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Why we Homeschool Our Children

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We were home schooling when nobody was homeschooling. We started with our firstborn son in his kindergarten year, 1980--81. It started out as a matter of convenience (we didn't like public school but lived a half-hour commute from our church's Christian school) but soon grew into a conviction.

Over three decades later, we have never experienced a moment of doubt as to our choice. That little boy in kindergarten is now a college graduate, a lawyer and a married man with three children, all of whom he and his wife plan on teaching at home. He is also the eldest of our fourteen sons and daughters. His younger siblings, some of whom are also the parents of our 11 grandchildren, are homeschooling as well. Obviously, our children are as pleased as their parents are with the method of education we chose.

Over the years, of course curious people have asked us why we made the decision to begin and continue homeschooling our children. There are many reasons we love it, but for the sake of brevity I'll share a few here.

First, we love having so much time with our children. It hurts us to hear parents talk about how glad they will be when the kids go back to school in the fall or after Christmas vacation. We have been there at the delightful times of childhood. We watched them learn to read, answered their questions about God and about toads, and rendered first aid after bike wrecks. We heard all the cute things they said at odd moments. It was we, not some hired stranger who shared all the special discoveries and charming revelations that make up so much of childhood experience.

Along the same line, our kids grew up together. Really together. They shared toys, secrets and life-changing experiences. The girls played tea party and the boys scrambled together through the rough-and-tumble boyhood adventures of semi-rural life. Our kids had to learn to resolve the conflicts, large and small that inevitably arise when people live in the same house and spend a lot of time there. I didn't have that as a child. I spent so much time at school and in school activities by the time I was in high school I was away from home and family nearly all of my waking hours--and that, sad to say, is the way I wanted it. My children had their share of arguments, but rather than just walking away they had to learn to resolve and forgive. They became each other's best friends and as adults, they still are. They wouldn't have had time to forge the deep relationships they have any other way.

Of course we wanted to give our kids a good academic education. That's a characteristic of homeschooled kids in general. The National Home Education Research Institute has plenty of documented research that shows this. Look them up online if you want proof. For us, the key to academic success seems to be the fact that we can create an individualized program for each child. We're pretty informal about it, but we've found that the small student-teacher ratio at home allows us to accomplish a lot more than a teacher in school with thirty children in class. And we don't have to march in lockstep with the demands of the clock. Right now my 13-year-old daughter is spending most of her school time reading about World War II and interviewing old veterans about their experiences in it. She wouldn't have the freedom to do that in school, where order requires that everybody do the same thing at the same time and for the same duration of time. Homeschooling is like being outside of a bird cage and flying free.

But will they get their basics? Well, our kids have always done well on tests. But a lot of people do that in school too. The question is, how much do they retain after the test? More importantly, what about the things that tests can't measure such as originality, creativity, determination, initiative and problem solving? We have been very satisfied with the results in our family. They have done ok with the "basics" as they are called, along with some other things that we consider even more basic.

But what about socialization? The common question. I wrote a whole book about that; it's called *The Socialization Trap*. You can forget about it. Unless you are training your child to live in a world in which everybody is the same age, he is better off in your home, neighborhood, church, workplace and wherever you go than he would be in the grossly artificial environment in school. There's plenty of research showing that the worst social environment you can put your child in is an age-peer group.

But you really don't need the research if you have any capacity for logical thinking. Remember the anti-social things you did as a young person? The first time you sneaked a smoke, shoplifted a candy bar or experimented in immoral behavior, you probably weren't in cahoots with your grandmother. Most likely, you were being egged on by kids your own age, those whom society is so afraid we can't get along without. Spending so much time surrounded by immature social models is no great inspiration to adult responsible behavior. My little girl is learning about adult life and responsibility from veterans, men old enough to be her great-grandfather. If the purpose of youth is to prepare for adulthood, which way do you think works better?

It's also important to my wife and me that we pass on our values to our children. Some people call it brainwashing, but our nation has been served pretty well by the passing down of important beliefs. And the rest of the world around us certainly doesn't hesitate to influence the values and attitudes of my children. Lasting attitudes about life are transmitted to children through advertising, entertainments, peers and definitely through schooling. How can teaching history or science with no mention of God fail to condition a child to assume that God isn't all that important? And that is not to mention the anti-God and anti-morality attitudes that are communicated by such materials as *Heather Has Two Mommies*, a book used in some public schools and possibly some private ones. It's no big secret that most schools today promote socialism, homosexuality and materialism at least passively and often actively. Render to Caesar what is Caesar's and render to God what is God's. My child's values are owed to God. If you render your child to Caesar, don't be surprised if he grows up thinking like a Roman.

I could go on and on about why we started teaching at home and have grown ever more committed to it over three decades. But if you're not yet willing to look into it on your own, I'm not sure your mind is open enough to benefit by hearing more from me. I pray that you will give this careful consideration, though. As I have learned in nearly forty years of parenting, they're only young once. It's a shame to miss most of it by sending your kids away from you so much of the time. Please don't miss the chance to build a lifetime of memories together. You won't be sorry.

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