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The Joy of Mentorship--Learning From One Another

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Dear Friends,

We hope your school year has gotten off to a good start, and you've settled into a routine--although "routine" may not be a word that is in your vocabulary during these hectic yet precious teen years. Our prayer is that you will hit your stride and find just the right mix between the seriousness of high school academic preparation and the fun times of experiencing and enjoying life with your young adult.

As part of your homeschooling activities, we want to encourage you to consider the benefits of carving time out of your busy schedule to take advantage of mentoring and being mentored. A mentor is an experienced teacher who nurtures and fosters a younger and usually less experienced person. As you've seen your child reap the rewards of one-on-one tutorial style teaching, you can also profit from spending time learning firsthand from a mentor who may be another homeschooling parent, relative, teacher, or someone the Lord brings to you. We know how busy your days are and how little time you have to allocate to self; however, we learned that unintended isolation breeds burn-out and discouragement. Moms are giving and giving and giving to such an extent that their tanks frequently run on empty. Refilling comes by attending to your personal well-being and health through the study of God's Word and the encouragement of a mentor-friend.

Both of us were blessed by mentors during our homeschooling years, and we are very thankful for the help we received. Not only did our mentors give us practical advice about courses, methods of teaching, curriculum suggestions, and more, but they also encouraged and prayed for/with us.

There are many ways to find a mentor. One way is to simply reach out and ask for help. We know one homeschooling mom who makes it a practice each summer to invite three different homeschool moms out to lunch to just "pick their brains" regarding their school schedules, things that worked (and didn't work!) for them, and curriculum they could recommend. This mom is the recipient of much useful information, and also receives the joy of spending time fellowshiping with other moms who know the responsibilities that she carries. She says the time and information she receives are well worth the cost of three lunches.

Mentoring does not, of course, have to be done one-on-one, but can occur in the context of a local homeschool support group. The high school years are sometimes when many homeschool parents drop out of their local groups or stop attending support meetings. We know the struggle of just not having enough time to do everything! But think about the benefit you will accrue from making the effort to attend at least some of your local meetings. Many times you'll come away from a meeting refreshed by a word, with which someone has encouraged you, or you'll pick up a tip or two from a speaker that will actually save you time in the days to come. Here's a simple idea that may benefit your entire support group. Why not recommend a "What Works" night? You'd be surprised at how many great ideas parents have! These don't have to be earth-shattering ideas, but could be tidbits, a helpful website, or a good resource discovered and used along the way.

Another idea may be to call a homeschooling friend and schedule an evening to listen to a high school seminar tape together. You may never get around to listening to the tape on your own, but just knowing you'll be listening together and sharing notes afterward may help you to plan the time to do this. (We've spoken at a number of conferences this year, and our tapes are available for purchase--see the sidebar for information).

However, if you desire a more structured approach for either one-on-one or group mentoring, check out the resources we have listed in the end of this newsletter. You'll be glad you did!

Mentoring may be a one-time occurrence or a continuing process. Regardless of the frequency and duration of mentoring, learning from a more experienced homeschooler and brainstorming together will get you off-center and thinking in creative ways which will energize you to meet the demands of your family and schedule. Laughing together over bloopers and

"failures" will also help to put things into perspective.

During these high school years, challenging though they be, keep your eye out for that younger homeschooling family who could use your help, words of advice, or encouragement. Realize that you have much to offer, and know that your input on any given day may be just what this young homeschooling parent needs to continue the journey especially during a rough school day, week, or even year! Ask the Lord to bring to your mind someone who would benefit from your expertise. We are not suggesting a very big time investment, but just a phone call now and then, or a short note of encouragement. You will be surprised how the Lord will multiply your efforts and how much fruit will be harvested from your investment in someone else.

Being mentored and mentoring are natural ways the homeschooling community has grown over the past 25 years. Loving to learn is not only a goal for our teens, but a goal for homeschooling parents as well! So, how about it? Make a couple of phone calls this week--one call to a more experienced homeschooler, perhaps asking for advice or requesting prayer, and one to a less experienced homeschooler offering your support. We're all in this together!

Next month's newsletter will answer the questions: to grade or not to grade? What guidelines do I use for grading? These are questions we frequently receive from HSLDA members, so join us as we expound on this subject!

Until then, know that the Lord promises to provide everything you need for all He has called you to do,

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