

They are teens who are doing their very best with the skills and abilities God has given to them, but who are earning C's, sitting on the bench in baseball games, not progressing very far in debate, or still practicing the same piano piece they were assigned months ago.

If this describes your child, don't be discouraged and disappointed that your child does not attain accolades for excellence in schoolwork or in extracurricular activities. Their best, though, should always be viewed as success. Average should never be construed as a negative, nor should their work be viewed with concern, disappointment, or guilt. Because God made your child, loves him and saves him based on grace through Jesus Christ and not on performance, encourage, love, and accept him in like manner.

As the parent, you can be your child's most ardent encourager and personal cheerleader. Do your best to hearten your children, and always point out to them areas in which you see them improving. Yes, there's a place for correction (when they are letting their studies slide due to lack of motivation or laziness), and there's also room to urge them to reach for new goals, but in the end, and above all else, your children need to be convinced that your love and acceptance doesn't rest on their performances or accomplishments.

You can do this in any number of ways.

Be on the lookout for areas in which your child has an interest and then provide him with the time and opportunity to enjoy and grow in these areas. If your son is excited by engines and cars, let him loose to spend time tooling around the garage and maybe even sign him up for a mechanics course at the community college. In return, you might be the recipient of free oil changes for the future! And, your son may be investing in a career (or maybe a hobby) that will serve many people.

If your daughter believes strongly about a current issue, encourage her to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and have the delight of being published! She'll be encouraged that she has a voice. Will this be the making of a future political leader? Maybe not, but she will better understand the importance of being salt and light in our society.

Even in the core curriculum subjects, a child may find one aspect to be of particular interest, such as the Civil War in American history. If so, you can expand upon this interest or provide extra credit/work. Or, you may simply spend additional time exploring that unit of study.

Remember, too, that children's brains mature at different rates, so it is not unusual for a child to do average work during the beginning of the high school years, and then suddenly the light goes on and the material begins to click. You never know--that child just may be the one to go on for the graduate degree!

Extracurricular activities such as music, sports, theater, and others provide occasions to realize that not all of our children are superstars! Some will excel, others will not--but valuable life lessons are learned along the way. If your child doesn't make the A-team, is not picked for the squad, or doesn't bring home the trophy, use these opportunities to have great discussions about the importance of graciously accepting disappointments. Humility, diligence, and perseverance will be traits that in time may provide this same child the ability to accept winning in a godly way. Learning to congratulate and cheer on fellow teammates and competitors will serve him well into adulthood.

Your child may be putting in the effort, yet not doing well according to your standard or in comparison to his or her siblings. Be aware of the messages you may be sending--are you proud of the child who does well and yet disappointed in the child not measuring up? Remember you are not raising children to meet the world's standards, but the Lord's standards. Give your child opportunities to grow, to practice, and to mature. Allow him the freedom to serve others, create websites, research new inventions, or learn diligence while practicing an instrument. As he strives for excellence, remind him that he is dependent on the Lord's strength and power to accomplish any achievement.

By the way, "eureka" in our newsletter title not only means a certain vacuum cleaner (!) but also means "to express delight on finding or discovering something." So, go and find your teen, then give him a great big hug while telling him what a blessing he is to you!

Next month we'll take a look at high school mentoring and give you some ideas of how you can make a difference in someone's life. Now it's off to school we go!

Happy September,

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