

Chapter 1

Thinking About Homeschooling



Focusing on Eternity

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Several years ago I slipped on black ice. The impact to the back of my head destroyed much of my vision. I could not read, drive, or clearly see the face of my newborn son. I had literally lost focus on the world around me. I forgot what rainbows looked like. Mountains faded into blurry shadows on the horizon and, as far as I could tell, there were no more stars in the night sky.

Thanks to the Lord, surgery and contact lenses have restored much of my vision. I can now describe the intimate details of my son's face. Once again rainbows are brilliant, mountains have contour, and the stars twinkle. I've regained my focus and the world makes sense again.

Homeschooling parents can also experience loss of vision—spiritual vision, that is. How easy it is to lose focus on eternity, forgetting the reasons why we are training our children at home. Sometimes our vision gets so blurry we begin to esteem test scores, finishing the book by May, and yes, even a high school diploma more highly than training our children to be useful servants and devoted followers of Almighty God.

Every now and then it is good to step back from teaching and reexamine the vision we have for our children. At times we may find we have become nearsighted, that either our educational goals or the methods we use to achieve them have become blurry or distorted. With the Lord's help, we can bring these misaligned areas back into focus.

EXAMINING OUR GOALS

All homeschooling parents have some idea of what they would like to accomplish. Through painfully honest self-examination, we may discover that not all of these goals will withstand the fiery trials the Master allows for our purification. Some goals are but chaff. How exciting it is, though, when we find that the goals we've been striving for will come forth as gold! To this end, let us determine to train our children to do the following:

Humble themselves and desire the Lord's will in all things. Do we show them by our own example that we should be joyful and content in all things? Are we sincerely surrendered to the Lord's will? Moms, are we submissive to our husbands? If not, how will our children learn to submit to God?

Develop godly character. Our children will be transformed into the image of Christ as they learn to be obedient, cheerful, hardworking, kind, and humble. For example, overly praising a child for getting all A's on his report card may encourage pride, whereas praising his diligence and cheerful perseverance will tend toward a godly spirit.

Be about their Father's business. We want our children to be used of the Lord in His vineyard. Visiting the lonely, distributing Christian literature, corresponding with missionaries, and practicing Christian hospitality are excellent ways to encourage our children to be servants useful to their heavenly Father.

Do everything for the Lord's glory. We should strive for excellence in whatever our hands find to do. Why do we encourage beautiful penmanship? For the Lord's glory. Why should math problems be done neatly and correctly? For the Lord's glory. Why must children learn to do their chores diligently? For the Lord's glory. If our children learn to do all of their work for the Lord's glory, they will surely be vessels fit for the Master's use.

Enter into a saving relationship with God. Isn't this our ultimate goal after all, to see our children safely into the kingdom?

Let all of our training gently point them to the Saviour, so when the Holy Spirit begins to convict, they will gladly answer His call.

EXAMINING OUR METHODS

Having refocused our homeschooling goals, we must now examine whether the courses we choose and the methods we use will make our children more or less likely to accept these goals as their own.

What should we teach? Dad and Mom should devote much prayer and study to determine what courses and skills to present to their children. Many textbooks and subjects subtly encourage worldliness, militarism, academic pride, lukewarmness, individualism, and other attitudes contrary to the Biblical worldview we wish to instill in our children.

How should we teach? The traditional lecture method encourages attentiveness and respect for authority. Individualized study promotes diligence and critical-thinking skills. Hands-on learning allows children to study in the real world. Which method should we use? Again, as parents, we have the duty to go to our heavenly Father for guidance. He created our little ones; He knows what teaching methods are best for each of them.

When should we teach? September to May or year round? Three hours per day or six? How should we handle unexpected interruptions? How do we balance schooling and real life? Again, our schedules should encourage our children toward the eternal goals that have been set for them.

Is our vision clear and focused on Jesus? Will our homeschool goals withstand the trial of fire? If so, then let us point our children in that same direction and encourage them never to lose sight of eternity.

You Homeschool?!

Rebecca Friesen



What?! You're homeschooling? Your children won't have any friends! How will they learn to get along with others if they spend time with no one outside of your own family? They won't respect any adults but yourself. You and I turned out well enough in spite of attending public school. Don't you realize you can't shelter your children all their lives? As Christians, shouldn't you want them to be a witness in the public system? How will you teach high school when you have no diploma yourself? Will your children be able to find jobs later? Is it even legal?

If you are homeschooling, you have likely heard some of these comments before. How can we overcome the criticism we hear about this very important choice we have made for our family?

When I think about homeschooling and people's reactions to it, I am reminded of the journey into homeschooling my family took many years ago. I was in the lower grades in our local public school when my parents began homeschooling. They were among the first homeschoolers in our area, and many people had questions.

Not long after the school year began, our family received visitors one evening. They were not happy about our homeschool and demanded to know why my parents had pulled us out of the public system.

A few years later, a private school was established not too far from our house. Some people were sure that we children wanted to attend that school. Even when we said we preferred to homeschool, they replied with, "You're just saying that—you don't really mean it." If we went grocery shopping in the afternoon after our school work was done, we were sure to be asked if this was a day off from school. Then we had to tell them that we had school at home and face the questions that followed.