



THE BENEFITS OF HOMESCHOOLING...

For the
Homeschooling
Parent

It has long been recognized in the homeschooling community—and even by its critics—that homeschooled children tend to excel. However, homeschooling affects the parents just as much. This e-book summarizes several of the ways the homeschool life turns parents into better people, better contributors to society, and better followers of God.

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The Benefits, Bonuses and Blessings of Being a Homeschool Parent



(Introduction)

For the diehard homeschooling parent, the parent who is thinking about homeschooling or the curious, this e-book focuses on how homeschooling improves the one who does the homeschooling as much as, if not more than, the one receiving the education.

There's a lot out there about the benefits to the homeschooled student. Statistics say that, on average, the homeschooler scores higher on achievement tests, relates better to people across the age spectrum, and finds his or her niche in life faster. And those averages touch just the tip of the perennial iceberg. Being homeschooled is a good thing.

But I'd like to explore the flip side of the equation. The side most studies don't address.

Homeschooling will make the person who chooses to homeschool the children under his or her care into a better person.

I want to write this while the memories and experiences are still fresh as I live in this season of transition. While my youngest still lives at home as he goes to college, both my guys have graduated homeschool and are moving forward with their education, careers and life in general. I'm working more outside the home and my hubby's retirement date nears. Big changes.

But homeschooling changed me in ways that will make me more fit for my remaining years and then more fit for heaven. God has used that time to refine my character, my intellect and my compassion—to name a few. And I know from chatting with homeschool parents over the years that I am not alone.

Yes, this e-book will focus on various aspects of my own story and give you my top fifteen reasons (in no particular order) for why the school at home lifestyle benefits the parent. But it is my hope that it reminds you of your own experiences or gives you hope for your future as a homeschooling parent. Whether you decide to homeschool for one year or twenty-five, it will make you different and continue to shape you long after your homeschooling days. The experience carves its imprint on your soul, making you a bit more how God wants you to be.

And when you remember the adventures and your own stories, I'd love to hear them!

Reason 1: Home

Reason two will focus on the ‘school’ part of homeschool that makes the parent smarter, but reason one means the parent is there. The parent is home, mostly available. The homeschooling parent learns to be present for their children.

Any parent can co-exist with children. We can be physically near our kids and yet have no clue who they are and what makes them tick. Even if we purpose to be present, even if we work to understand the gifts God has given us, they can act and react in ways that boggle our minds.

The only way to sort of cope with that is to spend lots of time with them. To do that, we create both a place and state of being that they will identify as home.

So what does home mean? What does being home mean?

Scripture reminds us often that this world is not our home. Once we become Christians, little Christs who follow after our Lord, his home becomes our home. And his home is heaven.

Thus, as much as earthly possible, our homes should be little oases of heaven in a fallen world.

How on earth do we do that?

- 1) Center life on the Bible. Turn to it for guidance. Turn to it for controlling principles. Turn to it for answers to any questions your kids have.
- 2) Bow to divine authority. We don’t have to like what God says to do or how he commands us to behave as parents. We just have to do it.
- 3) Make home a place of comfort, love and open arms. Our kids should know we always love them and we’ll always welcome them. This does not mean we will always agree with them or approve of their choices. That’s because things go back to points one and two.

4) For me, this point means have a cat. Some it means have a dog. Others it means have a place of quiet. You know your personality and what you need around when the world gets too much. What creature or situation can you bring into your home to remind you that God is still in control?

There is so much more to this and much of it is personal. But do your best to create a sense of home and then share it with those you love.

Reason 2: School

Probably the most obvious benefit, blessing or bonus of becoming a homeschool parent is that by teaching your children daily and consistently, you yourself will become smarter. Conventional teachers will frequently comment how much their students teach them or how the requirements of education keep them learning. Homeschooling, too, affects the teacher in the same ways. This section will address four of them. Do what you can to apply all of these to your homeschooling experience (trust me, you can't avoid most of them) and your brain will thank you for it.

1) Repetition. By teaching your children, at varying levels, the facts that you convey will become engrained in your mind as well. Things that you first learned as a student just to pass or move on will suddenly become accessible and understandable—especially as you teach it for the third or fourth time. And if you help your child memorize something through repetition that you never knew growing up, chances are good that you'll memorize it, too. That's how I learned the books of the Bible.

2) Fluency. By teaching ideas and concepts that you covered in school, but may have struggled with, they will become more familiar and relatable. For instance, Geometry has never been my strong suit. I prefer Algebra. But after taking it once and teaching it twice, the Pythagorean Theorem makes sense and I can explain it to others. I can also explain why the predictable variations of the 30-

60-90 and the 45-45-90 triangles work. This is a strong contrast to my school years where I just plugged in numbers and hoped for the best.

3) Expanding knowledge base. While homeschooling, I had to learn new facts. Sometimes it came from one of their questions that needed an answer. When 5-year-old Erik demanded to know how civilization began, I learned about Hammurabi and his code. I had no recollection of ever learning that in school. Sometimes, it was simply the next stage in curriculum that taught me something new. After they finished Biology, my highest science, I learned Chemistry and Physics along with them. Likewise, whenever I supervised their research for a paper or tried a new teaching method to help them master a skill, I learned.

4) Recognizing limits. Many of the things I've learned have shown me where I am not wired. I can struggle enough to sort of grasp and explain high school Physics, for instance, but I will never be completely comfortable with it. Working with those concepts feels like I'm trying to assemble a house, using only straws, while keeping my eyes shut. However, language use and algebra have become clearer over the years. The more I learn, the more I realize that I still have to learn, and the more I know that I was not meant to know and understand everything.

Thankfully for the ultimate smarts and understanding, we have an infinite God!

Reason 3: Wiser (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

There's a reason that the temptation Satan gave Eve centers on wisdom—our pride and our ego—our sin in other words, wants to exalt ourselves above God. However, if we recognize him as the source of all wisdom and honor that, he does promise to make us wiser than serpents while remaining as harmless as doves.

Between the words 'wise' and 'wisdom', the Bible has over four hundred verses! God values the person who submits to him in order to learn true wisdom.

Homeschooling helps the parent or teacher grow in wisdom because the process, the days, repeatedly bring us to the end of ourselves. The honest homeschooler will realize, quite frequently, that apart from God, we can do nothing.

One reason that homeschooling will drive us to our knees and to the throne of God frequently is the transparency of the process. We are with our kids constantly. They see us and how we act day in and day out. We have nowhere to hide.

This vulnerability helps us grow, but it is often painful. Or at the very least, it keeps us on our toes and aware that what we do, moment to moment, matters.

I remember one shopping trip that Karl accompanied me on, for instance. As I approached the checkout, a homeless woman came up to me with reading glasses in her hand.

“I have to have these, ma’am. My eyesight isn’t what it used to be.”

I acknowledged her with some meaningless words and tried to get back to loading my items to the space in front of the cashier. But she wasn’t done yet.

“Ma’am, surely you can afford these and help me out.”

Karl stood silently behind me.

“After all, you have such a well-behaved young man here. That’s proof that things are going well for you.”

I looked at the cashier who subtly shook her head from side to side. She told me not to help this woman. It was probably a scam on her part. But I felt a twinge somewhere deep and listened. *Do what you can for the least of these.*

I bought the glasses.

Shortly thereafter, I saw that same woman buying a lottery ticket. I mentioned it to Karl.

“So?” he said. “She’s confused and doesn’t have her priorities straight.” He paused. “You had to do it. I would have thought less of you if you didn’t.”

Ouch.

Wisdom trusts the promptings of the Spirit even when they don’t make sense. And if we follow, while our children watch, we give them the ability to act wisely, too.

Reason 4: Braver

Countless passages in Scripture tell the follower of God not to fear, not to be anxious, but my favorite is one I memorized in AWANAs, Joshua 1:9. *Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest. (KJV)*

Israel was heading into new territory. From what they could see, it was beautiful. From what God had promised them, it would be amazing and filled with abundance. But they couldn’t just have it. They had to fight for it. And the land was filled with giants, walled cities, and violent marauders. Yes, God was fighting with them and for them, but you know how it is. His presence isn’t always as obvious as a pillar of cloud, a tower of fire or manna on the ground. For those times we can’t see him or sense him, God issues the reminder. *I am with you wherever you go... be brave.*

As homeschoolers, we are constantly called to new territories. Whether it is the search for a curriculum to fit our child... filled with frustration and failed attempts or moving from one stage of homeschooling to another, these changes can terrify and intimidate





us. But God says again, *Be not afraid nor dismayed, for I am with you.*

There are nights, in spite of this knowledge, that I have covered in fear, sleepless and oppressed. Bravery has fled from me. But daylight comes and I am reminded that God has not left his throne. In the security of the light, I can easily take a nap.

I would not call myself naturally brave by any means, but God called me to homeschool our two sons. Training guys, for a female, takes extra courage because they have to test their limits. Sometimes the bravest thing is not what I do myself, but what I let them do or how I react when they take a chance.

I'll never forget when Karl learned to ride a bike. I was a bit ahead of him when he called, "Look Mom! I'm going to do something dangerous!" Before I could stop him, he took his hands off the bike, hit a pothole and flew onto the street. Yes, he fell and scraped himself up. But before falling, he bravely exercised his wings.

Since homeschooling, God has exercised my wings. What follows is a short list of times life with my guys has helped me step into the unknown.

- Scary amusement park rides
- Earn a two-year Bible certificate
- Ride a Segway off-road
- Hold a hissing cockroach, a snake, an alligator, and pet a stingray
- Sign both guys up for high adventure treks
- Climb Old Rag
- Finish my AWANA Timothy Award
- Achieve black belt, and then second and third degrees, in taekwondo
- Keep marketing my books in spite of disappointments (it took 10 years from finishing my first novel before I saw one published)

- ... and many other things that don't come to mind.

But even though I've officially ended my homeschool journey, I want to continue to put my wings to work.

The next thing I want to tackle? I want to hold God's hand as I head down the zipline at the Creation Museum. Maybe that will finally slay my fear of heights!

Reason 5: More Common Sense

Homeschooling makes you savvy-er. OK, that's not a real word and I know it. But it sounds better than commonsenser. The fact is that homeschooling your children will exercise your common sense. It will help you become more savvy and matter-of-fact.

I'll be honest. Smarts come fairly easily to me. Common sense about day-to-day life? Not so much.

But homeschooling causes me to grow in daily logic and rational thought. Still, if you ask my guys, they might admit that I've improved in the category, but I still need a bunch of extra help!

Here are a few things that have helped me apply the savvy quotient to my days.

- 1) Group similar tasks together. Left to my own nature and devices, my way of attacking a day has little, if any, sense of reason to it. When I forget to apply this step, I call myself the headless chicken. It means that I'm frantically running in every direction and not making headway on any task or project.
- 2) Sort, organize and plan. For most of my life, I considered all of those equal with curse words. I have never liked the process of organizing anything. My way of sorting paper or junk or anything else is to group it into related piles. But piles have a way of becoming bigger piles and soon I don't know what any of them contain. When it gets to that stage, I become really stressed out. And when I get to that point, Gary, who is an organizer, has already been stressed about it for

quite a while. That really isn't fair to my poor hubby. As I said, I still need a lot of work on any of the common-sense skills like this one, but I am making progress!

3) Keep a central list of the items that need to be done for work, around the house, or for others. I have a tendency to write 'to do' items down whenever I think of them and on whatever happens to be handy. That is a good way for something to get overlooked. So I try to keep them all in one notebook, with the most pressing things and appointments written on the calendar in the kitchen. That way, fewer things slip through the cracks.

This remains one of my weakest areas, so if you think of any other techniques and tips for me, I'd love to hear them.

Reason 6: Weaker



It might seem, since earlier on the list was braver, that there's a contradiction here. But no. The only way to become stronger spiritually is to recognize that I am weak.

The picture is from a time I knew I couldn't do it. That was graduation from my Air Force training.

The military was so beyond me and I felt so weak and insignificant that I prayed all the time. That, I know, got me through.

Lately, sleep is one my major weaknesses. In the middle of the night, my thoughts race and I feel vulnerable. Sometimes my heart echoes the speed of my thoughts and I have to pace for a while until my breathing returns to normal. Sometimes I will read before I fall back asleep. Sometimes I will sing songs to myself or recite poems. But what I always do is pray.

In the middle of the night, my defenses are down. That's why a dream or a leg cramp can wake me up suddenly and put me on high alert. But in the middle of the night, also because

my defenses are down, if a person or name comes to mind, I will pray for him or her right then. In my weakness, I am much more responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

During the day, I can imagine myself in control or I can get overwhelmed with busy-ness. Either will distract me from the promptings of God. I may promise that I'll pray about a concern or a request—later. The long, dark hours of the soul draw me to God's throne because I see myself then for what I am—small and weak.

God would love it if I recognized my need and his leading twenty-four hours a day. Yet, I seem to forget what's truly important so often. In tackling the circumstances that flood my hours, I lose the sense that I am at the foot of the throne of God and that I serve Him.

While not ideal, it's OK. I know when I've pulled too far away during the daylight hours, the night comes. And when He needs me to pray, God will wake me—to live small, weak and totally dependent upon Him.

As the Apostle Paul says in the second letter to the Corinthian church. "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Reason 7: More Intuitive

As I rode with Karl the other day, I twitched. He was approaching a stoplight faster than I liked, but I knew he had it under control so I vowed not to say anything.

"I saw that!" he announced. "Stop criticizing my driving."

"But I didn't say anything. I made a point of not saying anything. You're doing fine."



“Maybe not,” he conceded, “but I can read you. And I knew you thought I wasn’t braking fast enough.”

Karl’s always been a bit more adept with motorized items than I’m comfortable with. The picture many years ago with the Segways was just one evidence of such. He takes to wheels and motors easily—more easily than I’d like.

But the focus of this post is not Karl’s excellent driving ability, but more of the fact of how easily he reads me.

And to an extent, it goes the other way, too. There’s just something about being with my sons day in and day out that convinced this homeschool mom of two things:

- 1) I’m much more emotional than I ever realized, and,
- 2) Most of the emotions I experience have no bearing on reality.

I can feel sad when everything is going well with equal ease as feeling joyful after staying up most of the night with a sick child.

A key, at least for me, is seeing the word ‘motion’ within the word ‘emotion’. The mood will go. Often, it will go as fast as it came. That can be a shame when it’s enjoyable, but something to cheer when the feelings are negative.

So why is all this rollercoaster a blessing? Well, we were created to feel, to empathize and to rejoice. Emotion is woven through us. So that’s part of it. But I’ve also never really thought of myself as that emotional. I’m quiet and my feelings don’t often show on my face. (Unless you happen to be Karl who says I telegraph every mood to him. Most people think I never stress out or get upset.) But compared to my guys, I conceal nothing. So I’ve had to train myself to look for clues.

And that, in turn, has helped me see changes in those around me.

I can still be totally ignorant of someone’s discomfort or pain, but I’ve gotten much better. So if I come up to you someday and say, ‘you look tired’ or ‘do you have a headache?’ thank my sons. Homeschooling them has made me much more intuitive to those around me.

Reason 8: More Willing to Persevere

I am naturally stubborn. That is not a good thing, but it is truthful. As a child, it led to more than my fair share of temper tantrums with the familiar phrase: I won't! Imagine small arms crossed across a chest and as defiant a position as a pre-teen form can assume. I knew it well...

As a child, I often saw my stance as justified. I perceived some wrong or injustice that I wasn't willing to put up with even if my parents explained their reasoning. Life just isn't fair.

As an adult and a homeschooling mom, the maxim that life isn't fair echoed. It isn't. It really isn't. But if we wanted true fairness, we'd all be headed to hell and we don't want that either. What we want grace... but with an edge that favors us over the next guy.

So why do I mention all of that? Because I think as agape is to regular love, perseverance is to stubbornness. Perseverance is the God side of the equation, the good way of expressing the emotion, and stubborn temper tantrums is the bad way.

We need the discipline of perseverance for when things don't go the way we expect or plan.

Back in the early days of homeschooling, I thought I knew it all. I had taught other peoples' children with success. Then my firstborn took to education easily, too.

So God gave me one that would need perseverance to grow me. Karl struggled with reading.

One day he'd be able to sound out the little picture books. The next it was total gibberish. The same thing with our phonics and learn-to-read programs. Each would seem to work for a while. Then he'd hit a wall.

It wasn't that he didn't try. It wasn't that I set him front of the books or the programs and left the room. It was just hard. Really hard. It needed perseverance.

We went through a total of five phonics programs and three learn-to-read curriculums. Nothing really did it.

Karl and I listened to audiobooks. I read to him. A lot. And we sounded out books that interested him as much as possible.

Then one day, he decided he wanted to read *Eragon* by Christopher Paolini. It is not a short book. But he was determined. He had perseverance. And the battle was won for him with that decision.

Today, reading comprehension is the easiest part for him in any testing situation. I wish I could say I had something to do with that. But I just walked alongside him until he wanted it for himself.

Reason 9: Closer to God

If there's anything an honest homeschooler learns quickly, it's the following. In our own strength, homeschooling isn't just hard, it's absolutely impossible.

How do you decide what books to read, what curriculums to use, what skills are necessary for your budding students? How do you teach one (or more) student all day when you were up with a sick sibling all night? How do you get past the butting heads of ego and personality clashes? How do you cope with an overloaded calendar and an unmotivated student? How do you deal with all complications and wrenches that life throws into the mix? How do you prepare young lives for being strong and faithful in a fallen world?

The answer to all of these is to lean on God, pray continually and fill yourself with his word.

As mentioned in the post on weakness, many of our failings that God points out through our circumstances in order to grow us. When we're weak, he can work in us. So that's the weaker point and benefit. But the other side of it is that when we know we can't, when we see every iota of our weakness and the whole futility of it all, we lean in closer to our heavenly father. We will sit on his lap, call him Daddy, and ask him to take care of things.

Many verses in Scripture remind us that as his children, we need to stay close. Here are just a few:

James 4:8

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

Matthew 1:23

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

Psalm 46:7

The Lord of hosts *is* with us; The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah

Psalm 37:7

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

We draw close because only God can educate our children as he needs. Only he can give us the wisdom needed to raise up godly men and women.

We also draw close because we are children, too. We need the love and guidance of the perfect parent. We also need his comfort and reassurance. In a sense, we never grow up so much that we do not need his arms around us or the whisper of wisdom into our soul.



Reason 10: Unscheduled Free Time

Now that I'm technically not a homeschooling mom anymore, I miss the ability to declare on a day that I'm too tired to think: "How about a field trip!" or "Who's for a PJ day?" or "Why don't we all crash at the library and do nothing but read for a few hours?"

There is something joyous and liberating about thumbing one's nose up at the schedule and doing something fun instead.

That doesn't mean that fun doesn't involve learning. Often it does. But it isn't structured learning. It's learning that allows the brain room to breathe and exist creatively. It, in essence, is where the best ideas come from.

On one such impromptu field trip, Erik learned that he wanted to be a scientist. Later, during a school-in-session vacation at Monticello, he decided he wanted to work with plants.

While Karl never received bursts of career foresight from our days off of school, he did always make new friends. We had never been anywhere for very long before Karl had started a conversation and found a new friend.

But most importantly, I think the guys learned that they were more important than the schedule. For a list maker whose chief joy as night closes in is seeing how many items got checked off of my to-do list, that's saying a lot.

Still, as the focus of this series of posts says, it benefitted me as the parent immensely. I don't think any of the Talbott family mysteries would have come to life if it hadn't been for the days or hours when we, as a homeschooled family, rebelled against the plans made at the beginning of the year and went and did something crazy. Or something quiet. Whatever it was, it was something that hadn't worked its way onto the original template for what our homeschool year would look like.

Looking back, the days and hours of following the plan blur. They were so much the same. Necessary to some extent to get the grunt work of learning done, but repetitive and boring. The days where we declared mutiny... those, I remember.

And those are the days that homeschool tales are born from.

Reason 11: More Empathetic

Not all of the ways that homeschooling improves us are enjoyable. Some of the things that benefit us, that grow us as people are difficult, to say the least. The training for this section is one I'd rather not endure. Because in order to feel empathy for the pain of others, we need to live through our own pain first.

Now it doesn't have to be exactly the same pain, though that does help. If we have lost a pet, for instance, we can comfort someone who has recently lost a canine companion a bit better than someone who never experienced the same situation.

But trials are trials, pain is pain, grief is grief. All are part of the human condition. You only need read a bit of the Bible to know that suffering comes with the Christian life. If the world causes you problems, remember it did that to our Lord—only much more so.

First off, I'll say that parenting with or without homeschooling completes much of this training. Opening your life to the struggles of new lives, gifts from the Lord, softens you. It's how God wired us. Our desire to nurture and protect our offspring has been hardwired into us. We want to take all their burdens upon us and pave their way into a bright future.

However, as flawed sinners, we make a lot of mistakes. Still, in our best and most empathetic parenting, we imitate our Lord who took all of our burden of sin upon himself and paved the best path to a bright future that we could dream of—eternal life.

But homeschooling adds an extra layer. Anything your child suffers through, you see. You are there watching it. You do your best to help, but you can only do so much. Children must learn. And some have to learn the hard way or none of the lessons sink in and become personal.

How much you, the homeschooling parent wants to complete the task or learn the lesson on the child's behalf! But that won't do any good. So you coach. You stand alongside. And quietly (or not so quietly) suffer the pain your student endures.

All of this, all of this coming alongside, opens you up to the trials and sufferings of others. One thing homeschool parents do well when they assemble is share notes. What they have just endured might help another.

Or sometimes they just hold a hand and weep.

Because we know what it means to pour 110% into those we love.

Reason 12: Help with Work

I spent a lot of the last few days cleaning and organizing. At times like these, missing Erik's presence in the house adds a new dimension. I miss his strong back and many chore-performing talents. Karl still does his share, but he only has two hands. He can't make up for the lack of his brother no matter how hard he tries.

Over the years, I truly have enjoyed the different skills that my guys offer and ways they can help out around our house—and around the neighborhood. Actually, I think both of them enjoy work more when it is for someone not related to them!

In days gone by, children were not only seen as a blessing, but as a resource. Each child meant two extra hands, two extra feet and one extra body to help with what needed to be done. As soon as the child could toddle, he or she would begin receiving tasks. These jobs and chores would increase in complexity and burden commensurate with the child's development.

As civilization modernized, part of which included laws written to keep children from doing things that would endanger them, the world of work has been divorced from many of our youth. They have school, they have activities, but they have few, if any, jobs that task them and make them work and work hard.





I think removing this stage of growth does our kids a disservice. But it also takes away a blessing from the parents.

During the growing up years, my guys learned a lot of skills. In turn, those skills saved me work. For a couple of years, Erik cooked most, if not all, of one meal per week. That was so nice!

But both guys really benefitted from their Eagle projects when they were part of BS2215. (Troop 2215 still exists, but it is now a Trail Life troop.) The physical labor, planning, and organization stretched both of them. It taught them how to work and work with a group.

These pictures are from their respective projects. Erik created parking spaces and drainage so the area wouldn't flood. Karl refurbished a food pantry and installed new shelves.

Kids need ways to teach them their limits in a way that imitates the work world. And fortunately, when trained like that at home, the parents get the blessing of jobs done that they didn't need to do.

Reason 13: Seeing the Hand of God

The weekend we deposited Erik at the university of his choosing, I rejoiced for him and knew this was where God wanted him. One of the main reasons for my trust in how things are working out for him came from the week of three interviews several years ago.

In September of 2014, Erik was frustrated with the lack of progress towards his life goals. He had finished his GRE season with a score he liked and had completed one online grad school course in his field with a solid A. But then nothing. So he prayed. I could see his Bible on his desk quite often and knew, in spite of him never complaining, that he wanted things to change. He wanted to see progress.

I offered to pray, too.

He took me up on it. “Sure, Mom.”

Not long after we committed his future to prayer came the week of three interviews. Two were for different part-time jobs, both of which he took, and one was with a professor at the school he now attends. One or two interviews might have been coincidence, but three? It was so definitely a God-thing that I continue to praise Him and rejoice in the paths he has given our eldest.

Over the years of homeschooling, there have been countless moments where I have seen God’s hand. Whether something as simple as a close parking space when I had to carry a sleeping toddler to all the “coincidences” lining up to see my first book in print, God demonstrates that he treasures us. There have been free tickets to a Celtic festival when I forgotten I entered a contest, to a check for an article showing up right when I needed it. I have seen too many impossible and improbable things to think that God doesn’t care about me or is only involved at a distance. He is at work in our lives consistently and in more ways than I can even imagine.

But it’s in the day to day and the moment to moment that God has used homeschooling to help me see his hand and providence the most. When we pass an accident on the way to co-op that we could have been in if we’d left earlier or when I find steak in the freezer when I was convinced I didn’t have any more meat until I made it to the store, God cares. He answers the myriad of little prayers I breathe as quickly as a thought.

How much more does he care about the paths our children will take to become men and women after His heart?

Reason 14: In the Company of Greatness



One thing that we learned on our many field trips over the years is that many of the greats of history were homeschooled. Sometimes it was a matter of logistics, as in the case with leaders like Abraham Lincoln who came from pioneer families. When no school is within walking distance (and for him, walking distance was about ten miles), he was forced to undergo his own education.

I rejoice in the freedom to homeschool. God placed Gary and I in this country, this nation where the foundations have cyclically fostered the homeschool environment.

In the early, colonial days of America, many of our leaders received a home education. Sometimes it was because they couldn't afford to hire a tutor. Sometimes it was because they didn't live close to a city or town where education might be provided to young men of breeding. In the case of George Washington, it was due to both reasons. But observing the effectiveness and intelligence of the future general and president, homeschooling worked for him and worked well.

As our country expanded and the frontier homesteads popped up in the greater Ohio River valley, homeschooling again became a necessity. When possible, many of the children of these homesteads walked long distances to reach a trained teacher and one-room schoolhouse. But often the demands for many hands on the homesteads kept the children at home, working alongside their parents. Such was the case with Abraham Lincoln. His step-mother made sure he learned to read using the Bible and any other books available within walking distance—even though she, herself, did not know how to read. She ran interference between young Abe and his father, guaranteeing that our young president would do his hard work on the frontier, and have the time to get an education.

Born just a few years before the dawn of the Civil War, young Theodore Roosevelt found himself in a family of privilege in one of the nation's largest cities. He had schools, both private and public at his disposal. But homeschooling became part of his life after a lengthy battle with asthma and related illnesses. This foundation served him doubly well: 1) he

learned from the experts his parents brought in how to train his body and make himself stronger; and 2) allow him time to read and experiment and develop his mind until he easily qualified for admittance to Harvard.

Three presidential stories out of several. Three different reasons for homeschooling and at different time periods and cultures in our history.

The current cycle of homeschooling grew from the changes to public school in the sixties and seventies. Step by step, the Christian foundation of prayer and Bible reading were removed from the schools. And parents who wanted those foundations back, either put their children in Christian schools when available and affordable or began to pull them out and homeschool when the other opportunities did not work. They did this in spite of opposition, because they believed it the right thing to do. *Train up a child in the way he should go...*

Who knows what future famous leaders, presidents, CEOs, inventors, and Nobel Prize winners even, might be among the ranks of the homeschooled?

Reason 15: Finding Inspiration

Pick up any homeschool magazine and you will see advertisements for products that found their genesis in the typical homeschool day. My own story contains the stories that grew out of the time with my sons and their friends.

For several years, the boys attended a monthly group called Read It, Write It. Usually, they liked it, but sometimes they didn't. They learned a lot from the experience on how to give oral presentations and had to read types of books and genres they would have avoided otherwise, so it was good for them. But in truth, the meetings were for me.

Before and after the book reports, the homeschooling parents assembled in Ellie's kitchen. There, we talked about our struggles, our questions and our triumphs. There, I bounced ideas off moms and dads from the same world I lived in. In truth, Jeanine Talbott and

Guzman Guferntible (Guzzy Goofball) were born in that kitchen. Prior to this experience, I wrote (almost exclusively) sci-fi and fantasy. But since I lived the homeschool life, these homeschooling or homeschooled characters developed while we talked.

Guzzy came to life on one of these Fridays. I had experienced a long and tiring week, so I sipped my tea and listened while I paid my bills and sorted my mail. One of the moms was talking about some of the mishaps that occurred during a church drama. I couldn't help but laugh as she told it. After we all laughed for a while, we noticed kids listening in and chuckling, too.

On the way home, the boys brought up a familiar sore subject. One of the girls had done a book report on a character that was homeschooled. That, they liked. But as most of these books were, the main protagonist was female. It was hard enough to find fiction with homeschoolers in it. It was even harder to find homeschool fiction with boys as the main characters.

I don't know which of them said it, but one did. "You know, something funny like what Mrs. YYYY talked about today."

That started my brain whirring. Once we got home, I wrote the line, "I owe every misfortune to the name my parents condemned me to: Guzman Guferntible." And Guzzy came to life on the computer screen.

He was a fifth-grade homeschooled boy with twin younger brothers and a best friend (also homeschooled) named Shriek who lived down the street. As my younger son was earning frequent flier miles at the emergency room at the time, I based some of Guzzy's mishaps and close encounters on his. I based Shriek on an actual homeschooled friend of the boys—except for the trademark yell of the character. That, I added in order to give her a memorable nickname and make her more of a tomboy.

Once I finished the story, I presented it to the same audience that sparked the idea. The families at Read It Write It were my first critiquers. They enjoyed it, but made some suggestions and changes based on their experiences.

After all, who would know the homeschool world better than a group of homeschoolers?

Conclusion:

There you have it, my top fifteen reasons for why homeschooling improves the parent(s) who homeschool as much as it does the children under their care. This is by no means an exhaustive list. Rather, these are the ways that I know, without a doubt, that I have been molded by the experience.

If you have your own homeschooling stories that you'd like to share or if you are willing to be interviewed for my blog, please e-mail me at lytteks@gmail.com.

I look forward to hearing from you!

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