

## Where is Your Homeschool Ship Anchored?

How do you answer the question: “Why did you start home educating?” Your answer reveals a lot about your personal philosophy of education. Most people I talk to start home educating for one of several reasons. They want a better education for their children, or they are escaping a bad educational situation, or maybe they want to provide their children with a Christian education. Those who start because they want a better education for their children will often leave home education for similar reasons. When another education option comes along that is more convenient or seems to provide a better education, they move in that direction. Those who homeschool to escape a bad educational situation will often switch when they find what looks to be an easier alternative that allows them to resume their previous lifestyle without having to worry about their children’s education. Those who start because they want a Christian education for their children will often look to private schools if their financial situation improves or they hit a difficult place in their home education journey. Many fail to gain the greatest benefits of home education because they begin with incorrect motives and quit prematurely.

I find that most people who continue to home educate over the long haul do so because they started from, or came to, a place where their commitment to homeschool is anchored in a Biblical philosophy of education that centers around family discipleship. The Bible clearly places primary responsibility for children with the parents. Psalm 127: 1-4 explains that children are a gift of the Lord. They are strategic weapons (arrows) in the hand of a mighty warrior. The Lord is the warrior; parents are the arrow smiths who prepare the arrows for His use. As stewards of their children, parents are to raise them and prepare them to be mature members of adult society. Children need to develop Godly character, know how to make a living, keep a house, handle adult responsibilities, and be a contributing member of a local body of Christian believers in order to extend God’s kingdom until He returns. All of this is in addition to what we traditionally call “education.”

In a homeschool centered on Biblical family discipleship, the difficult times are part of the education! They teach character and allow the parents to model character for their children. Students learn about overcoming difficulties as they watch their parents struggle. Parents learn alongside the children and the entire family is involved in family discipleship as they mature together in Christ. Families like this endure because they cling to a Biblical definition of education and they are committed to a greater purpose than academic success. For them, home education is not another educational alternative; it is a lifestyle of family discipleship.

It is interesting to note that God designed the family (not schools or churches) as the place where kids are to be disciplined. It is impossible for a school to truly educate (disciple) a child in the Biblical sense. The best they can do is to teach academic subjects. Schools are incapable of accomplishing the other aspects of Biblical discipleship. Parents who place their children in a day school must be doubly careful to wisely use the time outside of school to finish the job in the home.

The local church is to stand with parents to assist them in discipling their children. The church is to equip the saints for the work of the service (Eph. 4:12) and be a place for encouragement (Heb. 10:25). Churches should organize their ministry in ways that bring the family unit together. Unfortunately, in our culture, a family church

is often one which has separate activities for every member of the family whenever the church meets. It is almost as if there is a deliberate plan to keep families apart. When families worship and minister together children learn how to worship and minister from their parents and parents learn how to model worship and ministry for their kids. A church that brings families together may be the only place in our culture where they are encouraged to be together. Education, work, hobbies, and activities usually tend to pull families apart.

A lifestyle of family discipleship takes some planning. It is helpful to construct a personal philosophy of education in order to set meaningful goals for teaching and raising your children. Here are some sample questions you can ask as you construct a personal philosophy of education:

### **Education Philosophy Questions**

What is education?

What does the best education look like?

Who is responsible for education?

How do I know when my child is educated?

What should he/she know when educated?

How should my child act when educated?

Where do I get information to answer these questions?

*Why are these questions important?* Success in education demands a clearly defined goal. If you aim at nothing you will most certainly hit it! More significant is the fact that you will have to answer these questions when your children begin to ask them!!

Educational goals are derived from our educational philosophy. This is a list of sample educational goals published on page 11 of *The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling*, by Debra Bell (Published by Tommy Nelson). The comments in parentheses are mine and show the philosophical purpose for each goal:

1. We want our children to love to learn. (truth is reflection of God's character)
2. We want our children to have a marketable set of skills. (God created us to work in order to provide for our needs and those of others)
3. We want our children to accurately understand the Christian faith and enjoy a vital relationship with the Lord. (This is the source of purpose and happiness in life)
4. We want our children to articulate with integrity the Christian faith to a lost and dying world in a way that is both culturally relevant and persuasive. (This is a demonstration of love)