



You CAN

Homeschool

Encouragement for the Journey

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You CAN Homeschool: Encouragement for the Journey

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Preface

Please enjoy this book of homeschool encouragement and resources. Thank you for being a faithful reader and subscriber to Homegrown Learners. It is my heart's desire to encourage you in this journey.

You will have good days. You will have bad days.

You will have days where you are 100% sure of your decision to homeschool. You will have days when you are tempted to chase that yellow bus down the street and have it take your children away.

Whether you have been homeschooling for 5, 10, or 15 years, or whether this is your very first year, it is my prayer that something in this book speaks to you. YOU have been chosen to educate your children at home. YOU have the skills to be their very best teacher.

I know YOU can do it!

~Mary Prather

*To view the resources mentioned in this book please visit the [You CAN Homeschool resource page](#).

How Homeschooling Turned Me Upside Down

A lot has been rattling around in my brain about this lifestyle we have chosen.. this lifestyle YOU have chosen.

I have already decided that I much prefer being "weird", as opposed to what the world defines as normal.

What I am feeling more and more compelled to share is how the decision to homeschool really turned me upside down.

That's right. It wasn't an easy transition.

(Remember, I had a third grader and a 4 year old when we took the plunge.)

In fact, in many ways I went kicking and screaming.

HOW IT "SHOULD HAVE BEEN"

In my world of 5 years ago things should have been much simpler.

I was preparing to be a mom whose children were in school full time. Once they were settled in school I was going to finish my basement and open a larger piano studio, also giving mommy and me music lesson for young children during the day.

With all of this additional income we were going to make improvements in our home, and do a million other things on my list.

I secretly longed for the days when both of my children would hop on the bus and then I

could have the day to myself.

I dreamed of pursuing MY goals and dreams. I naively thought the "hard" work of mothering would be behind me once my children reached Kindergarten.

Wow. How flawed was my thinking? How many times did you read "I" in what I just wrote?

As I look back I'm ashamed at my view of how life was supposed to be. It was shallow, uninformed, and quite frankly – SELFISH.

HOW MY LIFE WAS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

After a series of events too long and boring to recount, we finally heeded God's call to bring our children home for school. I KNEW it was the right thing to do, but it was HARD.

How so? Here are just a few of the adjustments I had to make (remember, I'm telling you I was selfish back then - but maybe you can relate to some of the adjustments, too):

- no more time to clean my house in peace while the kids were at school - my house was suddenly messy and chaotic
- kids were with me CONSTANTLY - hard for this mom that loves QUIET to handle
- a loss of mom friendships - moms I had been friends with who had kids in school stopping calling
- I had nothing left to give my husband at the end of the day - homeschool wore me out
- I gained 40 lbs. - we did a lot of cooking and baking that first year of homeschool

- no "me time" to shop around during the day, stop for coffee with a friend, or attend that morning Bible study at church
- sometimes feeling "left out" at family and social gatherings - so many people assume I'm just always in charge of the kids since I am with them all the time - many times adult conversation just seems to pass me by
- criticism from a friend or two I had considered close - seeing their true colors hurt (I recall reading one friend's Facebook status on the first day of school - she wrote that her child remarked it was good he got to do "kid things" at school while his mom got to do "mom things" all day long. I remember feeling so sad - because our society is all about separating families from such a young age. I was also hurt because I knew this was directed at me.

My skin got a lot thicker that day and I learned a lot about friendship, too.

Life as I had known it changed. It was a difficult adjustment. I often say that I wish I would have had the wisdom to homeschool my children from the beginning. Maybe then I wouldn't have gone through this difficult adjustment.

Truth is, though - I think the adjustment was GOOD and NECESSARY for me.

Never in my life have I made a change that took such commitment, effort, perseverance, and courage.

Homeschooling moms let me tell you this:

You are courageous and wonderful. Don't be too hard on yourself. Homeschooling is not for the faint of heart. You are brave, strong, and a trail blazer. You are creating a legacy for your children that MATTERS.

Stay the course. Give yourself (and your children) grace on the bad days, and celebrate the good days. Remember you are the authority on your children. While others claim they know what is best, God gifted your children to YOU for a reason.

LESSONS LEARNED

Most of those adjustment I listed above are now POSITIVES in my life.

My messy house doesn't bother me.

I am thankful to be with my kids all the time. I know them so much better than if they were away at school all day.

I've learned to manage my time better - to make time for my husband FIRST and I've taken off a lot of that extra weight!

I have made new friends that love me and support our homeschooling choice. Most of my good friends also homeschool, too.

I've discovered a new mission - one of encouraging and sharing ideas with homeschool moms through this blog. I am abundantly thankful for this community!

I realize that there will be many years when my children are gone (and I will be sad) to pursue my dreams and whatever else I thought I was missing when I was homeschooling.

{Oh, and you don't have to be friends with everyone on Facebook.}

God has called me in the here and now to disciple these children. They are entrusted to be for but a brief time and I need to be sure I get it RIGHT.

How can I ever express my thankfulness for these two human beings that refine me on a daily basis?

How could I ever entrust half of their day to strangers?

Yes, homeschooling turned me upside down.

Guess what?

I NEEDED to be turned upside down.

I was living according to the world's definition of right side up.

While it hasn't been easy to make this adjustment, it has definitely been worth it.

I hope you feel the same.

And if you are on the fence about homeschool, let me encourage you. This will be the hardest and most rewarding transition of your life.

But I KNOW you can do it.

10 Reasons You CAN Homeschool

I've had some very honest conversations recently with people who are contemplating homeschool, but just don't think they can do it.

I waffle between being sad about this and wanting to scream, "Stop Telling Me Why You Can't Homeschool!".

The homeschool journey is much like traveling a train track (sometimes smooth, sometimes bumpy, sometimes you derail! - you can see great sights) and if you just have the courage to get on the train it will be the best trip of your life.

The life of a homeschool mom is one of self-refinement, and that refinement comes through our children. I am immensely thankful for the opportunity to educate my children at home. Without this challenge I never would have learned so many things about myself.

There are so many things I've learned, but here are the top ten ~ and they are ten things I am willing to bet might be true of YOU, too.

1. I have learned that there is much joy in laying aside what I thought were my "dreams" and focusing on my children.

It's interesting that my dreams have shifted and are better than I could have imagined... and some are coming true! A well meaning family member told me I would probably regret homeschooling because my life would just be my kids.

Guess what? It is. I think many moms buy into the lie the world feeds them that having motherhood as your mission just isn't worthwhile. We've bought into the lie for so long and our society is paying a steep price.

You can homeschool because as a mother your mission field is right under your own roof. Your children MATTER.

*I recommend reading The Mission of Motherhood by Sally Clarkson. This book changed my perspective dramatically.

2. I have discovered I LOVE to learn!

I never knew how much I loved the pursuit of knowledge and beauty until we dove into homeschool. I am learning so much - I never realized how LITTLE I knew before!

My passion has become reading aloud to my children and a love of classic literature. I never would have known this about myself had I not homeschooled.

You can homeschool because your love of knowledge will rub off on your kids. It's an awesome gift to give them.

*Check out The Read Aloud Handbook by Jim Trelease. I refer to this book often for read aloud suggestions.

3. I have learned I can march to the beat of my own drummer and ENJOY it.

While there is a large homeschool community where we live, we are the only people in our family that homeschool. We are one of two homeschooling families in our church.

I have one foot FIRMLY in the homeschool world and the other firmly in the traditional school world. Two of my closest friends have children in schools.

It takes COURAGE to do something totally different and I believe I am stronger and more faithful because of this. True innovators didn't stick with the "path" society prescribed for them, and I want my children to know that conformity isn't all it's cracked up to be.

I'm hoping it doesn't take them almost 40 years to realize that.

You can homeschool because your children will see you stepping out boldly in faith and courage for THEM... maybe one day they will do the same for their own children! You will

be strengthened by knowing you are blazing a unique path - created by YOU for your children. No other path will fit them better.

*A book I read early on in our homeschool journey was Weapons of Mass Instruction. It will give you the courage to march to the beat of your own drummer. Trust me.

4. I have learned what I thought was important really isn't.

Through homeschool I have learned that the important things in life are time with family, cultivating a mind and heart to serve God, and caring about other people.

The rest DOESN'T matter.

Once again, society tells us that bigger is better, more is better, and busier is better.

My friends, I believe this is a LIE from the enemy himself.

I still have a LONG way to go in this area, but with prayer and age I do believe it's getting better.

You can homeschool because you know in your heart what really matters, don't you?

I start each day with Jesus Calling, a wonderful devotion that speaks to my heart each and every day. It helps me discern what is really important.

5. I can teach MATH!

When you homeschool your kids you have to trust you are doing it "right". Some days I pray I'm getting this right, and I have to believe God's grace is sufficient for me.

God has equipped me with a brain and a creative spirit (and given me access to resources) to help educate my children. Doubting my ability is doubting God's gifts to me.

I used to wonder (and still hear the question ALL THE TIME),

I'm finding resources to help, math classes, and many other options. I can provide the same math education a school can provide.

It might take a little more work on my part to search that out and piece it together, but that's my JOB.

You can teach math because you have what it takes. If you don't know it, you can find resources and people to help.

The math excuse doesn't hold water.

*We use Saxon for math. For upper level math they have instructional CDs with the solution to every problem worked for you. There are also multiple companies that create CD/DVD instructional videos for Saxon Math.

6. I have learned I love to encourage and listen.

I never would have called myself an "encourager" or a "listener" before I began homeschooling. I was always too concerned about myself.

After homeschooling turned me upside down, I felt a burning desire to let other moms know they could DO THIS!

Homeschooling has nurtured these gifts in me and I believe I am to use them for God's glory. You can homeschool because you might have hidden gifts, too. If God is nudging you to homeschool, don't you think you should listen?

*My favorite book to gift to a new homeschool mom for encouragement is [A Pocketful of Pinecones](#). What a beautiful, inspiring story.

7. I have learned I enjoy being submissive.

Wow. That's a statement I NEVER thought I would make.

My life is easier and our family is happier now that I have submitted to God (by obeying His

call to homeschool) and also am submitting to my husband.

I used to have a friend who prided herself on being very independent - and saw it as a sign of weakness to submit to her husband. Once we made the decision to homeschool I had to slowly distance myself from this friend - it was a voice I didn't need as I was trying to make a major life change.

I find I receive much more love, joy, care, and affection when I do submit. My husband is the natural leader of our family. He trusts me to homeschool our children and gives me advice and direction. We are a team, but it is understood that he makes the final decision in our home.

Just because I am submissive doesn't mean my husband rules me with an iron fist - quite the contrary. When I serve and obey my husband our family is happier. He is helping me realize my dreams and supporting me in everything I do. I am a lucky lady to be sure.

You can homeschool because you might just be happier when you have submitted to God and your spouse. My husband and I read the book Love and Respect a few years ago. It changed the way we relate to each other and the way we think about marriage.

8. I have learned that I am impatient, and that's OK.

Before I homeschooled my children I would have told you I was a very patient mom. Now I will tell you I am woefully impatient. I ask forgiveness and pray a lot.

When my kids were in school I had a lot of patience at the end of the day because I had been by myself all day - it's easy to muster patience when you have peace and quiet without children all day long.

My children see me striving to be more patient. They see a mom with flaws and in need of grace.

The "I don't have patience" excuse really makes me laugh. If someone tells me they're

afraid to homeschool because they might always be at odds with their child, I want to say (but I don't, for risk of offending them):

"Isn't your child's education worth it to try and work on your relationship? Where there is a WILL there is a WAY!"

Some of the best things in life aren't EASY!

Are we promised a life of perfect relationships with everyone around us? Our relationships with our children take WORK. Maybe we are at odds with a certain child because they need MORE of us.

You can homeschool because you are impatient. No one is perfect - including homeschooling moms!

*I believe a lot of impatience stems from being too busy. Years ago when I was a new mom I was in a group Bible study using the book, [Little House on the Freeway](#). This book is excellent - it spoke to me then and it speaks to me now!

9. I have discovered I need people.

I was raised to be self-sufficient. The goal was to get a good education and be able to take care of myself.

I did that for several years. It worked out fine, I guess.

It wasn't until I started teaching my children at home that I realized I needed PEOPLE. I needed to ask advice about what curriculum to use, how to handle certain heart issues with my kids, and I just needed FRIENDSHIP.

Homeschooling has taught me that there is so much to be learned from others. It's no good for my kids if I give them my limited perspective on things.

I have also developed a dependence on God and His word that I didn't have several years ago.

I believe homeschool has brought me to my knees so many times that now I actually want to be there!

You can homeschool because you will have people to help you - even if you don't think you will - they will appear when you least expect them. Your God is also faithful and will never leave you.

*The best thing I did was join a homeschool group. Seek out a group (not online friends - real friends you can see any day you want!) and jump in for the friendship and support. It is so worth it.

10. I have learned that I have the coolest kids on the planet!

Yes, I thought they were cool before we homeschooled, but something about being with them day in and day out has given me a new appreciation for them.

I know the details of how they learn, what excites and frustrates them, and the struggles they have.

I have learned I have a daughter who is compassionate, fiery (like me), and full of musical talent.

I have learned I have a little boy who is so precise and loves any kind of details and facts. He will surprise you with his insightful comments and observations. (He will also talk your ears off, which can be draining on this homeschool mom.)

You can homeschool because the relationship you will have with your children will be DEEP and MEANINGFUL. As they grow they will turn to YOU before they turn to peers in difficult situations. At the end of the day, God and family are the two constants in your life. Are you investing in those two things on a daily basis?

Stop Telling Me Why You Can't Homeschool

There is something that, as a homeschooling mom, has always bothered me.

A LOT.

Let me set the stage:

Now that I've been homeschooling several years, people come to me with questions.

LOTS of questions.

I am happy to talk about homeschooling and answer legitimate questions.

I am happy to share our story and encourage you on your journey.

People I randomly meet (or actually already know well) also feel very free, however, to tell me why they CAN'T homeschool.

I think they tell me these things because they assume some things about me.

Let's talk about those.

Common Assumptions About Me:

I MUST HAVE A LOT OF PATIENCE

This one is actually laughable. In fact, someone we met at lunch the other day told me she could never homeschool because she doesn't have nearly the patience I do.

I think my eleven year old daughter just about spit her drink out at that one.

I am a very IMPATIENT person. I regularly lose my cool with my kids. I get frustrated when

something isn't done on time. I get frustrated if things don't go my way.

But guess what? Homeschooling is teaching me patience, and I think perhaps God called me to homeschool because I am so wretchedly impatient!

Actually, it's easier for people to think I'm some patient sort of saint, because then they can say,

"Well, I'm not nearly as patient as SHE is. There's no way I could homeschool my kids."

That's just a load of junk.

Sorry, but it is.

Please stop telling me you don't have any patience.

I MUST BE INCREDIBLY RELIGIOUS

I would say about 90% of people I encounter think our family homeschools for religious reasons.

Guess what?

That was a motivating factor in our decision, but there were many factors that contributed to our choice to homeschool.

I just KNEW in my heart I could do it better myself (educate my children).

When the children at my daughter's school were herded into the cafeteria to watch the president address the school children and pump them full of government speak, that was it for us.

I grew up going to public school. I taught in public school.

Public school is a beautiful IDEAL.

I cannot, however, sacrifice my children for an IDEAL.

I've found all of our faiths growing deeper because we are able to spend more time together, spend time appreciating and studying God's word and creation, and just realizing our God given potentials at our own pace.

Therefore, while we don't say we homeschool for religious reasons, we homeschool because we feel this is the path God has chosen for our family.

Please stop telling me you would be the only person homeschooling in your church or family. (I have been in both of those positions, by the way.)

I WANT TO SHELTER MY CHILDREN

This is another laughable assumption.

I actually want my children to experience MORE of life and that's why I keep them out of school.

I do, however, want to protect them from drugs, sex, bullies, and ideas that promote a radical agenda.

My husband and I feel that in our home we are equipping them (through lots of conversation, faith experiences, and healthy friendships) to stand on their own two feet when they leave our home.

Hopefully our children will be able to defend their faith, make proper choices, and stand up to the evils of this world.

I'm sure they will make mistakes, but they make lots of mistakes right now.

Who doesn't?

Please stop telling me you don't want to shelter your children.

IT'S EASY FOR ME TO HOMESCHOOL BECAUSE I WAS A TEACHER

This is another funny one.

I was an elementary MUSIC teacher.

I never learned to teach a child to read, do long division, or write an essay.

I am really good at singing silly songs, learning about composers, and large crowd control.

The only qualification I have to teach my own children is that they BELONG TO ME!

Please stop telling me you aren't qualified to teach your children (this just makes me sad).

YOU MUST HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO STAY AT HOME

Ok. This one cracks me up, too. It's all about choices.

We made the choice 11 years ago to live solely on one income.

We may not be driving the latest and greatest cars and we don't have a huge house payment.

When my first precious child was born we KNEW we would sacrifice whatever it took for me to be home with her full time. I tried going back to work and that lasted for three days. Three.

We have learned to live well within our means and budget for the things we feel are truly important.

PLEASE stop telling me you don't homeschool because you don't have the money

Now that we've debunked the myths about me, you don't have any more excuses.

Please stop telling me why you CAN'T homeschool.

You and I are more alike than you would think, and I think THAT is what scares you.

Because, if I homeschool my kids, then maybe you can, too.

When Being Normal Looks Weird: A Message to the Critics

Have you ever felt like you are the only "normal" one left? Are you maybe the only one in your family who homeschools? Are you the only homeschoolers in your church? Maybe you are the only ones in your community.

Sometimes I have just thrown my hands up to my husband and said, "Are we the only NORMAL ones left?"

Recently, at [The Great Homeschool Convention](#), we listened to a panel of Classical educators moderated by [Andrew Kern](#).

A story was told by [Martin Cothran](#) that went something like this (I'm paraphrasing here, but you will get the general idea.):

In Australia there was a rugby match where all of the players were naked. In the middle of the game, a fully clothed spectator went running across the field.

Sometimes it seems as if WE, as homeschoolers, are that fully clothed spectator.

We get the feeling that being the only normal one left is weird, but as enlightened individuals we must stay the course and do what we know is best for our own children.

After all, this new "normal" of compulsory schooling and assembly line education hasn't been around all that long. Educating your children at home used to be the way things were done.

Thinking deep thoughts about worthy ideals used to be in vogue. Reading REAL books used to be the norm.

You get the point...

This story hit home with my husband and I at the convention.

It really hit home, however, just a few days ago.

In a series of unrelated events, we received criticism of our choice to homeschool (directly and indirectly).

We are LONG past caring what others think of our decision to homeschool. After four years of doing this we KNOW this is the best path for our children, just as a parent that sends their child to school knows the best path for their child.

After all, we shouldn't do things to please others. We do not believe in conforming to the world.

I didn't realize just how far we had evolved in our thinking until just recently. I was put in a position to articulate why we homeschool to a critic, and (if I must say so) I did a good job. After all, I consider myself a [homeschool ambassador](#).

I tried to pepper my words with grace and a remembrance of the time when I didn't quite understand why in the world someone would want to HOMESCHOOL.

People criticize what they don't know or understand, and sometimes what intimidates or threatens them.

When someone takes the time to criticize our decision as homeschoolers it tells me they either have too much time on their hands, or are woefully uninformed. I know, because this was once the way I behaved.

So my friends, the next time that neighbor, family member, or "friend" criticizes you (either to your face or behind your back), please remember the naked rugby tournament.

The next time you hear things like:

"Their children are so sheltered they won't be prepared for the real world.

How are they going to learn to relate to other kids their own age? "

"You don't let your kids watch cable?"

"Do you really LIKE homeschooling?" (I actually got that one just a few days ago)

or (my personal favorite)

"Aren't you depriving the world of what your child has to offer?"

- please remember what you are doing takes courage, sacrifice, and an obedience many people do not understand.

My daughter had been crammed into the historically under-served "middle" in her public school classroom. Her once enthusiastic learning spirit had been squashed little by little. She didn't want to go to school because of a few mean girls in her class. She was only allowed to choose books from a certain shelf in the library because they were at her "reading level" (I knew she could read harder material, but they didn't give her the chance.).

My son was thriving in a four year old preschool program at our church. I was literally sick thinking about putting him in public school Kindergarten and watching him go through the same equalization process. He was so very bright and precocious, too - if he didn't get a very patient, loving teacher he would probably spend the entire year in time out.

Words from my time in graduate school for Educational Leadership kept ringing in my head:

"Schools are built for the adults that work in them, not the children."

That is when we just knew we had to make a change.

We needed to return to NORMAL.

I wish I would have known then what I do know about choosing to homeschool.

It isn't our job to make the critics understand; it is our job to raise these precious souls that have been entrusted to us in the best way we know how.

What we are doing by home educating our children is so normal it just appears weird.

My favorite scripture during these times of criticism is James 1: 2-4:

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

I like to meditate on these verses often. They keep me grounded and thankful.

We are running a most worthy race, and if we persevere, we will lack nothing.

Remember - it's ok to look "weird" - you know you're really NORMAL.

Don't Let People Put You in a Homeschooling "Box"

People make all kinds of assumptions about homeschoolers.

As we were making the decision to homeschool I remember worrying about what people might think of us, and being hurt by offhand comments people would make about homeschoolers.

I'm ashamed to admit that I let my [silly fears](#) and worries about what others would think of us almost stop me from making the best decision of my life.

One thing is for certain: through homeschooling I have learned that our family DEFINITELY doesn't fit in a box. If anything, we have seen that it's better to be outside of any box and make your way in this world according to what YOU believe is right.

I've been having a lot of revelations over the past few months - remember when I wrote about [when being normal looks weird?](#)

If you homeschool and are trying to fit in the traditional homeschool "box", STOP! Please stop. Make your own box.

If you are contemplating homeschool and are worried about the stereotypes others have about homeschoolers, please STOP. Most criticism and stereotyping is born out of misunderstanding, fear, and other people's issues. It has NOTHING to do with you.

If you don't homeschool and think all homeschoolers fit in a box - shame on you. Do you believe all families who send their children to school are alike? Of course not.

Let's start by defining the homeschool box. This is actually very easy for me to do, because I've heard the same tired stereotypes quite a bit:

HOMESCHOOLERS ARE AFRAID OF THE "REAL WORLD"

Hmmm.... let's see. If you are speaking of the real world that means living in a building (which, by the way, looks a lot like a prison) 9 months out of the year, seeing the SAME PEOPLE day in and day out, starting at the same 4 walls each day, and having basically no freedom, then YES – we are afraid of the real world.

I never realized until I took my children out of school just what a stifling place most schools are.

In the "real world" of school children are taught that conformity, "self esteem", and compartmentalizing are the norm. This, in turn, produces adults that perpetuate these thoughts, which in turn is producing a society that is devoid of THINKERS.

HOMESCHOOLERS KEEP THEIR CHILDREN HOME FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS

We did not set out to homeschool for religious reasons.

I know many people that have religious reasons for homeschooling, and I also know many families that homeschool for other reasons, too.

We're just a family, seeking to give our children the best possible education - academically and spiritually - that we can.

If anything, I hate the fact that people assume we are "holier than thou" - because guess what? We're NOT. We are simply trying to raise young people who will add VALUE to society, along with compassion and generosity.

While I would love to see everyone in our world become a Christian, my prayer is that my children will live out their faith in such a way that demonstrates the principles Christ taught, drawing those around them to find out more about the one true God.

One of the things that saddens me the most is the "us vs. them" mentality with

homeschooling and religion.

I don't believe Jesus would have been happy with homeschoolers excluding others based on sticky little points of theology... and acting like that certainly doesn't encourage non believers to become Christians, either. (I'm not saying you shouldn't have convictions about religion - we most definitely do - but I believe we must have grace and love when dealing with opposing viewpoints. Learn not to waiver from your views, but do so in a graceful manner.)

HOMESCHOOL MOMS ARE ALL STAY AT HOME MOMS WHOSE ENTIRE LIVES REVOLVES AROUND THEIR CHILDREN

The face of homeschooling is changing. I love a recent article from Penelope Trunk [-You're The Type of Parent Who Chooses to Homeschool](#). Penelope always puts it just as she sees it, and I love that about her posts.

"We know that most homeschool families have a parent at home, and it's usually the mom. And women who choose to stay home with kids are more educated and emotionally stable. This makes sense to me, because you don't get any gold stars for staying home with kids. So if you have a great job, and you're willing to give it up for kids, then you have a lot of internal validation that dampens your need for the external validation people get from work."

Wow. I just love this.

I had a stable job as a teacher before I had children. I had great benefits, a retirement plan, and a halfway decent salary (as far as teachers go).

I nearly listened to the world as it said "Put your child in daycare and live for yourself! You

have worked hard and having children doesn't have to get in the way of your career. You can have it ALL."

Well, that was just a lie, and looking back twelve years I can see it so clearly.

Now, however, I homeschool my children and work part time from home. I run a blog, freelance write, and am getting ready to release my own music curriculum in just two weeks.

Yes, the biggest part of my life is my children, and that's as it should be.

But just because I homeschool my children doesn't mean I have no dreams and goals for myself, and it certainly doesn't mean I checked my brains at the door when I received my homeschooling mom card.

IF YOU HOMESCHOOL YOU MUST BE CONSERVATIVE, BAKE YOUR OWN BREAD, HAVE CHICKENS, AND NOT WATCH TELEVISION

There's nothing wrong with any of these!

I, however, only meet one of the criteria (let's just say we're pretty conservative).

It's funny, however, that homeschoolers have this reputation. It's certainly what I thought of homeschoolers before I became one. In fact, I wondered how I would fit in, and even went so far as to pull my bread machine out of the basement and make a few loaves.

(To see more about homeschooling myths, watch Blimey Cow's [Seven Myths about Homeschooling](#))

Have you seen instances of the "homeschooling box" in your own life? Specifically, people trying to place you into "the box"? Maybe if I share a few experiences of my own (a few painful) you can relate.

A NEIGHBOR TELLS OTHER NEIGHBORS WE ARE "STRANGE" HOMESCHOOLERS

If you homeschool (or even have a little bit of common sense) you see just how warped this is. Seriously? My kids are just like any other children. I think our family is pretty typical (well, we do homeschool, though).

Maybe strange to this person means my children not being allowed to roam the neighborhood with lots of children I don't know well. Or maybe it means I'm normally outside with my children (especially my youngest), supervising their time with friends.

I don't keep my children out of the public school just to let them experience all of the school drama when the school kids get home.

On the first day of school when there are huge cheers going up from moms in our county because their children are finally back to school, I am gearing up for another homeschool year. I'm cheering because I just got a box of curriculum!

OK. Maybe I am strange. {wink}

On second thought, maybe this neighbor shouldn't let her child play with my kids. (are you catching the note of sarcasm in my writing?)

WELL MEANING FRIENDS AND FAMILY ARE STARTING TO ASK "HOW LONG" WE ARE GOING TO CONTINUE HOMESCHOOLING

I guess homeschooling makes sense to some people when your kids aren't as smart as you. But put them into the upper grades and it makes some people shudder.

My answer is always, "We will do this as long as we feel we can. You have no idea of the resources that are out there for homeschooling high school."

(My friend, [Jimmie](#), has written a great post about [homeschooling high school](#).)

I love to tell people about the young adults I know that have graduated college and were homeschooled the whole way through! I even like to shock people and tell them about a homeschooled young man we know who is quite successful now in his own business and he didn't even (GASP) go to college!

PEOPLE ASSUME MY KIDS AREN'T ALLOWED TO READ HARRY POTTER

I guess Harry Potter and his world of sorcery aren't allowed in the "homeschool box".

Well, my kids LOVE Harry Potter, and so do a lot of other homeschooled kids.

We believe our children deserve to read a wide variety of literature. We loved it so much I even created a set of [free notebooking pages](#) about it.

My children also love Tolkien, CS Lewis, L'Engle, Dahl, Alcott, Twain, and many other writers.

I have found, though, that they really can't stand canned excerpts from textbooks. Go figure.

MY CHILDREN MUST BE VERY ATTACHED TO ME BECAUSE WE HOMESCHOOL

My children and I are quite close, but I am proud that they love to do things without me. They both have ample experience with being away from their dad and I and they always do quite well.

Just because I am with them for school doesn't mean they can't function without me.

(Children desperately NEED their parents. They NEED that guidance and firm hand. They cannot get it from a string of teachers. Our culture is full of people who have abdicated parenting to the government.)

My children each have ample chances to be on their own and learn from others. I can't

teach them EVERYTHING, and sometimes it's good to hear things from another qualified adult.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I could offer many more instances, but I think you get the point.

What I have learned in the past four years about homeschooling is very true about life in general.

You CANNOT worry what others think of you. You cannot compare yourself to others, and you cannot allow others' expectations of you to determine your actions.

I have learned that I must be MYSELF. I need to be the person God made me to be or I am going to be very unhappy in my life.

Trying to be like "the crowd" - even if it is the "homeschooling crowd" doesn't work out so well.

Recommended Resources:

10 Best Books for Homeschooling Moms

There are books every homeschool mom needs to have in her library.

When I was a new homeschool mom a friend loaned me a bag of books to borrow during our beach vacation.

They were her stash of best homeschooling books for moms. I devoured them on the car ride there, while we were on the beach, and on the car ride home.

I learned SO MUCH from those books. They gave me inspiration, motivation, ideas, encouragement, and just the TOOLS I needed to begin my journey.

I have since invested in many of those same books (plus my friend wound up giving me some of them!) and happily loan them out to my friends. I also re-read these books frequently. I have also added to the books as I hear of new recommendations.

My children are constantly changing, and I constantly need encouragement and ideas.

1. For The Children's Sake: Foundations of Education for Home and School

This was the VERY FIRST homeschool book I read, and I still read it each summer. It is full of so much gentle wisdom, inspiration, and advice.

2. A Charlotte Mason Companion: Personal Reflections on the Gentle Art of Learning

This was the SECOND book I read. It was so helpful to me in forming my homeschool philosophy, which ultimately became an Classical/Charlotte Mason/Interest Led mix!

3. [The Well Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home](#)

This is the primer on Classical Education. It contains curriculum suggestions, a thorough explanation of the stages of learning, and so much more. I have been reading this book A LOT lately!

4. [The Core: Teaching Your Child the Foundations of Classical Education](#)

The Core is another great primer on Classical Education. I read this book last year and it convinced me we needed to join Classical Conversations (which we start in August). Leigh Bortins offers WONDERFUL suggestions if you are interested in educating your child Classically.

5. [Educating The Whole Hearted Child](#)

Sally and Clay Clarkson have put together a must have resource for homeschool families. This book is full of encouragement, curriculum suggestions, book suggestions, schedules, chore charts - you name it, they have included it in this homeschool bible of sorts.

6. [The Handbook of Nature Study](#)

Normally this book stays in the back of my van, because I love to use it as a reference when we are out and about. If you're like me, you didn't know a lot about nature study when you started homeschooling, and I feel it is such an INTEGRAL part of appreciating God's world.

*Guess what? My friend Barb has an entire blog, [The Handbook of Nature Study](#), devoted to this book. It's a fabulous resource.

7. [Pocketful of Pinecones: Nature Study with the Gentle Art of Learning](#)

This book, actually in story format, inspired me to slow down and enjoy my children. It

showed me that we needed to spend time being TOGETHER, not me scheduling "activities" for them to do. It's a sweet read that refreshes tired souls.

8. The Homeschool Experiment

I laughed OUT LOUD while reading this book. It's written by a young homeschool mom who shares her escapades, triumphs, failures, and dreams in story format. I read it in two nights - it was THAT good.

9. Soundbites from Heaven: What God Wants Us To Hear When We Talk to Our Kids

This is a great devotional - and it made me think a lot about how I speak to my children, and what that says about myself and my walk with God. It was a bit painful to read, but I believe it grew me in an area where I needed (and still DO need) work.

10. Weapons of Mass Instruction: A Schoolteacher's Journey Through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling

If there are ever days where I feel tempted to flag down the big yellow bus, I sit and read this book. John Gattotells the tale (in no uncertain terms) of the effects of compulsory schooling on our culture. While I believe everyone makes their educational choices for different reasons and homeschooling doesn't work for everyone, I FIRMLY believe our current system of compulsory schooling fails our children.