

## The Homeschool Adventure

When it comes to your child's education, you should be a consumer, so seek to provide the best education you can for your child. Don't settle for just a good-enough education. The outcome is going to affect your family, your community, the world, and them for the rest of their lives. You should know your reasons for homeschooling. When it gets tough, having your goals written down will help you remember why you began. Over time, your goals may change, but you will need to have an initial direction to launch.

Homeschooling is an adventure, but it is not the best choice for everyone. If you are thinking about homeschooling, or have already begun, this book introduces seven principles to aid you on this journey. It will help you know how to begin homeschooling, guide you through choosing resources and keeping records, teach you how to find your parenting style, and discover how your child learns best. Later, common myths about homeschooling will be presented and addressed. Lastly, you will learn how to cultivate a *lifestyle of learning* so that your children become self-motivated to seek resources of all types and embrace learning throughout their lifetime.

Consider the cost if you choose *not* to homeschool. What are your children absorbing from the public school culture that may conflict with the values of your family and undermine your family heritage? Is your public school curriculum revising history? What societal pressures will they face too early before they have had time to develop a sense of who they are and what they believe? Political agendas sweep through the education system, weaving their way into the textbooks and into our children's minds. Through schools and under the pretense of health and safety, partnering organizations seek to break down modesty and promote promiscuity among children, encouraging them to experiment with their bodies before they have a sense of how their bodies are developing. Pressures weigh heavily on children to look like models, to perform like athletes, to experiment with drugs, and to explore sexual deviancy.

In government-funded education, Common Core standards profess to know what is best for every child and mandate what each child must do to meet those milestones and when they

are ready to move forward. Standardized testing supposedly guides the child toward a future profession. This testing and Common Core standard cannot replace the loving, caring, nurturing knowledge of parents who understand their child and where their passions and God-given talents lie. Parents who spend a lot of time with their children can better discern when and how their children are ready to learn. If you have noticed this not-so-subtle social agenda that has made its way into your child's education, take charge of it now and reverse the effects.

When considering the cost to homeschool your child, first consider the *investment* you will make in their future. Then you can count financial costs. Investments take resources you already have. You must put forth something of value with the expectation and hope of a good return on that initial capital that you put out. You want to make sure you are investing wisely and have trustworthy information about the investment and a way to measure how that investment is doing. With homeschooling, just as with parenting, you don't always see a quick return on your investment. It takes time to develop momentum, to organize resources, to develop a plan, to execute it, and to measure progress.

Usually, one parent gives up a career to manage their child's education. Sometimes the cost of materials, classes, and transportation is high, but it doesn't have to be. One of our most memorable homeschooling years was when we had no extra money to spend. After my husband had cancer treatments, we were all home and able to spend precious family time together. Even though we didn't have the resources or energy to go on trips, to buy textbooks, or to pay for music lessons or dance classes, we enjoyed the outdoors and spending the time together teaching our children what we know.

If you have always wanted to homeschool or have explored other options after trying public and private school, think about what support you already have. Are you committed to home educate your child? Do you have a family that will help you? Perhaps it is overwhelming to think about homeschooling all your kids full time. You could start by working with one or two children at a time, helping them learn to read and increasing their math skills or another area you feel confident in. There are many ways to find a homeschool community. If your area doesn't have a good support system, consider creating a homeschool group or co-op. You may even consider a career change or perhaps work remotely in a different state or region if it puts

you closer to the support you need. Some families relocate to another area for greater home education freedom and better local support.

## **Friendships**

Sometimes within the homeschooling community, it can be challenging to meet new friends or to keep up with old friendships. One way we were able to help our kids meet people was to be invitational. When a new family moved to the area and started homeschooling, I invited them over to share our books and materials and introduce them to some of the activities in our area. We always offered to drive ours and others' kids to events, to pick up and drop off friends, and to give rides to any others who were joining a field trip or sport. In that way, we got to know their friends and families. Before our kids were in high school, we moved to the next town, a little farther away from our son's friends but right in the same neighborhood as our daughters' two best friends. This was a great opportunity to carpool to regular weekly activities, such as youth group, chess club, soccer games, and other special activities, such as plays, dinners, and proms. My husband and I got to know these families well and became good friends. Another way to meet new people was to accept invitations. Going to homeschool beach day, soccer games, Fourth of July festivities, and joining ski club provided a great way to meet other homeschoolers.

We have always felt that if we foster a loving, fun environment for our kids and their friends (and feed them), they will want to hang out at our house. We don't have a large home or a huge yard. We have lived in a rented small house for several years and squish everyone in, heating up frozen pizza and playing cards, but for six years, we have hosted a Saturday night group for teens and young adults. It started out as a small game night for our kids and their friends. As time went on, our son and several of his friends graduated from high school and went off to college, but they returned on Saturday nights when they could. Our home is the place where they can come every week and not have any expectations put on them. They have found acceptance here and rest from pressures at work, school, or home. One year seven of our sixteen "kids," including our daughter, were graduating from high school or college, and they all wanted us to host a party. We have also hosted an engagement party for one of our

“daughters,” several birthday parties, and going-away parties over the years. Even when our son was away at his last semester of college, several young adults still came over for pizza and games every weekend. These are the “sons and daughters” I dedicate this book to.

### **Not Always Easy**

I highlight the positive aspects about homeschooling to encourage you to evaluate your current educational plan for your kids and give it a try. To be honest, just like anything we pursue that has immense value, it isn't always easy. There are many obstacles to overcome and challenges you will face. From financial problems, family illnesses, and trauma to other circumstances beyond your control, we all navigate what life throws at us in diverse ways. While you may decide to homeschool for one year or twenty, the time you spend together as a family will be a treasured memory.

Unless your circumstances throw you into the new adventure of homeschooling overnight, explore your options surrounding education. Interview family and friends to find out who is going to support you through this journey. Explore the opportunities for education in the area you live or where you want to live. As a consumer, know your options. Get what you want for your children's education. Don't just settle for the local public school. There is a sacrifice to homeschool, but consider the sacrifices you make to *not* homeschool. Weigh the benefits by talking to homeschool graduates and parents who have homeschooled their children. Consider the cost both financially and morally to you, your kids, and their futures as you decide what is the best way to educate your child now.