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## Among True Champions

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The sight was stunningly magnificent! We were spending a day sightseeing after attending the first Global Home Education Conference (GHEC) in Berlin, Germany. Large rooms in the Pergamon Museum displayed various archaeological finds which had been moved there from various places in the Middle East. They included temples of false gods and their worship artifacts, and crumbling stone sculptures depicting armies supposedly protecting them. I could not help but make the obvious contrast in my mind between the false gods worshipped there and the one true eternal God who is the great "I AM." The false philosophies were crumbling, were full of cracks, and needed to be propped up by man. The Lord Jesus Christ is the true living Savior, is totally self-sustaining, and protects His own.

Entering one room, I unknowingly had walked through the famous Ishtar Gate. As I turned around and saw the structure which originally stood at the entrance to the ancient city of Babylon, I was amazed at its size! Painstakingly transported and rebuilt brick by brick as it had been constructed centuries ago, the beautiful walls of blue-glazed bricks contained sculptured insets of lions and other beasts. Through that gate had walked the Old Testament heroes Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Mordecai and Esther. I felt honored for the moment to stand where these faithful and true spiritual champions had once stood.

Then I realized that by attending GHEC, I had just been in the presence of modern day heroes --- parents from around the world who are committed to homeschooling their children even during persecution. What a privilege to fellowship with true champions. They are the kind of parents whose convictions can be passed on to their children, and those children will be the future "Daniels" who will impact their world for Christ.

My attendance at the GHEC was made possible by a generous family which has a heart for missions and Christian home education. They gave funds to send me to represent the United States and to encourage international homeschoolers. Their investment was well worth it, as several attendees thanked us for participating and mentioned that our presence and involvement showed them that they were not alone in their struggle for homeschool freedom.

There were approximately 175 people from 30 different countries who participated in GHEC. Most of the people were already home educators, but some were there to gather information so they could begin teaching their own children. The conference was mostly presented in English since that is considered the main international language; but there were some speakers who spoke in German, so we had the new experience of listening with head phones to hear it translated into our language. There were political leaders from Germany and Russia who came to learn more about homeschooling and support it as an educational option, and that attracted the radio and television media. Cultural differences were set aside for the greater purpose of discussing home education freedoms, experiences, and strategies. Although most of the participants had some sort of Christian background, non-Christian homeschool families were also represented. With the wide variety of people present, we saw firsthand their struggles to be free to homeschool. We were in "their world" and heard "their stories."

My wife overheard one person asking, "Why did these Americans come? They don't know what we're going through." They did not realize that 30 years ago we were in similar situations, not having the freedom to choose the appropriate education for our children. Just like a few at the conference, some of our families were broken up by government officials removing children from their homes, imposing fines, and putting the parents in jail for home educating their children. During a panel discussion in which I was a speaker, I was able to share about the struggles that we in America had during the battles to secure our homeschool freedoms. I believe my account gave them new hope.

We heard testimonies and pleas for help. One homeschool dad of seven children told how his parents were persecuted by the Nazis because they hosted Christian gatherings and, now, he is persecuted by government authorities for homeschooling. Another dad shared that they needed encouragement to keep up the fight to home educate and gave suggestions as to how we could help. He emphasized that it was crucial for them to know that they are not alone. Would you lend a hand?

It has been so long since we in the United States have had to struggle to gain the freedom to homeschool that we take that

freedom for granted now. There are new dangers on the horizon for families and homeschoolers. We need to pray for wisdom for ourselves and for global homeschoolers. Our work is cut out for us.

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