

Why Do You Educate Your Own Children?

by Rodger Williams

Christian father, why does your family educate your own children? If you do not have the reasons firmly established in your mind, then when the hard times come -- and they will -- you will be unprepared to weather the storms.

One reason we make the sacrifice to educate our own children is for the better education they get with individual instruction. Even when it appears that chaos reigns, our children end up being able to think better because of their increased meaningful interaction with parents and others who are not their same-aged peers. The strengths of home education end up outweighing any inefficiencies. And our children are the better for it.

But there is a much more important result that a Christian father should want for his children: We want them to be God's people, loving the Lord and obeying Him throughout their lives. Home-based discipleship should be the ultimate reason we educate at home.

If you are like me, you feel very insecure in this area. We do not put the time in with our children that we want to. All of us are caught in the undertow of life's responsibilities and events. We do what we can to disciple our children, but it seems so meager. And there is always the nagging realization that some other fathers are much more organized about encouraging their children in the Christian faith.

But God is gracious to us and uses the home education environment to make up for many of our deficiencies. For one thing, we do not constantly have to counter anti-Christian influences that many other families face. The osmosis of our Christian faith has a chance to take up some of the slack as our children spend time with their Christian mother and siblings rather than in a godless-by-design classroom. And your personal example, such as reading your Bible at night, somehow counts for more.

That does not mean that we just go on autopilot, depending on home education by itself to disciple our children. We need to give deliberate attention to guiding our children in their walk with the Lord, thinking about how we can do a better job of it. Teaching our own children at home gives us a unique opportunity to carry out that home-based discipleship.

So, this is what is really at stake: The home-based Christian discipleship of our children.

What can interfere with that purpose of discipling our children at home?

The first thing is the stress it brings onto your wife. The mothers bear the burden in most homeschools. So when she is frustrated, tired or discouraged, you need to be there to support her. She is on the front line daily, and she needs your encouragement and intervention when necessary. I know you are drained when you get home from work. But you need to reserve some energy for lifting up your wife when she needs you.

This is a duty you need to take seriously. Be aware of your responsibilities in this support and leadership role as a husband and father, and determine in your own mind to do what is necessary to help your wife keep going in the face of the inevitable adversities of home education. We can't afford to fail our families at this point; we have too much riding on the outcome.

Another area that interferes with the home-based discipleship of our children is money. Home education costs money, not only in direct expenses but more forcefully in lost income. None of us go into this blindly. We know we will have a lower standard of living than a two-income family. But the recurring problem is this: The father gets tired of paying for curriculum and educational activities. And there is this convenient local public school program designed for homeschoolers. Everything is free there.

But public school at home has the same agenda as public school in the school building: It is godless by design. Neutrality of curriculum is a myth. Your children will be taught that God is not relevant to their education. They will be tested on materials increasingly more designed to further the public school social re-engineering goals.

Your wife cannot catch and counteract everything they throw at your children. She just does not have time to teach two different curriculums: the slanted materials they will be tested on by the public school program and the counter-balancing truths they need to absorb to become disciples of Christ.

You can save some money in this way, but it will destroy your purpose of home-based discipleship. The irony is that the money you save is on the minor part, which is curriculum and activities. The bulk of your home education money investment is the lost income of a second wage earner. So you are trading your major benefit for a lesser savings. It is a poor bargain.

Better to economize on curriculum and activities while building up your children in their Christian faith, than be reduced to servitude to the public school.

All of this goes back to the foundational question: Why do you educate your own children? For a Christian father, the right answer is home-based discipleship. That is the driving force why we make the sacrifices we do. That is what we need to focus on. That, in the end, will be what makes it all worthwhile: knowing that we have helped our children to love the Lord and to obey His call on their lives.

May God help us to faithfully carry out our duty as Christian fathers.

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