## ***Is Home-education for Me? (Counting the cost)***

*by Bruce & Karen McNeice*

We believe that the very best way for children to be educated, is by their own parents in their own home. However, it is a big commitment, and you need to be aware of, and weigh up all the issues involved. So, before you begin:

**- Know Why!** Have a clear understanding of why you want to teach your own children, what you want to get out of it, and what you want to achieve through home-education. Work out your aims and objectives for your home-education in general, and then for each child specifically. The following books are also excellent resources to further assist you to qualify your vision and to **‘know why’** you are educating at home:

i) ‘The CM-Method Guide’ (from Homeward Education Support)

ii) 'For the Children's Sake' by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay, 1982.

iii) 'The Successful Home-school Family Handbook' by Dr. R. & D. Moore, 1994.

- **Count the Cost!** Ask yourself the following questions and carefully consider the following issues:

i) Are you willing to make the sacrifice? Is your children's future worth investing so much time and money, as well as physical and emotional energy? Is it important enough for you to give up or curtail your career and perhaps some of your other activities?

ii) Are you absolutely convinced that caring for your family is your real career? Is home-education merely a ‘preference’ or is it a strongly held 'conviction'? Do you believe that, by educating at home, you are really trying to do the very best for your children, rather than just 'avoiding' the problems of conventional schooling?

As Mal Garvin says: *..."True freedom is not merely 'freedom from...', but rather 'freedom to..”* One sort of freedom is merely an escape from the bad. The other type of freedom requires an active pursuit of a better alternative (Garvin, 'Theodynamics Course', 1982).

iii) Do you have the support of your marriage partner, (or a close friend if you are a sole parent)? With all the demands of running a family, you will need to intentionally and regularly set aside special time alone with your spouse. Even the single home-educating parent needs a supportive adult friend to be a sounding-board for ideas and concerns. The married home-educating mother needs the protection, care and interest of her husband, who should be self-sacrificing regarding the emotional and friendship needs of his wife.

*"...Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honour to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life - so that nothing may hinder your prayers"*
*(1 Peter 3:7, N.R.S.V.).*

Husbands, you cannot expect your wife to be relaxed enough to be intimate together (at the end of a day), if you have not been considerate enough to be a supportive friend and companion during the day (or evening). It takes Christ-like self-sacrifice to give of yourself at home, when you have had a draining day at work; but rely on the power of the Holy Spirit and He will help you to have this Christ-like other-centred attitude.

*"... Greater love has no man than this, to lay down his life for his friends"*
*(John 15:13, N.K.J.V.).*

*"... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, ..”*(Ephesians 5:25, N.K.J.V.).

The wife, in turn, needs to respect her husband (Ephesians 5:33), for the providing and protecting role that he plays. (The reverse is true if the husband is the main educator.) The wife also should be aware and considerate of the needs of her husband, and not allow the children to take up all her time, energy and thinking. Children need to not only be assured that they are unique and valued for who they are, but they also need to know that the whole world does not revolve around themselves and their own needs. They will be more secure if they know their proper place in the family. This is a pre-requisite for good citizenship and (if this discipline is balanced with love and fun), should have no ill effect on the child's creative genius.

Furthermore, even though it is often the mother who has the major role in the child's education, fathers can have just as significant an input by seeing education as an 'all of life' phenomenon. Fathers can teach their children by working with them during yard-work, house and vehicle maintenance projects, by checking up on their daily progress, and through play and recreation; as well as backing up the mother with discipline and character training.

Single Parents: Even though we strongly recommend that you have the support of your spouse, a relative or close friend, we have seen single parents who are coping much better than some married people whose partner is antagonistic to their home-education vision and efforts. So, our advice would normally be not to take up home-education if you are initially in an antagonistic relationship and there is disunity in the home on this issue. Yet, on the other hand, we have seen some husbands, who have had a negative attitude to home-education, turn completely around to being totally supportive of their wives who have patiently given their husbands time to come to terms with the benefits of home-based-education. Be patient, prayerful and prepare well by reading all that you can on home-education.

Many parents also enlist the help of friends and neighbourhood community members to teach specific life skills and interests to their children, especially when they lack the capabilities, resources or even inclination to handle the subject themselves.

(iv) Another consideration is the need for spiritual refreshing. As the good book says: *"for in Him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28, N.K.J.V.). You cannot expect to pass on to your children anything of creative and life-giving value, if you have not spent any time with your Creator (the source of all life, love, truth and wisdom). Atomic physicists do not know why, or by what power the atom is held together. The Bible says that Jesus is the one who holds the whole of creation together. He is also the one who will hold you together during your home-education journey. When you daily take time alone with Jesus, drawing close to Him, allowing Him to fill you up, then you can face the day with His resurrection power to love, lead, and live with your children in peace.

*"All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children"* (Isaiah 54:13, N.K.J.V.).

(v) If you look to Jesus, and prepare well by 'counting the cost', then this will help you to cope with the difficult times and to enjoy living and learning with your family. You will also discover that there are many, many blessings and unspeakable joys ahead of you. There is no greater joy in life than to see your children reaching towards their full potential.