## ***The Home-education Graduation***

***1. Rounding Off Your Unique Learning Journey***

At the end of a year, or at the end of their home-education as a whole, many parents have come to us with comments like these:

*“You know, when we look back over the last year (or 12 years), we've done a lot of excellent learning activities, and we have covered so many topics. I know they’ve developed greater skills & maturity than if they were at school; but we just seem to have nothing to show for it. I always thought a certificate wasn’t necessary; but the children are not sure what they’ve really achieved. I wish there was a good way to round it all off.”*

There is!

The Bible says: *“As arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of your youth.”*

At this time in life, when you are launching your arrows into the world, a Home-school Graduation can provide an extremely significant time of affirmation & blessing, that will be greatly beneficial to your child’s future success.

There are two stages to a ‘Home-school Graduation’.

**The first stage is the preparation of the Grade 10 or 12 Certificate**.

This involves documenting details about the student’s learning journey over the previous two to three years and collating samples of their work. This information is presented to Hearthward Academy for review so that we can (collaboratively with the parents) work out a set of High School Certificate results that will best display your unique home-school journey along with your child’s talents & abilities.

**The second stage is the ‘celebration’**.

Particularly at transitional times in life, it is very important to impart blessing & affirmation to your child. A graduation ceremony is one way to symbolically cross over from childhood to adulthood, or from one phase of their learning journey, to a higher stage. Many adults (even in their 30’s, 40’s or 50’s) still have a nagging feeling of ‘not having grown up properly’, or ‘not being sure if they are really OK’; they still feel like they are an insecure little boy or girl. This is usually because they were never blessed & affirmed by their parents & especially their father. When God spoke over Jesus: *‘This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased’*, He was using a phrase common to the Barmitzvah ceremony, which was a person’s graduation from childhood into adulthood.

There are many ways of conducting a blessing ceremony, graduation ceremony or coming-of-age ceremony. It can be a small intimate family affair such as a special dinner with a presentation and parental blessing-prayers etc.; a surprise party with close friends; or a full-on celebration-party with hundreds of guests. Either way, it should be as dramatic (i.e. with symbolic elements) and as memorable as possible. It is amazing how strong is the effect of a commitment, a certificate, a blessing and a celebration.

You may also wish to think up other creative ways of imparting blessing and affirming your child. Some families have caught hold of the concept of a “commencement celebration”, which takes the focus away from mere academics.

Rather than focusing on this being the ‘end of school’, a “commencement celebration” can focus on the fact that you have been preparing the child in every way to be an autonomous adult, and this is the beginning of their new level of responsibility. This could even incorporate a “barmitzvah” type of spiritual initiation into adulthood, with the child’s own personal vows to take responsibility for providing for their family, responsibility for their own relationship to Christ, purity, further training, citizenship, membership in the church etc.

You could also help the student to collate a portfolio of achievements, awards and documentation about their talents, skills and experience. The parent can act as the student’s “promotional manager” by documenting anything that they accomplish. Try this idea: If they have some skill/competence/expertise/compelling-interest in a certain activity, then help them to organise some “community service” in that field, take photographs, get references and submit a story to your local newspaper. This can all add to your child’s portfolio, and is evidence of their initiative. There is no end to the creative ways you can help your child get a head-start in life.

***2. Are Graduation Certificates Really Needed?***

1. The Memory Fades: All the child’s learning and experience may be very good, but our memories fade. You may have been busy learning, but when you look back over the year, you think back and say …well what have we really done this year, or these last few years?
2. There is great value in bringing it all to a culminating climax & it provides a motivational goal for the student to work towards.
3. A ‘Graduation Certificate’ is a doorway to opportunity because an objective official party vouches for your competency.

*“Let another man honour you”*

*“Let a thing be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses”*

***3. How Do I Gain a Graduation Certificate?***

There are two ways to gain a graduation certificate. The first, is to be enrolled in a Hearthward individualised secondary school course.

Secondly, we can also help those students who have not previously been enrolled in the Academy, and who have been using other study resources and alternate or unconventional learning activities through a process called ‘Recognition of Prior Learning’ (RPL).

To gain recognition for previous studies & learning activities, send to us as much as possible of the following information:

* a record of all subjects & topics that were studied or researched over the last two to three years.
* A record of all hobbies & special interests, plus how much time & effort/initiative was put into the exploring or participating in that interest
* A record of all books read and learning-resources used
* A diary or list of learning activities
* Samples of essays, creative projects (or photos & description of the project), study notes, etc
* Examples and results of any tests that were completed
* Evidence of short courses
* Other multimedia evidence of learning activities e.g. oral presentation on audio file; video production; etc.
* References from mentors, tutors, trainers & work-experience supervisors
* Parent’s comments about your child’s personality, strengths & weaknesses