

31 Days of Encouragement for the Homeschool Mom



from the Teach Them Diligently Bloggers
compiled by Candace Crabtree
Amanda Pelser, editor

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Dedication

This book is lovingly dedicated to all the moms that are struggling, day in and day out, to love and educate their children in the ways of the Lord. Living in a world, yet not of it, comes with many trials. Yet, God is faithful. Each of us, as contributors, is praying that the Lord will encourage your hearts as you read these words.

May He bless each of you on your homeschooling journeys!

We are in this together!

"Encourage one another daily..." Hebrews 3:13

Much love and many prayers,

Candace Crabtree

Contributors

Each of these lovely ladies is a part of a team of bloggers that blog occasionally for the Teach Them Diligently Homeschool Conference. We have been blessed tremendously through this conference and wish to acknowledge and thank the Nunnery family for all of their efforts in spreading the gospel around the world and among homeschool families. For more information about these wonderful conferences please visit their website www.teachthemdiligently.net

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Avoiding Burnout

By Caroline Allen

It's not even worth asking the question "Do you get discouraged as a homeschooling mama?" Of course we all do! I have never met one homeschooling mama who has not struggled with doubts, confusion, discouragement, and wondering why they don't have it altogether.

I'll be honest, compared to many homeschooling bloggers out there I feel like a newbie. My oldest child is 9, so we haven't hit the difficult high school years yet. The only reason I feel a little more qualified to write about homeschooling is because I was a homeschooled student from K-12th grade.

Here are some common things that homeschooling mamas can get discouraged about and my response.

1. I'm not smart enough to homeschool, my child is already smarter than I am! I'm never going to be able to keep up.

If you have that attitude, your child will easily pick up on it and then the disrespect will quickly start to happen. As a homeschooling mother we are responsible for our child's education through high school, and the older grades involve scary stuff like algebra, chemistry, and foreign languages. *shudder* You know what? I don't let those fears stop me. My mother was not the smartest women in the world. She learned more from home educating us than she did going to public school herself. But that fear did not stop her from tackling the subjects that needed to be learned. We need to let go of the mentality that we must do it all. There are many programs available to help your child learn subjects you don't know. Rosetta Stone for foreign Language, Teaching Textbooks or Math U See on DVD, and Apologia has amazing science programs that go through high school written for the student to comprehend. If you need further help, there are always tutors available to ask for help!

2. My Child has such a bad attitude, we never can get any schoolwork done! I'm always disciplining and our days end in tears.

I hear you mama. I really do. You are not alone, we all understand this one. Something that helped me was attending the Teach Them Diligently Convention in Omaha recently. I received so much encouragement from sessions I went to, and vendors I spoke with about putting character first above education. It is not wrong to step back from academics for awhile and focus on character. There are so many good character resources available that actually can be incorporated into a school day! A good resource I recently picked up at the convention is "Laying Down The Rails For Children".

3. I have so many outside problems going on, marital, health, church issues....I just can't focus on homeschooling my children.

My mother endured all of these issues and more, and never gave up. Homeschooling was

a huge priority to her, and I never saw her waver or even be tempted to place us in Public School. There were days that she taught us from her bed, as she would be terribly sick with her Lupus, or recovering from a seizure caused by her epilepsy. Sometimes we did school in the car on the way to yet another Dr. visit. Other times our school education consisted of reading scriptures to her, singing hymns to her, making meals and bringing them to her, helping her do even basic things such as getting ready for the day. As soon as we were legally allowed to drive we got our permit, and were put on our parents checking accounts. We learned not only how to follow a list and get groceries, but also how to go ourselves and purchase things that were needed when she was too sick to make a list. The things I learned through everyday life with a homeschooling mother who struggled with illnesses are far more practical and life changing than if I had been sent to Public or Private school out of fear of not being able to do it because of a parent being sick. A young mama I know became sick with Cancer last year, and a young lady in our church went over and helped the children do their school work while the mother went to her chemo treatments. Pray for wisdom through various situations. Many times it is doable if you are committed.

4. All I do is homeschool and clean the house! I'm getting so burnt out on this, I just need some time alone.

Some women are of the opinion that it is spiritual to say you don't need any alone time. I'm not one of those. If I don't get some alone time to breath once in while I can crash and burn. Some things I do for alone moments are: browse on Pinterest for 10-15 minutes, go to the grocery store by myself (or even just with one of my five children!), go on a walk, have a dinner date with my husband, or put the children to bed and watch one of my favorite movies with my husband. If I'm spiritually discouraged (versus just suffering from noise overload!) then spending time reading God's word can be very encouraging. I always head to the Psalms and Proverbs if I'm down. Remember, even Jesus took time alone to be apart from the crowd. It is not wrong to need some quiet time.

5. I'm all alone! I have no support, my family is not excited I'm homeschooling and I don't know of anyone who homeschools either.

If this is the case, it is imperative that you find a homeschool convention near you and try to attend. I am surrounded by friends who homeschool and I have full support from all my family, yet I still receive great encouragement whenever I attend a convention! You can also join a homeschool forum online and interact with other homeschooling mothers about curriculum, schedules, and everyday life.

Finally, don't feel guilty if the school day has fallen apart and you are tempted to indulge yourself in a huge pity party. Just put the books away for the day, go outside and play with your children or bake cookies with them! There is always tomorrow to pull the books back out.

Caroline blogs at The Modest Mom blog (<http://www.themodestmomblog.com>). She is wife to her sweetheart and mama to five children ages 9 and under. When she's not homeschooling, cooking meals, changing diapers or doing yet another load of laundry, you will her at her blog sharing her heart concerning modesty, femininity, and mothering.

Encouragement: Find It

By Vicki Arnold

Homeschooling is awesome. It is also one of the most challenging things I've ever taken on. And if I think about the scope of what we are trying to accomplish, I am on the verge of hyperventilating. It is a lot to take on.

My kids are pretty awesome, if I do say so myself; however they are far from perfect. Which is astounding when you consider how close I am...hahahaha, sorry couldn't even keep a straight face for that one. There are no perfect people in our house. I struggle with my imperfections daily. My children seem to have inherited my procrastinating ways and an organizational style that relies heavily on piles of stuff. I can't tell you how super this is.

We deal with this "stuff" (also known as: child training, parenting, and getting over oneself) on top of attempting to educate our children as the Lord leads. It can be a mess. Yet we are entering our sixth "official" year of homeschooling (if you start counting with Kindergarten).

How? That is the question that Teach Them Diligently posed to us bloggers. How do you stay encouraged while homeschooling?

Why, why, why, why, why?!

I have said it before. Knowing WHY we are homeschooling is sometimes the only thing that pulls me along. Sometimes kicking and screaming...I kid. Sort of. There is a saying that nothing worth having in life comes easy. I view homeschooling very much in this light.

Our purpose for homeschooling can be summed up like this: God gave us these precious blessings along with the responsibility to disciple them and prepare them for life. We see childhood as such a short window in which to build strong relationships with our children, train their character (and, frankly, our own), and teach them the way of the Lord. We must take advantage of every precious minute. Homeschooling gives us that opportunity. And that freedom.

Community: Get One!

You need community. You need other like-minded people to help support you. Online friends are awesome for this in that they seem to be there at the press of a button. As awesome as this is, it is not enough.

You need someone in your "real" life that is there for you. Personally, I think a supportive spouse is entirely necessary. You do not want strife in your marriage over homeschooling. Marriage and homeschooling are hard enough as it is on their own. Don't pit the two of them against each other. It is not worth it.

Beyond your spouse, finding other homeschooling families to fellowship with provides you with that "I'm not alone!" encouragement when you have hard times AND makes the

celebration times more fun! Just don't compare your children to their's. Seriously. Don't do it.

Encouragement: Find It!

Read books on homeschooling. A few suggestions (affiliate link alert): A Biblical Home Education by Ruth Beechick, The Ultimate Guide to Homeschooling by Debra Bell, and When You Rise Up: A Covenantal Approach to Homeschooling by R. C. Sproul Jr.

Attend conventions to hear speakers and find curriculum that works for your students. Find out if your state homeschooling association has a convention (Indiana does, by the way). Consider attending Teach Them Diligently, which has several marketplaces available still this summer and next year has three regional full conferences plus a National convention in Washington, D.C. Seriously excited about that one.

Read magazines. There are homeschool magazines! A few I know of: Home Educating Family, Indiana Association of Home Educator's The Informer, and Practical Homeschooling.

Blogs, blogs, and more blogs. There are so many homeschool blogs out there. If you need support in a specific area, try using a Google Blog Search to find exactly what you need. If you find a blog you particularly love (you know, like this one...), subscribe to it via email.

No one is going to knock down your door to give you the encouragement you need. You will need to be intentional about finding it and keeping it.

Above All, Remember This

Seek the will of God in your homeschool. Read your Bible to see what God has to say to you. Pray, pray, pray. He will lead you to the encouragement you need, even if you don't know what it is. He will also protect you from the headaches that arise from our wandering hearts. True story.

Vicki blogs at <http://www.vicki-arnold.com> where she likes to encourage women in their journey to follow in the big footprints left behind by the Proverbs 31 and Titus 2 women. She and her husband have 4 great kids.

The Toughest Job You'll Ever Love

By Kelli Becton

You've heard the expression "Parenting is the toughest job you'll ever love"

For homeschool moms, it can be the toughest of the tough.

I enjoy posting pictures and sharing our adventures. There are so many blessings that come with this homeschool life of ours. We travel, and explore. We investigate, grow and learn together. It's a wonderful thing. It's special to me and it is our true story. I love encouraging you with interesting ideas on getting out to explore God's creation, and sharing wonderful resources we've found.

Reality . . .

I don't stop and think to take pictures of the little boy of mine who's pitching a fit because he doesn't want to finish his chores or do his assignment. It doesn't often occur to me to grab the camera and photograph my little ones sitting in time out because they were scrapping and rolling in the floor fighting with each other. But, they do. (they aren't allowed to - but they do)

Our house gets messy. Laundry piles up. Laundry piles up. Laundry piles up. I sometimes feel like I am running about 3 months behind . . . on EVERYTHING! There isn't enough time in the day for all I want and need to do. Never mind enough energy.

You should know. . .

Every homeschool mom I know struggles with finding time to get it all done. As a matter of fact - the real truth is - we can't get it all done. Being home with the kids doesn't mean that we have a luxurious day to ourselves or that our home is spotless. It means we are on duty, on call, working, around the clock. Whether we are feeding, teaching, washing, hugging or all of the above - our jobs are truly never done. We change hats off and on throughout the day faster than you can blink. Yet still, we drop the ball.

Be encouraged . . .

Please know that if you are struggling with the homeschool lifestyle, or having a hard time getting through to your children, or having an especially hard time with one of them - you are not alone! Not only does God have you safely in the palm of His loving hand, but He is faithful.

I cannot tell you how many times I've looked up and cried, "Lord, I cannot do this!" Yet, He has decided I will. And, He is faithful. I told many people that although I enjoyed teaching, I knew I could not homeschool one of my boys. God had other plans. I am homeschooling all 3. And, He is faithful.

Remember . . .

When you see my pictures of fun adventures or all the wonderful creative homeschool blog posts out there- remember, they may have come on the tail of a fit pitching or a time out. Life isn't perfect, we take pictures of the fun cute stuff. You can have peace in your home, but there will be challenges along the way.

Practical solutions . . .

I can tell you that I struggle, regularly to keep up, or catch up and to do it the way God wants me to. I want to share a few tips on what does work for me:

Pray and then pray some more - out loud if the kids are really pushing it! (that always gets their attention - oh boy, Mom's praying out loud again)

Stay in the Word - fill up on it every day

Share - don't be afraid to share your struggles. If you don't have local homeschool moms to talk to, find an online group to connect with. There are many different facebook groups for moms to connect and encourage each other. Talk to a friend!

Stop - take a break from your daily routine and go play outside. Spend a couple or few hours on the house or catching up on the thing you feel the most behind on - then STOP & GO play!

Get to a Teach Them Diligently Convention or Marketplace - Yes, I'm an affiliate and I blog for them. But, for me, the encouragement came first. I believe in the mission. I was invited to attend their first ever convention last year and it changed me. I cannot find words to tell you what it meant to me to step into a place where the hearts of the people working, speaking, and participating were so full of love and passion for the homeschool family. God's Spirit in that place was palatable. It will encourage you and equip you to press on.

These things have made a difference in my life and in my homeschool.

I pray they are encouraging for you. You can do this Mama. God Himself has called you.

1 Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Kelli blogs at Homeschooling Adventurez (<http://www.homeschoolingadventurez.com>) and is the mom of 3 boys. If you had told her years ago that she would be homeschooling her 3 boys she would have thought you mad. Yet, that's exactly where God has her. They spend their days exploring God's creation and enjoying life's everyday adventures.

You Are Good Enough

By Tara Bentley

Over the years, our family has been blessed with the privilege of working homeschool conventions for different curriculum vendors. When we started, it was simply a fun, weekend job and a way to help out the curriculum companies that we love and support. But it has proven to be more than “fun” and it is truly more than a paycheck for us. Each convention is a small window of opportunity for us to minister to homeschool parents as they make choices for their families.

Many parents already know what they are looking for when they approach us. They already know what works well for their students. Some parents just have typical questions about grade levels, the length of the lessons, or scope and sequence.

But then there are the families who are struggling with their doubts about homeschooling. They are not skeptical about the success of homeschooling. They have seen it in other families. But they are harboring doubts about their own abilities. Doubts that they may not be able to discuss with their local homeschool moms... because they are living a life filled with unspoken fears that they just aren't good enough. Every decision is overwhelming. They worry they will fail their children... that they won't be able to get their kids into college if they pick the wrong book.

I've seen moms break down in tears over choosing curriculum. I've seen moms paralyzed by so many options. Many moms are drowning in the idea that everyone around them is capable of homeschooling their children but them.

It's easy to sit in our homes with ungraded papers and half-finished lesson plans and let doubt consume us. We believe that everyone has it together but us. We put blinders on, isolate ourselves, and focus on our own weaknesses.

Last year as we worked a convention, I once again had a mom standing before me in tears. She was overwhelmed by the task of choosing curriculum for her children. She was convinced that if she picked the wrong thing she would mess up her child's future and he would never be able to get into college. She was consumed with doubt and fear.

She isn't alone. I've had similar conversations with moms over the years. Each one tied up in emotional knots over curriculum choices, each shadowed by dark clouds of uncertainty on their homeschooling journeys.

As I looked in the tear-filled eyes of this particular mom, I just wanted to hug her and tell her:

“Dear sweet mama, YOU are good enough.”

“YOU are the best teacher for your child.”

“YOU are the best person to choose curriculum for your child.”

“YOU are the best choice.”

Too often we focus on the books, the transcripts, the daily piles of paperwork. But that is not the point of homeschooling. It is not about our curriculum choices. It is about raising our children up to fulfill God’s purpose in their lives. Maybe that is college, maybe it is not.

If God has called you to homeschool your children, He will equip you regardless of which books you buy at a convention.

Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.

(Proverbs 19:21, NIV1984)

Our curriculum choices are temporary. Grades don’t last. Our job as homeschool parents is to remain focused on what is lasting...what is eternal.

Dear sweet mama...with God by your side, YOU are good enough.

Tara and Mark Bentley serve as Regional Representatives for the IAHE and have been homeschooling their daughters since 2001. The oldest has since graduated from college, and the youngest is a junior in high school. Tara also blogs about homeschooling, Christian fiction, and more at www.theblondemotherbear.com.

Getting Through the Bad Days

By Heather Bowen

The house is a mess. Clean laundry is in a pile on your bedroom floor. Dishes are overflowing in the sink. You snapped at your husband. You can't remember the last time you two had a real conversation.

The school day ended with both teacher and student in tears. Again.

Maybe your mom was right. Maybe you should just send the kids to school like a "normal" person. You've given this homeschooling thing a try and it's obviously not working. Maybe it's just not for you. After all, you don't have it all together like "Suzy Homeschool Mom of the Year" down the street. She makes it all look so easy.

Have you had a day like this?

I have. Even three years into this homeschooling life, I still have these days. I still have moments where I am sure God mistook me for someone else when He called me to homeschool.

I can't figure out why I can't get it {and keep it} together. I try and try and it all crumbles around me.

I realize these moments of doubt and insecurity come when I begin focusing on the situation in front of me instead of my God who goes before me.

My priorities are out of whack and when that happens, chaos is sure to follow. Satan waits for these moments. He sneaks in and whispers lies. Telling us we can't and we shouldn't, but God tells us differently. He tells us to trust Him because He can and He will.

So what do you, sweet homeschool mom? When you're on the brink of burn out and ready to call it quits?

Try this.

Take a deep breath. Go somewhere you can be alone. Fall on your knees and cry out to God. He led you to this place. Surely He can take you by the hand and guide you through these hard times.

God knows you don't have it all together. He knows that as hard as you try, you'll never have it all together. But listen, He didn't call you to this life because you had it all figured out, He called you because He wanted to do a work in your life and the lives of your children. Trust Him. Let Him do His work, it will be your greatest blessing.

Heavenly Father, it's so easy to get caught up in the busyness of life. Help us to remember to keep focused on you and to put you first in our lives and everything else will fall into place. Remind us that even those these days seem to drag on forever, the years pass by so quickly.

We must cherish the little lives you've entrusted us with. Though we may not say it often enough, thank you for the opportunity to homeschool our children. We know the lessons and memories will go well beyond a textbook. Lord, please give us strength and courage to face another day. Remind us that a happy child is more important than a clean house. Thank you for loving us enough to give us new mercies each morning. In Jesus' sweet name we pray, Amen.

Heather Bowen is a homeschooling mom from Southeastern NC. She is a nurse by trade, but her real passion lies in ministering to homeschool families. You can find her blogging at one of her three blogs: Upside Down Homeschooling (<http://www.upsidedownhomeschooling.com>), Frugal Homeschool Family (<http://www.frugalhomeschoolfamily.com>), and Spiritually Mismatched Marriage (<http://www.spirituallymismatchedmarriage.com>).

I'm Quitting Homeschooling

By Rebecca Brandt

"I'm quitting homeschooling. We have prayed and prayed over our choices and decisions. This is best for our family. We need to begin loving one another again, but I'm afraid I will be judged."

Those words have crossed my screen many times. The first time I read them, I was shocked. However, that shock no longer exists.

I do sit and wonder though... I wonder if I could have done something to encourage my friend(s). Did I miss a chance to encourage, love or just walk this journey that can seem lonely?

As my mind tries to unravel the words I am reading, memories of my first conversation with a mentor is awakened. "Rebecca, the world you are about to enter is unlike any you have ever been in. The Christian homeschool world can be one of the most vindictive you have ever encountered. Just remember, no one is perfect, including yourself and you'll need to hand out grace, as well as mercy, like candy. But, don't expect anyone to do that for you."

While I wish I could say my mentor was wrong, I can't. This Christian homeschool world can be one in which judgments run deep. Comparison and fear can drive families to do crazy things they would not normally do. In a 'culture' that desires to bring radical change, it's still easy to fall prey to that old friend, pride. While one would think that gossip and exclusive clubs would not exist in this arena, they do. Yet, it is magnified (due to the small community that exists in the homeschool world) and engulfs many who desire to walk a path that God created for them – especially if it looks different from what everyone else is doing.

As I think about the complexity of homeschooling, I pull myself back to reality and pray for my friend(s). I pray for words to say, to encourage, love and walk their new path with them.

No path is the same.

My heart is to help others learn to disciple their children in their own way. I long to sit with Moms and help them see their path may look different but our destination is the same and we can begin enjoying sweet fellowship here. We can teach our children diligently and find the living waters of real refreshment to help my sweet homeschool Mama friends break free from any bondage they may think they are in.

Truly, there is encouragement in both the close community and the one online. There are those who want to walk the path to disciple and refresh a homeschool Mom's heart.

So, I've decided to join my friends. After many talks and prayers with my husband, I'm quitting homeschooling.

But I'm going to take my own path.

From this day forward, I will disciple my children (though some say I am not qualified because I don't have certain initials at the end of my name), not homeschool them. From this day forward, I will do all that I can to encourage another Homeschool Mom. I will share about disciplining vs teaching. I will show her where to find the true living water. I will help Moms seek the hearts of their children for the one who created them....

Together, we can encourage one another and make this journey one filled with joy and peace.

What do you think? Are you ready to stop homeschooling, too? Are you ready to join true authentic fellowship and encourage Moms on any path they are on?

I am – so I quit.

Have you?

Rebecca is a child of God, married to the love of her life, and the mother of three children. She writes about faith, life, nutrition and homeschooling at Mom's Mustard Seeds (<http://www.momsmustardseeds.com>).

A Long, Daunting Road

By Anne Campbell

Sometimes, homeschooling can seem like a long and daunting road. Though I would not trade our days at home for anything, some days are admittedly better than others. I have days when I feel like a squirrel, running from thing to thing to thing...When I feel like my wheels are spinning, but we aren't getting anywhere, I have learned to take a breath and focus on the bigger picture.

Several years ago, I read a book by veteran homeschool mom Vicki Farris, *A Mom Just Like You* and she spoke about being in a certain season of life as a homeschool mom. She explains the importance of not trying to "do it all," and writes about the need to recognize the season of life you are in right now as a homeschooling mother, and realize that it is just a temporary, fleeting time.

5 things I have learned to help me stay encouraged in my ten years as a homeschool mom:

1. Scale back on things that take large chunks out of your schedule—give yourself permission to let some things go; don't be afraid to say "no." Enlist help where you need it, and delegate some chores.
2. Sometimes, simply purging old papers and books and re-organizing your school space can give you a fresh perspective. If something is not working, don't be afraid to let it go. If necessary, pare down to the three R's for a while. Alternately, adding in a fun elective can generate enthusiasm among you and your kids. Especially in the summer months, I love to add in things like art, music, nature study, foreign language, and even home economics.
3. Schedule some teacher conference time for yourself, and curl up with a good book, magazine, or even flip through a curriculum catalog. Attending a homeschool convention is also a wonderful source of encouragement and motivation.
4. Keep in touch with other homeschool moms. Even if your kids are older, a park day can do wonders for everyone's attitude, and the mom-fellowship is often just what I need. If you are a new homeschool mom, seek out a mentor; if you are a veteran homeschool mom, offer encouragement to newbies. Plan some field trips and invite other homeschool friends along. Getting out of the house, while still being able to get "school" done, is a nice change of pace.
5. Don't compare where you are to where others are. Look at how far you have come. Flip back through your planner and look where you started. Encourage your kids and compliment them on all the hard work they have done. You aren't behind. You're right where you need to be!

Anne is mother to three boys (in every sense of the word!) and a homeschooler for the past ten years. I am a freelance writer, a columnist for Home Educating Family magazine, and a member of the Home Educating

Family review team. As a former classroom teacher, I love to share resources and ideas, review books and products, and encourage other moms and homeschoolers. When we started on our homeschooling journey, my oldest son was in kindergarten. We decided to take it one day at a time, one year at a time, and now here we are with one in high school, one in middle, and one in elementary, and all still at home. We fly by the seats of our pants most days, spending as much time as possible exploring nature, and seizing learning opportunities whenever they appear. I hope you leave here encouraged and inspired and that you'll stop back by from time-to-time. <http://learningtable.blogspot.com>

Making The Time

By Candace Crabtree

Homeschooling has been hard for me. So hard that I've wanted to quit. Many times.

But, God's grace is sufficient. By His grace, He has given me the determination and peace that my heart needs to keep going. That doesn't mean He has made the path easy for me, though, ya know?

I shared recently on my blog that most days I don't even enjoy homeschooling. Gasp! Is that allowed? I admitted how hard it has been and that most days by the end of the day, I'm ready for my husband to come home and save me. {In fact, there is an entire series on getting REAL about homeschooling called Real Life Homeschooling if you'd like to read about more real moments in our homeschool that don't include a perfectly clean house and patient mama.}

I wanted to share a few ways that God has refreshed my heart and given me the encouragement & renewal I need to keep going...I know He can do it for you, too!

When I'm feeling burned out and in desperate need of renewal in my own heart, here are ways that God has helped me to keep on keeping on. It's funny...they all revolve around TIME. How we spend our time is so important, isn't it?

TIME with the Father. Truly, this goes without saying. But, how many times do we wake up rushed, exhausted, already running late...and we neglect that time with Him. I'm not one of those that is a staunch advocate for your time with God being in the morning. Sometimes, it's the middle of the day and I just sneak off for a few minutes to pray or read a Psalm. ANY time we can carve out for God is worth it...His Word will not return void! That sufficient grace from 2 Corinthians?? So many times that sustaining grace comes from a few minutes spent clinging to His Word in the desperate moments.

TIME away. When God blessed me with the opportunity last May to attend Teach Them Diligently in Nashville, I was at a low point in my mothering & homeschooling world. I was ready to give up but didn't feel like God was giving me permission to do that yet. :) I wasn't even planning on attending TTD, but God knew I needed it so desperately! And He was right. I came away with such encouragement from the awesome sessions and was inspired & renewed once again to keep up this crazy homeschooling life.

TIME with friends. {or those who make you laugh!} This one isn't particularly easy for me. I'm an introvert. Generally speaking, I'm an insecure introvert. Double whammy. :) But, when I am intentional about making time to spend with a girlfriend, I always, ALWAYS come away feeling better. It's even better if this friend can make you laugh. I haven't always had people available to keep my kids on a regular basis, so it's hard sometimes to just make a plan to meet with someone – but if you can find a way, I recommend that you do this on a regular basis. Even once a month. For the past few months I have met with a friend and we've ever walked

together, eaten lunch together or just chatted after church...but her encouragement means the world to me. We were made for relationships, ya'll. Call that friend (or email, if you're phone phobic like me) and make plans to have lunch together next week!!

TIME with your husband. This may be another one that is hard to come by. But, sometimes, as homeschooling moms, we forget that our marriage came first and should STILL come first. My husband and I don't take regularly schedule date nights, but we do have parents that will offer from time to time for us to go out on a date...and we always take them up on it when the offer is there. :) Even just a cheap dinner out {alone} can do wonders for your MARRIAGE and for your own SOUL. We have to take that time to reconnect with each other...because the good Lord knows it rarely happens in the CHAOS of this crazy homeschooling life. :) grin.

I want to encourage you, friends, that His grace truly is sufficient. I'm so very thankful that His power is made perfect in weakness. My weakness. We can even BOAST in those weaknesses, according to God's Word, because in them the power of Christ is shown and He is glorified! I'm so thankful that I don't have to muster up the strength or find it in myself. His grace truly is sufficient.

Candace is just a messed up mama in need of God's fresh, new mercies daily. She blogs at His Mercy is New (<http://www.mercyisnew.com>) regularly about faith, homeschooling, good books and more! She and her husband live in beautiful East TN with their 3 children.

Unmeasureable Strength

By Marcy Crabtree

Dear homeschool mom,

Are you feeling weary?

Are you having a difficult day? Month? Year? Me, too. Some days, months, and even years are just like that. I find myself breaking from our regular routine, not able to easily find my way back to the place I long to be. That place of contented joy as a homeschool mom.

I struggle with getting on track (or back on track) to that sweet spot with the routine we've worked so hard to establish in the past. I feel weak . . .

For when I am weak, then I am strong . . .

I ask my accountability partners to pray for me to get back on schedule, to be diligent in my homeschooling and caring for my health. I pray myself for healing and energy and stamina. And perseverance. I cry out for help. And for forgiveness.

As I spend time alone with Him, in his Word, I don't have to look far to know from where the strength to continue this race comes. God is faithful to remind me that He is there to strengthen me and to fill in the gaps. I am free to come to him boldly, with confidence. He is waiting with open arms, and blessings to offer the faithful.

My prayer for you (and for me) today is the same prayer Paul offered on behalf of the church at Ephesus . . .

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. ~Ephesians 3:14-21

Immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. That part of this passage stands out to me as I read and begin to understand that my requests are paltry in comparison to what He able to do for me. What he wants to do for me. And for you.

It's difficult to understand that which we are unable to even imagine. We are human. We want to quantify it all. But he is not a God bound by our simple limitations.

Unmeasurable is his love.

Unmeasurable is his power.

Unmeasurable is his strength.

And you know what? Because of the Holy Spirit, we have unmeasurable love, power, and strength as well.

It's true. We don't even know our own strength.

He is able. And because He is, so are we.

Marcy Crabtree spent nearly 15 years as an Ob nurse, sometimes juggling homeschooling with the job she calls her first ministry. Grateful that her main ministry today is at home, she has been married to Tom for 16 years, and is the proud momma to Ben. Her homeschool style is delight-directed (just a hair shy of unschooling), using mostly unit studies, and greatly influenced by Charlotte Mason's love of living books. If she ever writes a book herself, it's likely to be entitled, Homeschooling by the Field Trip Method. Although Marcy resides in Kentucky, she loves to travel wherever and whenever given the opportunity (more research for that book!). You can find Marcy blogging at Ben & Me (<http://www.benandme.com>).

Be Encouraged

By LaToya Edwards

As much as I love homeschooling my little men, there are times when it gets hard. I've shared some of those moments with you before. Those months where no matter what you do you are just really behind. Or those days when my guys just don't want to sit still and pay attention because they are, well ... boys. And then there are just those days when you want to quit. I've been there mom. Here's a secret: It's okay to want to quit sometimes.

Here are some of my tips for those days (or months) when you just need some encouragement:

1. Take a Break

It is okay to not do school for a while. Sometimes I get so focused on doing school that I forget to enjoy my boys. One of the reasons that I wanted to homeschool was to have more time with my guys to just hang out and do fun stuff. Getting out of the house and spending some time together can be just the break you need. Try it sometime. I have literally stopped mid lesson and headed out to the park, way more fun and crying and screaming through math for the umpteenth time that month.

2. Quit

I know that sounds crazy but bear with me. If you have lost your joy when it comes to homeschooling maybe it's time to quit for just a little while. Close the books and put away the lesson plans for a few weeks or months. Remember I told you, it's okay to quit if it's just for a little while :) If you want to really get radical just quit altogether. Say what?!?! Quit homeschooling and start discipling your children. It's not all about academics anyway it's about raising soldiers for Jesus.

3. Talk with a good friend

Moms, especially single moms, get a community of people to lift you up when you are crashing down to the ground. Have some friends that you can call, text, and/or email for support and encouragement. I cannot tell you the number of times that Rebecca and Jennifer have blessed and encouraged me when I needed it . . . sometimes without even knowing it.

4. Surround yourself with like minded people

Community is vital to surviving the journey of homeschooling your children. It's easy to feel like a lone ranger, especially if you are the only person you know that's homeschooling. Get to a conference immediately! In fact get to a Teach Them Diligently Marketplace this summer. There are 8 more locations and it's only \$15. The best \$15 you'll spend all summer. I was so blessed when we went to Nashville for the conference and it was not because I found the best curriculum ever sold. I didn't buy any curriculum at all. I was encouraged to love and disciple my children, to teach them what is really important and to just cut myself some slack and

enjoy the little buggers while I still can.

LaToya blogs at Learning To Let Him Lead (<http://latoyaedwards.net>). She is a daughter of the King and a single, homeschooling mom of two boys!

Staying Encouraged is a Challenge

By Betty Eisenhour

Satan has a way to make sure those who are called by God to homeschool will be discouraged. We have to know that it is him causing it. Staying encouraged as a homeschool mom is a big challenge. We are so busy taking care of so many, that we often fail to take care of our selves. We let Satan in, then he takes control of our thought life.

Why is staying encouraged as a homeschool mom such a challenge?

Satan wants us to fail.

We tend to compare ourselves with other homeschool moms

We see what non homeschool moms get to do with their free time (Satan again)

We compare our children to other homeschool children

Others tell us we are failing our children

Our children can sometimes make us feel as if we are failing when they have bad days, or aren't' getting a concept we are trying to teach.

What to do to be sure that you are Staying encouraged as a homeschool mom?

Post encouraging Bible Verses around your home

Spend time with those who are encouraging to be around

Have a list of 911 friends to call on when you are discouraged.

Stay in His word

Pray to be encouraged.

Pray for your homeschool

Listen for His direction for your homeschool

Verses to post around your home and memorize to help you stay encouraged as a homeschool mom:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ~Philippians 4:6-7

Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations ~Deuteronomy 7:9

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. ~John 14:27

It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. ~Deuteronomy 31:8

Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved. ~Psalm 55:22

Gather with those of encouragement

For me, I find it really matters about who I surround myself with, both online and in real life. I tend to try and please everyone. I struggle with saying no. There are people out there who seem to find joy in tearing us apart. We have to understand that trying to make them like us, is not worth the stress on ourselves or our families. It just doesn't bring enough good to be worth it. I have tried. to be what these people want me to be, and really, it only ends up hurting me in the end and pulling my focus away from God. We should be finding our encouragement in Him and those who truly know and believe in Him.

Where He desires you to be

Staying encouraged as a homeschool mom is going to require you to know, where He desires you to be. I encourage you to talk to your husband and 911 friends during those discouraging times. Also, take a break from "school" and do something that is both fun and educational. Finding ways to enjoy your family always helps us be better encouraged.

Betty Eisenhour blogs at Peace Creek on the Prairie (<http://peacecreekontheprairie.com>) where she shares about her world as a stay at home, homeschooling mother, christian, wife, woman, child of God. She shares about her life as a farmer's wife, as a cook, a baker, a nurse, a teacher, a woodworker, a housekeeper, a farmer (yep, she drives tractors!) and a gardener.

I Can't Do This Homeschooling Life

By Kendra Fletcher

What do you do when you just want to call it quits and send them all to school? *sigh* When it all feels fruitless and frustrating? And your house is a mess? And you fight the same battles over and over and sometimes you just wish they were gone all day? How do you be honest about this struggle without a tongue-lashing from all the homeschool moms who "have it all together"? ~Julie

Julie, I totally get it. One of the things that I think makes it so tough to "grin and bear it" is the homeschooling community's tendency to make everything look so shiny and pretty. This is the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. Period. Do I have to polish it all up and pretend everything is smooth?

You've asked several questions in there, and in an attempt to not skirt over the deeper stuff you are asking, I'm going to take them one by one.

First, what to do when I feel like throwing in the towel and sending them all to school... I cry. I vent. I text my homeschooling girlfriends and tell them what a buzzkill this is (my friend Caroline texted that to me once and now we send each other "Homeschooling is such a buzzkill!" messages every now and again. I lay my head on my husband's shoulder and tell him how hard this is. I pray. I go to bed early, and hope I get up the next morning with a better attitude and a renewed vision.

Those are small things, but they can help. So can chocolate. At the root, though, I have to ask myself why we are doing what we're doing. If I can be reminded of our original vision, it helps.

But more importantly, and arching over all the little things that might help in the moment, is the realization that I am accepted. Loved. I have a value, a purpose, a worth, and an identity in something other than homeschooling, my children, my marriage, and my home. This is the Gospel: living in the overflow and abundance of the love of God changes everything, every time.

And so when you ask what to do when it all feels fruitless and frustrating? I go back to the Gospel. Is it fruitless and frustrating because I am bearing a yoke that isn't put there by Christ? Then I'm not living in the overflow and abundance of the love of God.

What about when the house is a mess? Yes, this drives me insane. I can't do clutter. Tonight as I write this I am recovering from some crummy 24-hour bug that overtook me just as my husband and I were driving back into town after being gone for a few days. The house was a mess because we weren't here for two days, and then I've been in bed and cleaning up other people's flu yuck for a day.

As I was starting yet another load of flu towels, I thought, "Tomorrow we'll go room by room and tackle the mess." That's all. A good night's sleep, a plan of attack, and the realization that

my identity isn't wrapped up in a clean house. I'm going back to the Gospel.

Fighting the same battles over and over? Yes. Like Paul, who said, "I always do what I don't want to do and don't do what I want to do". Selah. I like Paul. He didn't feel the need to make things shiny and polished because he understood what it was to live in the overflow and abundance of God's grace. He understood the Gospel.

If the battles are mine, I lay them at the foot of the cross. I remember where my identity lies (in Christ's finished work, not mine). And I move forward.

If the battles are my children's, well then we take them one battle at a time, filling in the cracks with as much laughter and light and fun and GRACE as possible. But only because of (guess what I'm going to say?) the Gospel.

As for all the homeschooling moms who have it "all together"? Well, I don't bother to share my struggles with them. I choose friends who also know the utter freedom and joy of living in the overflow and abundance of God's grace, mercy, and love, and we'll continue to text each other funny little truths, vents, and encouragements. I know those girls are praying for me, and I know they know where my identity lies.

Kendra Fletcher is the homeschooling mother of eight, ages 20 down to 5. She has never home schooled without the presence of preschoolers, and loves to encourage other moms beginning their homeschool journeys with little ones underfoot. She is the preschool columnist for The Old Schoolhouse® Magazine and the author of a popular ebook about creating a group teaching time for your homeschool. Her homeschooling website and blog can be found at www.preschoolersandpeace.com, and her personal author blog can be found at <http://www.kendrafletcher.com>.

Look to God

By Renee Gotcher

Finding support and encouragement for your homeschooling journey is vital. No matter how prepared or qualified you are, or how “on board” your spouse and children are, you will find yourself in need of encouragement at some point. Trust me: I was one of those moms who thought I had it all figured out (being a homeschool graduate and all), only to find myself struggling with the same fears and self-doubt that entangle all homeschoolers. Remember, if homeschooling was easy, everyone would be doing it — right?

However, I also believe that if God has led you to homeschooling, then He’s laid out a safety net for you. He doesn’t simply intend for us homeschooling mamas to survive, He wants us to thrive!

Here are five places where I look for homeschool encouragement:

1. Look to God and His word. If your homeschooling “why” is driven by your faith in God and what you believe He calls you to do for your children, then His answers to your homeschooling questions are the most important. Prayer and bible study is critical for defeating self-doubt and turning your struggles over to God. Allow Him to direct your path, and don’t be surprised when He leads you in a different direction. (Prov. 3:5-6)

It takes real effort to put an end to the constant struggle between “ideal” expectations and God’s plans for you. You have to retrain your brain with the right thoughts about yourself, your identity in Christ, and God’s words of truth about motherhood. So make sure you spend time feeding your spirit the right food — it’s vital, especially when homeschooling!

2. Talk to your spouse. This should have been easy for me because my husband (who was also formerly homeschooled) has always been an advocate for our homeschooling. However, I struggled with sharing my struggles with my husband because I let pride get in the way. To ask for help from him would mean admitting my weakness, and I wanted to be stronger than that.

However, God created the family dynamic for our benefit. Without going into the details of gender roles and family structure, I will say that I believe God designed women differently because of how He intended for us to function in our family — differently from our husbands. Parenting is a partnership, but father and mother have different roles and responsibilities. When we take on the “whole” responsibility (and burden) of homeschooling, we don’t take advantage of the gifts and support our husbands bring to the table.

I realize that not all homeschooling moms have a supportive husband or family member to share the responsibility of homeschooling with. If you are in this situation, I believe the Lord does have someone prepared to support you on your homeschooling journey that you can seek out through prayer — a mentor. Keep reading!

3. Find a homeschooling mentor. When I think of the often-referenced “Titus 2” woman, what

I am drawn to about her is her circle of support. Younger women — and new moms, and new homeschoolers — have a lot to gain from the wisdom of more experienced women who've walked in our shoes.

Once again pride often kept me from being honest with homeschooling veterans who would have been great mentors for me. There was a time that I let myself become isolated from the very women that God had placed in my life to support me. However, now I know how important it is to open yourself up to a mentor who can walk alongside you when times are tough. The fact that I can now reach out to these women for support and encouragement has been one of the best gifts God has given me during my homeschooling journey so far.

Pray for the Lord to guide you to an ideal mentor, whether it's a family member or friend, or someone new that He leads you to reach out to.

4. Plug in to your homeschool community. Whether you're looking for social opportunities or practical support, I think homeschool support groups can be a great place to find homeschool encouragement as long as you proceed with caution. What I mean by this is that once you open yourself up to group, the dynamic can be both positive and negative. Everyone won't always agree, and you won't always "click" with all the group members. You also don't want to fall into the comparison trap with the other homeschooling moms.

That said, I think that plugging in to the local homeschool community is an important part of building your personal support network. Within the group, you may develop a few close friendships with women you can open up to in times of need, and vice versa.

Also consider the homeschooling community at large: There are both local and national homeschooling events taking place yearly that are designed to support and encourage you in the practical, emotional and spiritual aspects of homeschooling. After attending a local convention two years ago in Denver and Teach Them Diligently Convention in Omaha last month, I can honestly say that I've never been so energized and refreshed. I've also made inspiring and supportive friends in the process.

5. Find encouragement in the written word. Before my sister-in-law Rosanna approached me about starting NextGen Homeschool together with our sisters, I was already reaching out for homeschool encouragement by reading the blogs and books of my "virtual" mentors — faith-filled, wise women who were sharing honestly and openly about their struggles and victories in homeschooling. The words of women such as Ann Voskamp, author of One Thousand Gifts and blogging at A Holy Experience, often read like letters written specifically for me by someone who knew my struggles and my heart. I can't tell you how many times God has led me to open a book or blog page to discover His message to me for that very moment.

This is one of the reasons my sister, sisters-in-law and I continue to share our experiences here at NextGen Homeschool. It's my prayer that getting a glimpse into the highs and lows of our real-life homeschooling days can encourage you the way the words of many other inspiring moms out there continue to inspire us.

The bottom line is this: God wants us to depend on Him and trust Him completely, but He doesn't intend for us to journey alone. Reach out to those He has placed in your life to be your safety net. And if you need more "lines" of support, it's time to step out in faith, get out of the house, and find them.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken." — Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Renée Gotcher is a wife, writer, entrepreneur & home-educating mother of three daughters: Audrey, Claire and Elise. A former journalist, Renée was homeschooled during her last two years of high school and started homeschooling in 2010. She is editor of NextGen Homeschool (<http://nextgenhomeschool.com/author/nextgenhomeschool>) and blogs on personal topics at A New Chapter (<http://reneegotcheranewchapter.wordpress.com/>). Her family lives in Castle Rock, Colorado.

How Do You Guard Your Heart Against Discouragement?

By Katie Haggard

So, you are called to homeschool. You jump in with both feet (or maybe you feel like you've been drug in kicking and screaming). Either way, you're trucking along on this homeschool journey, and then BAM! You hit the inevitable wall of discouragement, frustration, fear, feeling like a failure, or maybe just wanting to give up. What do you do in those moments? How do you guard your heart and mind from going there? How can we as homeschool moms, stay encouraged while homeschooling? Here are 5 things that have helped me, over the past 6 years, to stay encouraged while homeschooling my children...

1. Stay in the Word and in prayer, consistently. When I let this slide, everything else gets out of whack. And inevitably, a door is opened for those "not from the Lord" thoughts and feelings of failure, discouragement, lack of direction, & fear to creep in. Before you know what hit you, you are "going there." Wherever "there" is for you. If we are not keeping the Lord as our #1 priority and focus, we are sure to feel the weight of discouragement in our homeschool journey. Not to mention, Jesus is our ultimate encouragement!! He loves us, and truly cares for us more than anyone else can or will! His arms are the only perfect place to turn for encouragement in this homeschool journey, or in life for that matter. "Pray without ceasing" 1Thess 5:17

2. Spend time with other homeschool moms. God can use a friend or a group of friends who homeschool to be such an encouragement to your heart. There is something so refreshing in knowing you are truly not alone. Sharing thoughts, ideas, what's working/not working, frustrations, fears, joys, triumphs – all of it – with another homeschool mom can give your heart that extra dose of encouragement it needed. If you don't have any friends who homeschool close by, talk with one on the phone, or utilize the world wide web, and the many resources at your fingertips to connect with other homeschool moms that way. I believe that, if it's at all possible, finding a friend you can actually talk with face to face is going to be the most beneficial to your soul. But, if not, ask the Lord for this, and trust that He can use anything He pleases to encourage your heart!! "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." Prov 27:17

3. Have you made a list of reasons you homeschool? If not, do it. Now. Then, in those moments when you feel like giving up, like there is no way you can continue this journey, and you need encouragement to press on - go back to those reasons. I can't tell you how much God has used this to encourage my own heart during the times when I didn't know if I could continue. That is why it is so important to have solid reasons for homeschooling. My #1 reason? God has called me to do this. No doubt in my mind. He has called me. Why do you homeschool? Remind yourself, and allow the Lord to solidify these convictions in your heart. "But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies

ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 3:13b-14

4. Attend an encouraging Homeschool Conference. Listen to broadcasts or MP3s of homeschool speakers. Read encouraging homeschool blog posts. Fill your cup to overflowing. Attending an encouraging Homeschool conference is one of the huge things the Lord uses to fill me up, and prepare me for the year ahead. I need to be recharged, encouraged, fed, convicted, built up, and equipped. This year, I received that when I attended the wonderful Teach Them Diligently convention in Omaha. And while the large conventions are over for this year, there is still the opportunity to attend TTD Marketplaces in several locations across the US. These smaller scale events will also be offering so much of that same wonderful encouragement poured out at the conventions. If a conference or mini-conference just isn’t possible this year, I would highly recommend taking a mini-retreat, alone for(at least) a day. Use that time to spend with the Lord, and to listen to some encouraging speakers through MP3s or other broadcast, and/or read several encouraging homeschool blog posts. There are so many wonderful ones out there. Pinterest is a great tool for finding these. “Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.” Col 2:6

5. Take a break. Sometimes, what you might just need, is a break. Often we feel like we have to go 90 to nothing, and get it all done. You’d be amazed at what a little time off can do for your soul. Relax, refresh, and renew your spirit in the Lord. Go out and have FUN with your kids. Really let loose, and have FUN! Enjoy them! Enjoy life! Let yourself enjoy this beautiful journey the Lord has you on! “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matt 11:28-29

Katie Haggard is a homeschooling mom of 3 gifts from the Lord. She's been married to the man of her dreams, her college sweetheart, and best friend for the past 13 years. She's learned over the years that she can truly do nothing apart from Jesus working in and through her, and enjoys talking about God's amazing grace on this journey of life at her blog, Boasting In My Weakness (<http://boastinginmyweakness.com>).

The #1 Reason Community is Important

By Kelly Hancock

If you've been a Faithful Provisions reader for a while, you know that I have gone through times in my life when I have struggled with having joy. What I've realized is that when I get busy, I pull myself out of community, isolating myself with all I have to do, and losing my joy.

I know exactly how this happens: When my life gets busy, I turn my focus to accomplishment and getting things done. I focus on my to-do list, and so my relationships get put on hold. In doing so, I withdraw from my sisters in Christ, who really add so much to my life and contribute greatly to making my life joyful. I might get a lot of things done, but ultimately, I only hurt myself by being out of community. I am an extrovert. I get my energy from other people, and I know that. Not everyone is an extrovert, but the truth is, God has created us for relationship. Relationship with Him, first and foremost, and relationship with others. We are not to be alone. That's why we have community, and why we go to church.

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. (Hebrews 10:25)

God knows that we will grow and thrive in a supportive, encouraging community. We get involved with others in order to share our burdens (lightening our load) and share our happiness (multiplying our joy).

I was never more aware of the importance of community and the joy found in relationship than when my dad got sick a couple of months ago.

But the community that I am so lucky to have rallied around me! They prayed with me and for me, took care of my children, brought food to my family—I can't imagine how I would have ever gotten through those difficult weeks if I had not been in church and in a supportive community of believers. I just wouldn't have gotten through it. They loved me like Jesus throughout the whole ordeal, unconditionally. They were His hands and feet extended to me, showering me with love.

*Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.
(Romans 12:10)*

My friends Kim and Melanie in particular, took my kids so I could spend many long days and nights at the hospital. They never made me feel guilty or like it was an imposition. Multiple women friends brought food and constantly prayed and sent encouraging messages exactly when I needed to hear them.

I've seen clearly now that when life gets busy, I don't need to "batten down the hatches" and focus in. Honestly, during those times when there is so much to do, I continually feel overwhelmed and like I will never get enough done. I need to reach out! That's where my joy is. I need to lay it all at the foot of the Cross and let him show me what he wants me to do.

It's in faithfully serving others just as they have served me. It is loving people first, and doing things later.

Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:4)

I want to encourage you that if you are between churches right now, or if you're not in a fellowship group of some kind, pray about it and begin seeking community today.

Kelly Hancock left her job as a successful sales rep for a Fortune 500 company when her daughter was born. Because her family (and her mortgage) had depended on two incomes, this exile from corporate America learned quickly to live on less than half the family's former income. With no special training (and an initial repulsion to budgeting of any kind!) she figured if she could learn how to do it, anyone could. Mastering the principles of what she calls, "Grocery Savings," she began to share her journey with others on her daily cost-cutting blog, FaithfulProvisions.com, which led to her book, Saving Savvy: Smart and Easy Ways to Cut Your Spending in Half and Raise Your Standard of Living...and Giving. Today Kelly is a homeschooling mother of two who continues to divulge the secrets of her amazing saving savvy, showing homeschooling families how save money and live generously. Kelly, her husband Bradford, and their children make their home near Nashville, TN.

I Honestly Don't Know How You Do It

By Tricia Hodge

Have you heard that statement? "I don't know how you do it." Or the question – "how do you teach so many different ages?" Well, we've covered that in many ways in this series. But, today's topic is for you, the homeschool parent. It seems that statement or question always hits me on one of the hard days. And, sometimes, as a homeschool mama, I'd like to transport myself to a lounge chair on the beach. Or just have an uninterrupted coffee break. Is it just me?

But there are ways to thrive as a homeschool mom teaching multiple ages. Apparently survival and constant encouragement is a topic I am always turning to because I have plenty to share with you on this, our last day! Let's face it, without meals on the table and a happy mama, not much is going to get done in the area of homeschooling. So let's lean into Him and start with a heaping helping of gratitude.

Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more...It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend... ~ Melody Beattie

SURVIVAL TACTICS

Gratitude – The Messes of Yeses – giving thanks in all circumstances is really the answer to I don't know how you do it.

When You Want to Scream, Just Sing – after the packing peanut explosion

The Word Within Sight – Then, when the papers, crayons and school books were spread far and wide, my eyes caught this verse: Let all things be done decently and in order 1 Corinthians 14:40. Rather than put my head down on the school table, we all did a five minute room rescue...

PRACTICAL HOW TOS FOR MAKING THINGS EASIER

Housekeeping Habits – I just can't possibly follow around after five children, keep the house picked up and homeschool. But these habits help us all.

List of helpful habits for the homeschool mama – Everything from annual school planning to when do you shop?

Menu Planning – Cheap Eats for Two Weeks

Make Supper at Lunch – really

Slow Cooker Batch Cooking - the super supper saver

Pray constantly that you will have the strength and the wits to make it through everything that's coming and end up on your feet. Luke 21:36

MAKING IT EASY TO LEARN

Not your typical learning centers – on the couch, around the kitchen table, outside, in the school room, driving down the road – all together.

The best thing that you can give your children, next to good habits, is good memories.

~Barbara Johnson

REFRESHING TIMES FOR MAMA

Afternoon quiet time – besides being a great habit for the children, it's built in down time for Mama.

Just Take A Nap – put your feet up and relax for just ten minutes.

Just Step Outside- “Sometimes when it’s been a full day. When the patience is tapped. Or the noise is a bit much. I step outside...Just a short walk outside, around the house. A breath of fresh air. A new perspective...And a better wife, better mama for it. Refreshed to freely love. Ready to tuck in precious ones. Listen to prayers. Be thankful.”

TIPS FOR BALANCING RESPONSIBILITIES

How to Blog in 15 minutes (this applies for online time as well)

Planning for homeschool – annual planning post

Tips and Tricks for Online Time – balance in the midst of a homeschool day

Most of all, enjoy. Just like Moses' mother, we only have these children for a short time. Pause, soak it up.

“The best things are nearest...light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of God just before you.” ~Robert Louis Stevenson

Homeschooling for over a dozen years now, Tricia faces a daily dose of chaos with five children – preschool to high school. She is author of series of art tutorials for all ages and cookbooks. She shares art lessons, recipes and all things practical at Hodgepodge (<http://www.hodgepodge.me>). She and her husband, Steve are also owners and authors at Curriculum Choice (<http://www.thecurriculumchoice.com>), and Habits for a Happy Home (<http://www.habitsforahappyhome.com>). The biggest lesson she's learned? At the end of the day – when the dishes are put away and the children are tucked in bed – truly what matters is each child's relationship with the Lord. Raising children is a God-given privilege and, folks the time is short.

Homeschooling is a Worthy Sacrifice

By Jenn Hoskins

Our family is venturing into our 7th year of homeschooling. We now have 5 children who have official schoolbooks. It's gone in the blink of an eye. I cannot believe how amazing this adventure in our lives has grown over the years. It's weird to me that I am now the "seasoned" homeschool mom to some mommies who are just starting. I get asked a lot of questions now and I often sit back and wonder why there seems to be this big wet blanket thrown onto moms who decide to homeschool by some of the people around us.

People are well meaning in their concerns. It's a lot of work being a homeschool parent. There's a lot of time involved. Some could even ask "Why do you want to go through all of the trouble and sacrifices? There are professionals to do that for you." In Matthew 26:6-13, when the woman anoints Jesus' head with a jar of valuable, fragrant oil and the disciples thinks she's crazy for pouring it over Him! What she does as a sacrifice the onlookers see as waste.

So much in this biblical account carries over to homeschooling parents. We pour out our most precious commodity, time, into the souls God has placed in our care. As we hear other parents who say things like "Oh man, my kids are going to be home all summer." we wonder why that is such a bad thing? We count the seconds with our children as an offering, poured out at the feet of our Savior. If they were gone each day we would miss out on time, which is one resource that is irreplaceable.

Many homeschooling parents sacrifice so much keeping their children home. Do you know how many I have met that regret it? Not one. Why? It's because there's so much value in the moments your children spend by your side. Aside from the schoolwork, a small portion of homeschooling, there is fellowship, laughter, joy and fun. You are also together during moments of trials, pain, sadness and deep trials of this life. Your children watch as you walk out the Christian life in front of them. They see the tears and repentance of moments you stumble. They see you get up and continue on, trusting God for each step. They see God move in blessings in your life. They learn how life works by walking it with you each day. In pouring out the precious oil of your time into your children, you are filling their empty vessels as you march in the Lord's army side by side.

In Matthew 26:12 it says "For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial." The death of Jesus was just a short time away when this occurred. That death has saved those of us who have repented of our sin and follow after him. She poured out the oil on Him as an offering, just as we pour out our time onto our children as an offering. Our prayer as Christian parents is that when the empty vessel of our child is finally full of the rich oil we have poured into them they will then pour it out as a sacrifice to the Lord by answering His call on their lives. This is how generations of Christians are formed. Through pouring out the gift of our time onto our children we will never live with the regret of missing many hours that we could have spent by their sides.

Homeschooling is about far more than education. It's about training, loving, and shepherding our children. We take our time and hand it back to God, asking He redeems the moments He has given us to share with the small people He has blessed us with. Then we can live a life of no regrets. I will never regret spending so much time with my children. I will never look back and say it was too much work. Your children are eternal beings. What you are doing today has an eternal impact. Don't be discouraged when people don't understand why you homeschool. Know that God understands your sacrifice, honoring it in the way only He Himself can.

Jenn Hoskins is a wife, mommy of 6 and daughter of the great King! She blogs at www.MommyEvangelism.org, a ministry that encourages moms to share their faith during the busy season of motherhood. Also check out her new site www.planetmommyhood.net

When Life Doesn't Go As You Planned

by Meg Hykes

Clearly my Mothers rule of “If you can’t say anything nice, don’t say anything at all” has truly stuck with me. I think that explains my silence on here for the last month pretty well.

Now don’t get me wrong. I have had blessings given to me this past month. God has placed others in my life who I am truly blessed by and have as friends now. But I allowed myself to focus and even dwell on the few negative things that snuck there way into my life.

One of those I can share with you is our homeschool. To say the 2012-2013 school year was a year of struggle would be an understatement. We made another major move, in October, from Chicago to Northern Kentucky (just outside of Cincinnati). This move proved very difficult and time consuming with my very rambunctious soon to be 2 year old at the time.

We experienced a set back in our homeschool schedule.

We struggled through the Holidays with our school time. I tried not allow the “you’re running behind” feeling to take over me. But I am a schedule following kinda girl – I need my schedule!

In February I sat down with my planner, erased my plan for the rest of the school year, and planned our days again. Aaaahhh – this is better! This is how it’s supposed to be. Our final day of school may be later than I wanted but I had a plan again.

Just a week later my Mother-in-Law (who lived in Florida) had gone in to the hospital for a minor routine/surgery. Within two months her health became much much worse. By the end of March we were told to get down to Florida NOW! While we were driving down she was put on life support and during our 10 day stay she went to be with the Lord.

As you can imagine this unplanned trip became something so much more. Once back home life was still very much chaotic and stressful. School was bumped yet again.

Now each instance needed their time away from school. Each one needed me to focus on my girls and something other than school. I don’t think I would change how I handled each time either. But we are still working towards finishing this school year. We are still on a different schedule than what I had planned for – and I don’t roll with that very well.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:16-17 esv

Do you ever read a Bible verse that you’ve read over and over again and then just one day it clicks? “Let the WORD of Christ DWELL in you RICHLY” How am I missing this? It’s so in your face – I can NOT be overwhelmed with LIFE and MY PLANS if the WORD of Christ is what is dwelling in ME! It’s not possible to dwell on my earthly plans falling through if I am dwelling

on the Word of God.

July is the month for me to begin dwelling on God's Word again. Meet with Him each and every morning to find out what His plans are for my day. Allow Him to plan my day and our homeschool for me. Why do I want all of that burden when He is so willing to take it for me?

I know that my girls are so very smart. I know that we will finish this school year. I know this – because I have given it all to Christ!

How do you handle life when it doesn't go as YOU planned?

What Bible verses help you regain your focus on HIM?

Meg is a stay at home, Homeschoolin Mama and she wouldn't have it any other way! She has been married to her best friend (Big Daddy) for 17 years and together they have two beautiful little girls - Roo (7yo) and Boo (2yo). She loves sharing about all of the blessings God continually grants her and her family on her blog: <http://homeschoolinmama.com>.

Homeschooling Has Its Moments

By Jennifer Janes

I've been homeschooling for six years, and while I love it, it also has its moments. You know the ones. The ones where you are ready to walk away from it all, put your kids on the big yellow bus, and forget you ever heard of homeschooling.

It's easy to stay positive about homeschooling and its benefits for your family when you're feeling encouraged about it all, but how do you stay encouraged?

Here are some things that work for me:

Stay in the Word. I spend time reading my Bible every day. It is not optional for me. It is life-giving and necessary to my health and well-being.

Pray. This usually follows my time in the Word (and continues throughout the day). God often speaks to my heart, showing me where my attitudes, thoughts, and actions are hurting our homeschool and need improvement. Sweet times of prayer and repentance, assurance of His love, and promises of provision and strength are often followed by lifting up other families and friends who are on the journey.

Surround yourself with encouragers. All of us get down from time to time, but I choose to surround myself with people who are generally positive about their families and homeschooling. It is hard for me to stay positive around those who are speaking negatively.

Seek out encouragement. If you haven't ever attended a homeschool convention or conference, you need to! Events like Apologia's Real Refreshment Retreats, the Teach Them Diligently Convention, and Teach Them Diligently Marketplace offer encouragement for moms who have walked the path you're on. Are you in a season where travel isn't possible? There are innumerable resources in the form of books, blogs, podcasts, audiobooks, and online homeschool conferences and expos that will uplift and encourage you.

Sleep. I never realized how sleep-deprived I was until I embarked on the Early to Rise experience a couple of weeks ago. Now that I'm getting more rest, I'm able to get up earlier each day, be more productive, and feel more upbeat about my life---including our homeschool.

Jennifer Janes blogs at <http://www.jenniferjanest.com> and is a writer, speaker and stay-at-home mom to two daughters. She has been married to her wonderful husband for 11 years. They live in Arkansas, where she enjoys reading, writing, speaking, Bible study, homeschooling and spending time with friends. She is also an advocate for her daughter who has multiple special needs.

15 Ways to Stay Encouraged

By Kately Kautz

Every year, since I started homeschooling in 2006, I have a few moments where that Big Yellow Bus looks better and better. Usually in February.

Here is what I remind myself of in those times:

1. Read your bible.
2. You CAN do this.
3. The snow WILL melt. It does every year.
4. Take a bath. With candles.
5. If you're crabby are you getting enough sleep?
6. Ignore Granny or Aunt Bea... you are doing what is best for YOUR family.
7. Your kids are learning even if you don't think they are. Really.
8. Go on a date with The Principal. You need adult interaction. You also sometimes need a glass of wine.
9. Remember WHY you are homeschooling.
10. If you forgot, drive by a school at recess.
11. Don't over schedule your 'unsocialized' kids. They WILL have friends. A few close friends are better than many not so close friends.
12. Teaching the kids to clean isn't child labor it's Home Ec. Your house may never be in Better Homes and Gardens but you LIVE there. With kids. It's okay.
13. Don't compare yourself to Suzy Homeschooler who's kids are winning spelling bee's and are 3 years ahead in math...She has a housekeeper. And a tutor.
14. It's okay to have Netflix and Popcorn days for learning.
15. Have fun! Before you know it you will have 2 in high school and lapbooks aren't cool when you're in high school.

Mama Kautz is a self proclaimed Jesus Freak. She lives in North Idaho with The Principal with two of their four children. She is a Converse Wearing, Coffee Drinking, Homeschooling, Homesteading mama who strives to write Transparently for Christ. You can find Mama Kautz at: <http://www.MamaKautz.com>.

Be Encouraged, Homeschool Mom

By Jasmine Lucero

Homeschooling is tough.

It is an absolute battle.

Homeschool Beginnings

For many of us, we entered into this homeschool thing with visions of children sitting quietly at their desk working on their schoolwork. We just knew they would sit and play lovingly and kindly with their siblings all day. And because we are at home all day, we can keep the house clean and wonderful meals ready at 12:00 and 5:00 everyday.

And then reality sets in. Kids rebel, siblings fight, the house looks like a tornado came through, and we struggle just to get the kids a sandwich at 1:30. It doesn't take long for the honeymoon to end and we realize just how hard it is to be a homeschooling mother.

Our Homeschool Journey

I remember when I first started homeschooling 12 years ago. My oldest daughter had gone to public school for kindergarten and 1st grade. We began homeschooling her for 2nd grade and her brother was preschool age. I spent hours, days, weeks setting up our schedule and planning how things were going to be. I planned that we would say a prayer, then the pledge of allegiance in the morning. Then we would sing songs and sit at the table while each child worked on their projects and schoolwork.

Then we started school.

No one was ready on time. Everyone was grouchy (especially me). Attention spans were short. 2nd graders did not like preschoolers to mess with their things and preschoolers screamed because they couldn't mess with 2nd graders things. By lunch time, Mama was exhausted and hadn't even thought about what to eat for lunch.

Read-alouds were scheduled for after lunch and most days Mama fell asleep reading and missed doing all the afternoon lessons she had scheduled.

In short, I felt like a failure.

For many years.

Being Discouraged

I had the fierce desire to homeschool. I knew that it was exactly what the Lord wanted us to do. I just didn't realize how hard it was really going to be. I didn't understand that it encompassed your whole being. Physically, emotionally, spiritually—they are all impacted by homeschooling.

And to make matters worse, I had to keep all my frustrations, my fears, my failures locked up inside. I couldn't let my husband know how hard it really was because then he wouldn't believe in me. He had only reluctantly agreed to homeschool after my begging and pleading. It wouldn't have taken much for him to change his mind and send them back to public school.

So I plodded on, day by day, hoping to make some progress. And the Lord filled in all the gaps I had missed. He gently taught me and I in turn taught them. My husband came around and realized the benefits of homeschooling. And we graduated our first student last May.

I wish I could say "and I never have hard times anymore". As we enter our 13th year of homeschooling, the battle has become even more fierce. There are now more children of all different ages. The "newness" of homeschooling has worn off and the reality of a life of teaching your children has set in. There are new challenges and obstacles to be faced each and every day.

Encouragement from the Lord

I am in continual need of encouragement.

The first definition Webster's 1828 dictionary gives for encourage is "to give courage to". It takes courage to keep your children home and attempt to teach them. It takes courage to step out against the grain and say "we are going to dare to be different". It takes courage to put aside your own desires and dreams and embrace the dream the Lord has for you.

Many times when I think of the word "encourage", I envision a pat on the back and some nice words letting the person know that it will be alright. And yes, this can be encouraging. But I really think encouragement is so much bolder. When we give encouragement to someone, we should be giving them the COURAGE to get the job done!

I love 3rd definition of courage here, where the Webster's 1828 dictionary says that courage is "that quality of mind which enables men {and women} to encounter danger and difficulties with firmness, or without fear or depression of spirits! WOW! That is what I need. The ability to face the difficulties of homeschooling with firmness, without fear, and without depression of spirits!

How many times have I let fear overtake me and become depressed because homeschooling was so overwhelming? Too many! As a homeschooling mom, I need to be encouraged {given courage} to get the job done.

Did you know that in the book of Joshua, the Lord tells Joshua at least 9 times to "be strong and of a good courage"? Joshua was headed into battle. God didn't tell him that there wouldn't be difficulties. He didn't downplay what Joshua was going through. He didn't give him an easier route to take. Instead, he imparted courage to Joshua.

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.

This same commandment is given to us, homeschooling moms!

Be encouraged!

Don't be afraid or disheartened!

The Lord is with you wherever you are!

Jasmine blogs at Ponder the Path (<http://ponderthepath.com>). She is married to a wonderful man who has loved her through it all. They were married not long after her 16th birthday! They are parents to 6 precious kiddos, ages 18yrs-1yr. She is thankful to be able to be a mama, to love and guide and teach the wonderful blessings the Lord has bestowed upon them. She is also an Air Force wife, homeschooling mom, herbalist in training, quilter, soapmaker and all around homesteader.

But I Don't Even Own a Jean Jumper!

By Richele McFarlin

"You inspire me."

"How do you do it all?"

"I know you are a much better homeschooler than me."

"Help me, I need your advice. You do this so much better than me."

"If only I could be a perfect homeschooler like you...you always have it together."

Yes, at one point or another these statements have been said to me. Me! I always wonder what the women behind those statements see when they look at me. I must remember to add "take mirror in for a refund" on my to-do list. In some strange turn of events, I became a role model for other homeschooling moms. When they look at me they see perfectly behaved children, a well scheduled day, impeccable lesson plans, and a house swept clean. Throw in some rainbows, unicorns, and cheesecake that causes weight loss, and you entered my perfect fantasy.

Through the years, some things I got right and many things I got wrong. Enter my home on any given day and you will see laundry baskets filled with clothes that have forgotten if they are clean or dirty. The kitchen boasts of hearty family meals evidenced by the dirty dishes still left for the morning elves. Sit down with a cup of coffee and allow my living room to recount children fighting or watching too much TV on stressful days. Bring a tissue and help my dining room table wipe off where the tears fell during a difficult reading lesson. Walk over to my school area and see lesson plan books half filled and curriculum abandoned because it was not a good fit. Open my closet doors you will won't even find a jean jumper but you will find clothes that wonder if they will ever be traded for sweats or PJs in the morning. If my walls could talk....surely my perceived perfection would be seen for what it is...a mere perception.

You see, my friend, the only thing that separates us is your perception and my experience. Experience is an excellent teacher but great lessons come through great pain. Yes, I have talents, abilities, and enough life lessons to get a few things right. So do you. Left in the dark, under piles of wishes, my own talents failed to grow. I learned that wishing for abilities I valued in others prevented me from growth. While, we can learn from each other, we are unique. We have unique families and circumstances that God gave us charge over. So, step aside Miss Susie Homemaker and Miss Super Homeschooler, I live to please God and raise those precious blessings in His stead until they are grown. It's okay to have a different schedule. It's okay that a curriculum didn't work for you. It's okay if you forgot to assign To Kill a Mockingbird to your high schooler. It's okay if your child is struggling to read. What isn't okay is wasting time comparing yourself to a situation that is not your own and that you honestly know little about. In wisdom, seek council from other moms. Eat from the meat

of that advice but don't forget to spit out the bones. Cultivate your own talents rather than stumble around playing dress up in another woman's shoes.

Now, don't feel bad for looking up to other women or dismiss what I have said because you see your flaws. God puts others in our lives to teach us. Simply, do not demean your divine placement as mother of your children by trying to be someone else. There is wisdom in council if you are teachable and will allow God to work through you. Just don't forget to retain you because, friend, there is beauty in your brokenness.

Richele is author of the blog Under the Golden Apple Tree (<http://www.underthegoldenappletree.com>), and founder of Moms of Dyslexics, enjoys a good cup of coffee as she demonstrates her ability to wrestle HTML to the ground and write from the heart.

Your Plan = My Plan

By Lauren Mirecki

We I had a rough day yesterday. I should have seen it coming. It seems that whenever something is laid upon my heart to blog about, I get absolutely hammered and challenged with that exact same thing quite soon after. Sometimes I can see it coming, and can get a head start on it by crying out to God for help! Other times, like yesterday, I get completely blind-sided by it and start into a spiral which I can't see to get out of.

Through working through all of the anger, frustration, tears, misaligned priorities, misconstrued goals, bad attitudes and just plain self-reliance, I came to a conclusion.

My plan has not been God's plan.

My eldest, 6 1/2 year old boy-man, sensitive, stubborn, compassionate, rough, loving, energetic – and exactly like me. We seem to really push each others' buttons. I've been really pushing him lately, and he is struggling. I pushed him ahead in his school by 1 year, and he's been doing well, until we get to some math ideas this year. Every day this week we have spent 2 hours on his math.

Looking back, I should have backed down, should have taken a breather, should have shown more grace. But I was frantic, wanting him to just get it, because I struggled so with math, I don't want him to be in that same place!

Wham. I failed. We accomplished NOTHING, he remembers NOTHING, we have to repeat the whole week. Frustration and anger sets in. Frustration with myself for not being able to teach the lesson well enough for him to understand it. Anger at him for not just getting it.

I cool off. I try to pray. It takes me the entire day to see what's going on.

Fear. I am afraid he won't be quick at math. But hubby says, like potty training, they eventually catch on! One of my best friends who is a great encouragement to me said he'll learn easily what he needs to learn to get through life, the rest will come if he NEEDS it for a job. Both pointed out in the long run, it's not what is important.

What is important is that he – they – all of our children – follow God, accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour. HIS PLAN is for us to be on His plan of salvation. And with the way I have been teaching, pressing, I'm making it difficult for my children to see the light of His love through their mommy. God is showing me the path, taking me through the storm out the other side, but I'm sitting down in the middle of it, sticking to my plan, not wanting to move.

In Isaiah 30, the Lord warns Israel of their plans, saying, "Ah, stubborn children," declares the LORD, "who carry out a plan, but not mine," (can you believe I read that this morning? I love how God uses his word in my life!); trusting in our own plans alone lead to failure and shame.

Isaiah 30:15 "For thus said the LORD God, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you

shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength". More important than finishing our lessons is for me to return to Him, rest in Him, and show my children how to do that; I want that quietness before Him, that continued trust in Him

Isaiah 30:18 "Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are those who wait for him." I am resting in this today, cautious, pursuing His word and His desire for our home and school. We have promised blessing, a straight path, protection, grace, mercy, when we choose to wait on him.

So, with the start of this Canadian Thanksgiving long weekend, I'm taking a much-needed breather. Focusing not on what we need to accomplish with our schoolwork (although that is very important still!) but what needs to be accomplished through grace in MY LIFE and on to my children. I don't want to miss a moment of loving them for the sake of finishing something.

If we school the whole year through, I'm ok with it, if it means taking a slower pace with our lessons to prevent frustration and explosion. I want to be on His plan for what he has in store for my family; I am willing to go where he takes us, for the sake of my boys, my husband, my daughter, our ministry to others; knowing that only in resting on Him, leaning in on his grace, love and mercy, will I be able to minister to my family.

Lauren is a homeschooled student turned homeschooling mom of 4 residing in Ontario, Canada. Her passions are teaching her children the truth of God's word through his creation and his-tory, spending time together as a family and outdoors, learning how to be more creative, and giving glory to God. She blogs their adventures at www.servingfromhome.com.

4 Tips for Staying Encouraged While Homeschooling

By Amanda Pelser

Homeschooling is tough. It's wonderful and incredibly rewarding, but it can be really tough at times. It can be so easy to get discouraged. Here are some tips to help you in your homeschooling journey...

1. Stay in the Word

If you're not reading the Bible and taking care of your own spiritual life, you're going to find yourself even more discouraged. Because I deal with depression too, I can sink even lower and feel even more frustrated if I'm not caring for myself first

2. Communicate with Your Husband

Things get busy when you're trying to homeschool and care for your home/family. It's easy for our husbands to be pushed to the side and that's one of the worst things we could possibly let happen. Your spouse should be your greatly ally and encourager. Make sure to spend time with your spouse and let him know how things are going.

3. Find Homeschooling Friends

Everyone needs close friends. Find some other moms who can understand what it's like to be a homeschool mom. Look at your local homeschool co-ops or support groups. Look in your church. Look online. Get together for coffee with these ladies. Form a Facebook group. Find ways to gather and support each other.

4. Stop Comparing

Comparison will bring you down faster than almost anything else. Remember that your children, your family, and you are not like other homeschooling or non-homeschooling families. Even be careful with comparison in your own home. Each of your children is unique, has different gifts, and require different ways of being taught.

*Amanda Pelser is a former church communications director turned work-at-home(schooling)-mom. She's been married to her high school sweetheart for over 10 years and they have three boys. Amanda writes about faith, motherhood, and homeschooling at ThePelsers.com. She's also written an ebook called *Finding Joy in Depression* (<http://www.findingjoyindepresion.com>) and runs a successful VA and tech businesss (<http://thepelsers.com/va>).*

We Have to Fill Up

By Amber Oliver

Motherhood is a full time job, 24-7. There are no vacations, no sick days off, and no coffee breaks. Even if you do get away for a day—you’re still the mom. If you get a call that your kiddo needs you, you’re there.

The same is true for the homeschool mom. Even when school isn’t in session, you’re still a homeschool mom. Everything ties together. If you don’t get the supper dishes cleared off the table, you might get a late start to breakfast and then you might get a late start on school. There’s always a ripple affect. Even when you’re out and about you will see things through homeschool mom glasses: “Oh, we should study that in history. Oh, look at that bug! Let’s look it up when we get home.” Am I right?

If you add in the really hard stuff.. like trying to discipline, parent and educate almost in the same moment, or trying to figure out to engage and succeed with a struggling child.. well, it’s a lot of work! Most homeschool moms I know will readily tell you that it IS a lot of work, but that it’s just worth it. AND IT IS.

But dear homeschool mom, we have to fill up if we’re going to pour out into our kids. How can we stay encouraged – even in the middle of the really hard days – as we homeschool and raise these little ones?

5 Ways to Stay Encouraged for Homeschool Moms

1.) Read Good Books

There are all kinds of really good books for homeschool moms, or just mothers in general. (I made a list of some good books for homeschool moms a couple of weeks ago.) There are books for moms on all the various paths of life— raising sons, raising daughters, unequally yoked, living with learning disorders, and all sorts of things. How do you find good books worth reading? Ask your friends, friends in similar circumstances for good, solid books that will lift you up and encourage you.

2.) Surround yourself with good friends

People were made for relationships. Even solitary people need a few. More than that, we need really GOOD relationships – people who are like minded, that will encourage you, sharpen you as iron sharpens iron, teach you and be there for you. Especially in my early days of homeschooling, I was so thankful for some more seasoned homeschool moms that God put in my life. Even as a veteran homeschooler now (veteran!?), I am still thankful for my wise, godly women, homeschool friends. These ladies get me, and I get them, and we can encourage each other and bounce ideas off of each other and travel this road together. Because we’re busy homeschool moms, we may not see each other every single week, but when we get together, there is such a good time of encouragement. =)

3.) Attend a homeschool convention or retreat

Why this one? Because it's like visiting with your homeschool friends times ten! There is so much encouraging and teaching crammed in! Homeschool conventions are also a great place to get your curriculum at discounted prices and saving money always makes you feel good as a homeschool mom. Earlier this year I had the privilege of attending the Apologia Real Refreshment Retreat in Baltimore. I was again blessed to be able to attend the Teach Them Diligently convention in Nashville. They were both amazing! And in July, I am AGAIN BLESSED to be able to attend the Teach Them Diligently Marketplace and Apologia Refreshment Retreat Sampler. I am really looking forward to it.

I understand that making travel arrangements and finding the funds to get there can be hard. If there's not a Marketplace within traveling distance, find some kind of convention that is! I never understood how good it is to go to something like that until this year when I finally did!

4.) Write down the good things.

Some days are hard, hard, HARD. On those days the good days can seem so far away! That's why I'm telling you to WRITE DOWN THE GOOD THINGS. Start a journal! Instagram them! Start a blog! Something! Focusing on and remembering the good is key to not letting the hard things get you down. Paying attention and watching for the good things (to write them down, share them on Instagram, etc,) also allows you to really recognize, enjoy and savor those sweet moments. Homeschooling is hard. But it's not ALL hard.

5.) Focus on God; Keep perspective.

The previous four tips all tie together in this last one. Perspective is everything. Reading good books, listening to wise friends, attending good conferences, savoring the good moments — these can help you keep perspective. Remember that God does want you to do your best, but He doesn't expect you to be perfect. God does want you to teach your kids to write, but He's the one that will call them to be a writer — or not. God is with you, and He gives grace, through the good days and the hard days. We won't have it all together, and we won't be perfect, and we also can't do it on our own in our own strength. Take it to God, and lean on Him — because HE has it all together, HE is perfect and HE can use us to do this.

Amber blogs at Classic Housewife (<http://www.classichousewife.com>). She is an eclectic homeschooler, mother of three, and domestically challenged housewife. She loves Jesus, family, coffee, words and the color teal. In her "spare" time She read, blog, eat chocolate, can food with my mom and send the kids outside to play.

Unrealistic Homeschool Moms

By Amy Roberts

Most homeschool moms I meet are worried. They worry about curriculum, children, and chores. They aren't living a joyful life. In fact, they aren't living much of a life at all.

The truth of the matter is, I even fall into this trap from time to time. You know why? Because I'm not perfect and it is so easy to get caught up in a whirlwind of "what-if's", wondering:

What if I tried this curriculum? What if I tried this schedule? What if I did this, that, and another thing?

Would I finally "arrive"?

The answer is NO.

We are blessed with just a foretaste of perfection here on this earth. We are also blessed {yes, I said blessed} with enough imperfection to know we haven't arrived.

Every now and then, we have a homeschool day that looks and feels perfect. I had one on Thursday. It was lovely.

But those days are like the water Jesus spoke of to the woman at the well...they leave us thirsty again.

I know what it is like to analyze every move you make in your homeschool day (just take a look at the pile of books and papers currently beside my chair as I plan for the upcoming year!). I know what it is like to want to be certain you have the right curriculum, the right schedule, the right everything. But, mamas, if you are always right, there is no room for God.

So, what are some realistic expectations for homeschooling moms?

1. Expect interruptions, frustrations, minor catastrophes and other things that take time away from your actual homeschool day. You homeschool AT HOME and not in a bubble. Life happens here. It's ok.
2. Expect to be stretched – it's how you grow, it's how your children grow. There will be things that do not work for your homeschool and things that do and there will be things that need a little bit of tweaking. As a homeschool mom, you will find your education has just begun and it will last until that last little one has graduated (and beyond!). Don't see it as a stressor, but rather a chance to put those brain cells to work!
3. Don't let the rough days ruin the good of what you are doing. Homeschooling is a labor of love. It is work, but it is good work. The bumps may slow you down, but they ought never to beat you down.
4. Put Christ first in everything. In other words, keep your Focus! Take a step back {often} and

rather than analyzing curriculum and schedules, analyze your walk with Christ, your children's walk with Christ, and how your homeschool day falls in line with God's good and perfect Will.

When you start to feel like you are drowning in a sea of what-if's, step away from whatever it is that is causing you angst and step into your prayer closet (which more often than not in my world is a darkened bedroom).

Seek Him! What you are looking for is there.

Amy of RaisingArrows.net is the homeschooling mother of 7 living children and one precious little girl named Emily being held in the Lord's arms. Her days are filled with giggly girls, rambunctious boys and sticky baby kisses. At night, she writes about it all. Amy is the author of several ebooks, including The Homemaker's Guide to Creating the Perfect Schedule and Psalms for the Grieving Heart. It is her deepest desire that out of the overflow of her heart, her mouth should speak...and her fingers type.

What I Almost Missed...

By Sonya Schroeder

In September I will be starting my 3rd year of Homeschooling and I still look back and go wow 2 whole years have already passed by. It seems like yesterday the Lord was calling me to bring this bright young man home to do something that I have never done before, teach him.

At least that is what I thought He was doing.

Isaiah 41:13 “For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, “Fear not, I am the one who helps you”

As I sit here gearing up for our upcoming school year, I am pondering on the last 2 years. What has been the most important thing we have learned from Homeschooling? What would I change? What would I have done more of? If I could sit across the table from you what would be the #1 thing I would share with you as you get started on this journey of Homeschooling?

It's not, what curriculum you should use.

It's not, how many hours should you homeschool in a day.

It's not, how to get it all done.

It's not, don't worry what others think.

It's not, you don't have to finish every book.

It's not, there is no right or wrong way to do this journey

The #1 thing I would share with you is

DO NOT miss a moment to build a relationship with your children.

It is not about books, curriculum, right or wrong ways to do things, how much we get done in a day or year, or feeling guilty because we don't look like other homeschool moms, it is about building a personal relationship with our children. To learn who God made them to be and embrace that to the fullest. To be their biggest cheerleader. To equip them for what God has in store for them.

If we go through each day on what we think it should look like and a relationship was never formed with our children, what truly was the point?

I almost missed building an amazing relationship with my son.

I was so caught up in doing things the {right} way, doing what I know, trying to look like other families, and because our home did not look like other Homeschool moms, I felt I was failing. That my son was not getting what he needed. Most of all that God had the wrong person for this task of teaching my son.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"

Needless to say God showed me that I WAS the right person for this task and that building a relationship with my son was important. Every home will look different. That is the blessing of Homeschooling. God knows just what each family needs and will equip each of us to carry that out. We must look to Him for this guidance of our children not other Homeschool Moms. His way is the best way!

As you start this journey of Homeschooling embrace each day as it comes. If things are not going {as planned} then drop everything, take that as a blessing to spend quality one on one time with your children. Embrace the fact that this day may just be spending time together, getting to know each other on a deeper level. Our children just want US. They want to know they are loved, that they are important to us. Everything else will just fall into place.

Don't miss building a relationship with your children because we feel that they will miss something if we close the pages on a book that day!

Sonya is a sinner saved by grace trying to move through this broken world as a wife, mom and homeschooler. She has 3 gorgeous sons {22, 15 & 10} and a wonderful husband of 12 years, that have her heart! She doesn't have all the answers but she is blessed to be sharing her life with you, in hopes that it will draw you closer to Him. She blogs over at Becoming a Strong Woman of God {www.becomingastrongwomanofgod.com} about Marriage, Motherhood, Homemaking, Homeschooling.

Encouragement For The Journey

By Lisa Walters

Making a choice to homeschool means you are volunteering for an often arduous journey. Long days, many decisions, and numerous frustrations will litter the path. There will be tears. Maybe for the children, maybe for you... likely for all.

The best way to resist the temptation to call it quits and resell all your supplies, is by staying encouraged.

Here are some of the ways I stay encouraged:

Pray. Have you lost direction? Did you start grounded in prayer. Sometimes in our desire to plan and be prepared, we forget to communicate with the One who holds our days in His hands. Pray that He would place in your heart the mission for your family's homeschool. When our goals are inline with His, they have a way of feeling far less burdensome.

Find time to study God's word. Maybe this isn't a struggle for you, but it sometimes is for me. I find that the less frequently I dedicate time for personal study of His word, the easier I get frustrated and overwhelmed. It doesn't have to be hours at a time. Lately I have been blessed by purposing to set aside 5 minutes to study with the help of a great study guide. Have you heard the saying, "When Mama is happy, everyone is happy"? Well, when I am fulfilled and satisfied in Him, I am certainly be more eager and willing to serve those in my care.

Join a local homeschool support group. We've been members of Christian Home School Fellowship since our first year at home. Being members of the group gives us the opportunity for great group field trips and discounts, the chance to enroll in a great gym class, and for me to attend monthly encouragement meetings with other homeschooling moms.

Avoid venting to unsupportive friends. During your most frustrating times you will need to vent to someone. However, if you don't want someone to suggest that you place your children (back) into the school system, be careful of who you are venting to. Remember that we're each called to something different for our own families, don't unload to someone who doesn't really understand where you're coming from.

Take a break when you need to. Often you'll start a new school year full of inspiration and motivation only to hit a brick wall of staleness in October. You and the children will be dragging through your schedule. Take a break from routine and have a little fun. It doesn't have to mean abandoning schoolwork all together, just shake it up a bit. Try a unit study on a topic you all would like to delve a little deeper into. Have a week of local field trips or a week dedicated to intensive art or music study. Renew the joy of learning and head back into your studies refreshed.

Find a local convention. Some of the greatest encouragement I've received has been in attending homeschool conventions. At a convention you have the opportunity to shop through

many vendors, having a chance to really look at curriculum before purchasing. There are also opportunities to hear great speakers, most of whom are veteran homeschoolers. There is also the irreplaceable aspect of fellowship with other women on a similar path, facing many of the same struggles and frustrations.

Have a friend you can call for an emergency coffee/tea/milkshake/cupcake break. If you are having a day that is spiraling out of control and you're two steps from bringing your children to the front door of the nearest school, STOP! Call a close girlfriend and take the day off, have a play date for the children, grab your favorite cuppa, share your tears and frustrations and ask her to pray for you. Just knowing you aren't on this road alone can do wonders!

Remember that you are not powerless. If God has called you to homeschool your children in this season, then He will equip you to complete the task. Ask to be filled with His Spirit and strengthened for the journey.

Lisa blogs at CreativLEI (<http://creativlei.com>). She is a follower of Christ and a help-meet to the husband He has given her. They have been blessed with seven beautiful children and choose to homeschool the five He has left in their care while their precious sixth child dances at His feet, and rejoicing in the sweet redemption baby He saw fit to bless us with.

Connecting Dots During the Game of Life

By Carol Anne Wright Swett

I ask myself, “What have you learned?” How do I make a concrete list of visceral experiences?

I expected that Son #1 would learn a lot through his international adventures. I hoped I would learn as much. I hoped we’d both be able to quantify and qualify the experiences.

When the foggy film of jet lag began to evaporate, I asked, “Can you come up with a bullet list of what you learned while you were away? The five big things – just 5?”

He stared at me with an empty gaze. I could see his brain start to fire. He stared out in space and shook his head as if trying to organize his thoughts. The light of understanding flickered out like a match flare on a windy day. It was still too soon.

Rest overcame him again. The respiratory crud washed over me in waves demanding any extra energy I might direct toward lofty, bullet list driven thoughts.

Somewhere between sleep and productivity the finger of time reached up and poked me. “Look,” it said. “Remember?” The conversation came back to me. I tried oh-so-hard to recall the scene. I realized I was squinting from the effort of visualizing memories.

It was a mundane school day. The kind that peppers the lives of those of us who step out of the traditional mold of schooling. We were going through the motions checking off one more of our required 180 days. This day, a discussion of Tom Friedman’s book, *The World is Flat*, was on the agenda.

Technology has, per Friedman, ‘flattened’ our world making it easier to do business all over the globe. Of course, having married a technologically inclined fella and having birthed 2 more, we were all about technology

I had no idea as we read the book where life would take Son #1. Looking back, it almost gives you chills. As we talked, I alluded to Son #1’s struggles with insomnia.

“You know, the work world you are beginning to navigate will be unrecognizable from the one your dad navigates. For all we know, God designed you with a ‘backward’ biological clock because he wanted your most productive hours to be when the other side of the world is awake. Maybe you will be doing business with some entity that is hard after the work day when we are sleeping. Your hours of productivity may uniquely suit you to conduct business with someone half a world away.”

The days and weeks rolled on as we did what needed to be done to fulfill the letter of the homeschool laws. After that obligation was fulfilled, he immersed himself in photography and photo-editing. He spent long hours doing research about different countries in far off places. He compared the cost of real estate in Eastern European countries.

Some days, I questioned my own sanity. Should we stay true to our decision to homeschool to the end of his high school? In the end, what would come of all this creative approach to learning?

The dots of life were amassing before my eyes. At the time, they were a confusing, messy maze that often made no sense. In the scariest times, even Son #1 looked back with wonder and dismay asking, “Maybe we should have done something different at some point in time?”

Oh, the agony. Eleven years of hard labor left us both with nagging doubts, questions, and insecurities. In those horrid moments of confusion, I would think back to our third year of homeschooling.

In those days, I would administer one set of achievement tests and hire an outside testing agent to administer another set. If anyone accused me of ‘throwing’ the test I gave, we could always show that the independent test confirmed my results.

As I purchased curriculum for year four, I hesitated. Neither set of test results were back. I feared buying something that was ill-suited to the direction scores would show I should take.

I walked through the huge warehouse chanting to myself and God, “Help me. I have no money to spare. You know what he needs. You know I know his strengths and weaknesses. Help my choices magnify his strengths and bolster his weaknesses. Help me.”

Within a few days, the scores arrived verifying what I already knew. When I looked at the sub-test scatters and compared them with the curriculum I purchased, I breathed a sigh of relief. My good God had heard and answered my prayer. My purchases matched his needs. The dots connected.

Once upon a time, not so long ago, I talked to my son about the future. I hypothesized a world in which he might do business with an entity whose days occurred during our nights.

Once upon a time, he wandered the globe via the computer. His passport allergic mom turns the pages of his little booklet now and runs her fingers in wonder over the stamps for China and Australia. Business has taken him to places I have only dreamed of – to places where our day is their night.

Tonight, I can almost hear it. My good God laughs at his own sense of humor as tears of wonder spill down my cheeks and onto the keyboard while I type. Who knew? God likes to play connect the dots too

If the future looks like a messy maze of nonsensical dots, rest and trust. God has a plan. He’s connecting dots. When he’s done, you’ll be amazed. I promise.

Psalm 139:16 (NIV)

Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Carol Anne Wright Swett blogs at Confessions Of A Fraidy Cat (<http://confessionsofafraidycat.blogspot.com/>) and is a regular contributor for Home Educating Family's blog. She has homeschooled two Aspie's for fifteen years. Her younger son is a rising junior, a competitive Junior Olympic fencer, and a heavy metal music enthusiast with a heart for ministering to disaffected youth. Her older son has traveled to both China and Australia for work as a photographer and photo-editor. Presently, he is employed as Digital Ingenuity Manger for SHiFT – The Creative Solutions Agency in upstate SC.

Finding Peace in the Chaos

By Candace Crabtree

How do we, as believers, with so much reason to celebrate, find peace and joy amidst the chaos?

It was no accident that our Sunday School lesson and our pastor's sermon last week were both about peace. God sees our struggle, our racing about, our frenzy...and He ordains little reminders for us. I know I need them pretty often myself.

As I was burdened this weekend for our church, for friends and loved ones, I began to ask myself questions. Why do we do what we do? Why do we commit to too many things? Why do Christians stress out so often?

But, God reminded me that even in the chaos, He gives peace. Even when I don't have all the answers as to WHY there is so much craziness, I can still find peace, strength and joy in my Savior.

Isn't it good of God to remind me that I don't have to have all the answers to have peace! Sometimes I think I do need all the answers, to have it all figured out...THEN I will have peace. But that simply isn't the truth, according to His Word.

Here is what God reminded me about peace...

1. Peace is a Person. His name is Jesus. "For He himself is our peace..." Ephesians 2:14 We don't have to wonder how to get peace. We don't have to search for it. And the best news, we don't have to go without! Jesus, Himself, is our peace. When we are lacking, it is our own humanness getting in the way. Stop and call out the name of Jesus. He is there. He is with you. He is peace. We can't find peace in perfect circumstances. We can only find peace in Jesus.

2. Prayer brings peace. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7 If Jesus Himself is our peace, it is no wonder that prayer brings peace!! When we go to Jesus in prayer, when we talk to Him, when we spend time with Him...the peace just envelops us. I have found this to be so true in my own life. Just start talking to Him...He will fill you up completely.

3. Peace comes when we change our thinking. "...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things...and the God of peace will be with you." Philippians 4:8-9 I can tell you that without a doubt, my own negative thinking is what removes the peace from my heart more times than not. Yes, circumstances can rob us of our peace when we let it, but for me personally, more often it is my own thought process. When I choose to dwell on the negatives: how I've messed up, how many things we have going on this week, how crazy

my kids are behaving...when I dwell on those things, I spiral into a bad mood quickly and my peace flies right out the door. It is HARD for me to make myself think about the things outlined in Phil.4:8-9. I don't succeed so many times...but the truth is right in front of me.

Friends, as we begin a new school year, let's seek Peace in a Person. Let's learn from the wise men and seek Him above all else! Let's take those precious moments with Him that we need so badly. Let's spend time meditating on His Word and those true, noble things.

Praying peace for each of you...

Candace is just a messed up mama in need of God's fresh, new mercies daily. She blogs at His Mercy is New (<http://www.mercyisnew.com>) regularly about faith, homeschooling, good books and more! She and her husband live in beautiful East TN with their 3 children.

You Are Qualified To Teach Your Children

by Rebecca Brandt

Over the past few years, I have had a lot of conversations about homeschooling with other people. Recently, those conversations have included disciplining my children. Most of the discussions have been wonderful opportunities to share the beauty about walking through the days of learning with my children.

The most recent one occurred while we were checking out of a hotel. The nice man who helped us take our luggage to our car began asking me about homeschooling. As we were walking down the hallway, leaving our room – he said “surely, you don’t teach them grammar, english or math since you aren’t qualified.” Admittedly, this was the first time someone really said that ‘out loud’ to me. It took me a moment to really recover from his words. I silently prayed for kind and loving words to share with him. After all, I know he didn’t mean harm by his words. He simply doesn’t understand the truth about homeschooling.

So, I began sharing with him the historical aspects of many men in our nation who were homeschooled and the current data on homeschool children’s test scores. No matter what I said, he did not hear what I said. When I realized the conversation was going to be very one-sided – I simply thanked him for asking and explained I saw that we were going to disagree on the topic and that was totally ok – and one of the beauties of living in America. We can have civil discussions on topics we don’t agree on without causing any harm. At that, we changed the topic to the city we were in and local attractions. And then, we got in our car and left.

Now, I know many people may have stood there and given more facts, gone into a deeper conversation and for many – that would be fine. For me, I have found it best not to feed a fire with harsh words or conversation that may not go anywhere. Discussing homeschool with those who are against it or don’t understand it can be a futile attempt to change a mind that is not open to really understanding it.

And that’s ok.

It’s not my desire to change the world into thinking that homeschooling is the way we should educate our children. My desire is to be a an advocate for Christ in every moment I have to speak with another person. Whether the conversation is about homeschooling, recipes, the weather – it doesn’t matter. They are all opportunities to worship God through sharing life and truth.

My prayer is that the way I handled the conversation will impact this gentleman. I pray that my lack of criticism for him and the fact that I did not become angry – allowed him an opportunity to go home and consider the ideas I gave him without growing angry.

Moms and Dads, you are qualified to teach your children. God gives you everything you need to teach them, if it is the plans He has for your life. When you read the Bible, you see that He

picked people who were very unqualified for jobs He needed accomplished and HE made them qualified.

So, on those days, when someone asks – don't become angry or critical. Don't feel you need to justify yourself, your homeschool curriculum or even explain that you make changes when you need to. Share love and truth and keep on homeschooling!

Have you ever been asked if you were qualified to teach your children?

Need More Encouragement?

Do you need more encouragement in your homeschool walk? Be sure to visit each of the authors' blog and sign up for their regular emails and newsletters.

Also, visit TeachThemDiligently.net for more information on upcoming conventions and special events.