

No matter where you live, if you have children of school going age, you will have grappled with the whole concept of how best to educate your child. For some the question is an academic one, for others it is a matter of proximity to where they live or work. Others still consider the size of the classroom, or how well the sports programme is organized. But what we should really be considering is whether or not God's Word is honoured and obeyed in the classroom.

The shaping and moulding of your child's mind cannot be left in the care of individuals that do not share your worldview. To teach biology, for example, in an environment that denies the Author of life is like eating an egg while denying the chicken. To teach history apart from God is to praise the sculpture and deny the sculptor. To learn science and mathematics apart from the omnipotent God is to throw out the computer and do your computations with a roulette wheel. When your children spend an average of seven hours, five days a week, at school, and when you consider sports and homework, precious little time is left with them. So, the onus is on you as the parent to ensure that the education they receive is compatible with your beliefs.

In South Africa, there are still some great schools that are run by godly principals and dedicated teachers to be sure. But they are stemming an ever increasing tide which is becoming more and more overwhelming. Some families have the option of private schools and even great Christian schools. Sadly there are very few of these, and many are either too expensive, too far away, or the waiting list is too long. Fortunately, we have the privilege now of another option: Home schooling.

When I tell people I am home schooling four children, the response is varied. Some just stare in disbelief. Others shuffle awkwardly, because they now have no idea how to relate to me anymore. Others still look anxiously at my children to see whether or not they are social misfits incapable of carrying on a coherent conversation. Well, perhaps it is too soon to say with my children, but I can report what I have observed in other home educated families as well as the research I have read.

Most moms respond by saying something like 'I am not cut out to handle my children all day'; or 'I do not have that kind of stamina'; or 'what about sports'; or 'but how do your children learn social skills'; or, 'how do they make it into university'? My experience is that you need to, as

parents, decide on a good strategy for raising your children - before you can decide on a good strategy to educate them. Scripture is the best manual for raising our children, but there are also some great books and resources out there to help us along the way. I believe this is where you must start. If you have disobedient children who ignore your instructions day after day then it is no wonder you cannot wait to send them off to school. But if good ground rules have been laid, and everyone plays by these rules, then home schooling can be a very successful adventure. After all, if your children are not taught to obey you, then how can you ever expect them to ultimately obey God?

Home schooling provides an opportunity for a superior education for a variety of reasons. Allowing children to work at their own pace is reason enough. This works well with the student who is slower at mastering some concept as well as the child who is quick to catch on. Each home schooling set up is as unique as each family. Many families make use of a variety of curriculums, because their children are all so different. Home schooling should not be entered into on the spur of the moment just because you are fed up with little Suzie's teacher. Nor should it be attempted just because you feel your child is bullied, a slow learner or otherwise disadvantaged in his current school environment.

For home schooling to be successful, I feel you need to be convinced as parents that it is the right thing for you to undertake. If you are not, you will really battle to weather the storms that will inevitably come. The ups and downs, the frustrations, the sacrifice of your time and the nagging question about whether or not you are giving your child all he or she needs will be part of the package. But the rewards are worth it. The home schooling families I have observed have some of the most well-adjusted children. The interaction between the ages and between the generations is smooth and natural. Intelligent conversations are the norm, compassion for each other is common and the ability to manage time is a natural by-product. Research done in the United States shows clearly that home-educated children are sought after by most leading universities.

The last, and one of the most common, hindrances to home schooling for many parents is the feeling of inadequacy to teach. You do not need any fancy qualifications to teach your children. You need to learn to 'think outside of the box'.

Needed ingredients are:

- 1) Commitment to the Lord and His will for your family
- 2) A desire to do what is best for your children
- 3) Time
- 4) Good time management skills

The following is taken from 'No Greater Joy' by Michael and Debbie Pearl: "What can be called success if your children turn out to be part of the world's problem rather than its cure? What satisfaction can there be in the comforts of material success if your children grow up needing counsel rather than being sought after to give counsel? If your children lie awake at night suffering from guilt and anxiety, being gnawed upon by the demons of intemperance and self-indulgence, how can you enjoy your food or pillow? The success of a tree and a man is measured by the fruit that is borne. The fruit of a man or woman is their children; everything else is falling leaves. Let me die poor; let me die early; let me be ravaged by disease; just let my children rise up and call me blessed. Let me not measure my giving by the dollars I spend on them or the educational opportunities that my station in life affords them, but rather, by the hours I spend with them in fellowship.

"May they graduate from my tutorship to become disciples of the Man from Nazareth. May they learn good and evil from the pinnacle of obedience rather than from the pit of despair. May they have the wisdom to choose the precious, and the courage to reject the trite and the vain things in life. May they be lovers of God, co-workers with the Holy Spirit, and a friend to the Lord Jesus. And when their trail ends, may it end at the throne of God, laying crowns at the Saviour's feet."

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The Pearls have also authored a number of very helpful books. My favorites are: 'No Greater Joy volumes one, two and three.'

Recommended resources:

Praise Her in The Gates by Nancy Wilson

Future Men by Douglas Wilson

Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning by Douglas Wilson

The Heart of Homeschooling by Christopher Klicka

available through Christian Liberty Books Tel/Fax 021 - 689 7478 Email:

admin@christianlibertybooks.co.za Website: www.christianlibertybooks.co.za

So, your strategy as you consider Home Schooling should be:

Get some good books on child raising and read them

Get good books on home schooling and read them

Get onto your computer, and type 'home schooling' into your search engine, and you will be amazed at how many options come up on your screen

Get to know some moms locally who home school and ask as many questions as possible.

Pray, pray and then pray some more.

May God bless you and give you wisdom as you care for the hearts and minds of your children.

Lenora Hammond