

There are no good schools in our area.

We can't afford private school.

Reasons

for Homeschooling
and Why They Matter

Schools today are not safe

Our friends are all homeschooling.

Reasons for Homeschooling and Why They Matter

When we think of “reasons for homeschooling” it is usually in the context of deciding whether or not to homeschool or trying to convince someone else to homeschool. Once we’ve begun homeschooling our thoughts turn from the “whys” to the “hows”. How do we get started? How do we set up the schoolroom? How do we find the right curriculum? How do we make sure our children are learning what they need to learn? How do we make it through the next day?

We need to realize that the “whys” have a big impact on all these things.

Our reasons for homeschooling will affect the things we teach, the amount of time we spend on each area, the types and amounts of material we acquire and many other aspects of our homeschooling effort. Our reasons will also affect our longevity as homeschooling parents. When the going gets tough we often start asking ourselves, “Why are we doing this anyway?” If our reasons are not good ones, we are less likely to persevere.

All these things- whether or not we teach our children at home, how and what we teach them, and how well we stick with it- have a huge impact on our children’s future, in this life and in eternity. Our reasons for homeschooling are important long after we get started.

During our seventeen years as homeschoolers, we have heard, held and espoused many different reasons for homeschooling. These reasons run the gamut from the moral/spiritual to the academic/physical. You’ve probably heard many of these reasons and perhaps could add a few more to the list. Let’s take a look at some of these reasons:

- The other children in school can be a bad influence
- We can pay better attention to our child's needs
- We can have more meaningful interaction with our children
- Concern for our children's safety / schools today are not safe.
- Avoiding false teaching such as evolution or humanism
- We want our children to learn God's Word
- Our friends are all homeschooling
- We are convinced from scripture

The list could go on for several pages but these make up a good sample for our discussion. These reasons, and others like them, could be arranged into a few basic categories (Academic, Social/Cultural and Biblical/Spiritual), with a few of them potentially fitting into more than one. Something like this:

- Academic
 - We could do a better job ourselves
 - Public schools have lowered their standards
 - Our children can learn at their own pace
 - There are no good schools in our area
 - We can't afford private school
 - Avoiding false teaching such as evolution or humanism
- Social / Cultural
 - There are no good schools in our area
 - We can't afford private school
 - The other children in school can be a bad influence
 - We can pay better attention to our child's needs
 - We can have more meaningful interaction with our children
 - Concern for our children's safety / schools today are not safe
 - Our friends are all homeschooling
- Biblical / Spiritual
 - Avoiding false teaching such as evolution or humanism

- Prayer is still allowed in homeschool
- The other children in school can be a bad influence
- We can have more meaningful interaction with our kids
- We want our children to learn God's Word
- We are convinced from scripture

With these individual reasons as examples let's take a closer look at the broader categories.

Before we go further though, I want to let you know that I have a bit of a bias. I don't want to be like a multi-level marketing sales person and not tell you what I'm really talking about until the very end.

Over the years God has led me to the following convictions: The biblical / spiritual reasons are the best ones and will cause us to do the most good for our children. The social / cultural reasons are next in value and the Academic reasons are last and, in the light of eternity, the least beneficial for our children. As we look at these groups of reasons, I will try to explain the basis for my convictions.

Academic

The concerns of people who homeschool for academic reasons are valid. Modern schools have dramatically lower standards than schools of a generation ago or even of schools today in other countries. Political correctness, multi-culturalism and the religion of self-esteem have taken their toll. So, in many cases, we probably could give our children a better academic education than the public schools.

The problem I have with academics as a reason for homeschooling is that it leaves home education as one of many equally valid options. For those who can afford private school, homeschooling isn't all that necessary.

Then there are those who, for various reasons, really can't do a better job than the public schools. A dear friend of ours, a missionary in Mexico, told of his struggles in convincing parents in a very poor,

rural village to teach their children at home. The government schools in this part of Mexico are blatantly atheistic and immoral, but most of these parents had little more than a first grade education themselves. Many didn't even know how to read! How could they possibly teach their children better than the schools? Yet, we would all agree that even no education would be preferable to putting their children under the instruction of these avowed enemies of God. As another friend and veteran homeschooler wrote to us: "I would rather have an uneducated child in heaven than a PhD. in hell."

Also, if we homeschool our children because of academics we often bring a heavy burden on ourselves and our children. This can lead to overspending on curriculum and materials as well as burn-out in both parents and children.

Social / Cultural

Many of the reasons that I placed in this category are also in the Biblical/Spiritual category. That is partly because the Bible does deal with many social and cultural issues. However, some of them overlap because of deeper reasons behind the reason. For example, the influence of other children on ours can be a concern for us for different reasons. One parent might be concerned about their children dressing or wearing their hair differently because of their peers, while another might be concerned that their child's heart is being drawn away from the Lord and their parents and toward their "friends". The one I would see as more cultural and the other as more spiritual.

With that said, I do believe that these reasons are important. Our culture is a reflection of our beliefs and values and if we want to pass those beliefs and values on to our children then we have to be concerned about the cultural influences to which our children are exposed. Spending the kind of time that homeschooling affords with our children and getting to know them individually can be extremely beneficial. The safety of our children is a very real concern and we are seeing more and more that schools, public or private, can not provide the safety and protection of the home.

These types of reasons often provide a very strong incentive to take our children out of the schools but they are not as helpful in guiding our homeschooling efforts.

Biblical / Spiritual

This last group of reasons is, in my opinion, the most valuable in motivating us to homeschool, guiding us in how to homeschool and enabling us to persevere in homeschooling. In order to make it clear why I am thus convinced, we will look at each of the reasons above individually.

Avoiding false teaching such as evolution or humanism

If we send our children to spend the bulk of their day with people teaching them lies, how can we expect them to embrace the truth? No matter how much time we spend correcting the errors our children are being taught, we risk leaving doubts in their minds. These doubts can be spiritually crippling later in their lives. In Jeremiah 10:2, God told the children of Israel to not even learn the way of the heathen.

Prayer is still allowed in homeschool

In Luke chapter 11 we see Jesus teaching His disciples how to pray. We also need to teach our children how to pray. How are we to convince our children of the importance and reality of prayer when we send them to an institution where prayer is discouraged if not forbidden? Homeschooling also gives us the opportunity to teach our children to turn to the Lord throughout the day in every situation. Our children can turn to Him when stuck on an assignment, and see His provision in their daily lives.

“In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.”
Proverbs 3:6

The other children in school can be a bad influence

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” 1 Corinthians 15:33

There's no way around this principle. If we think there is, we're deceived. A wise man once said, “If you throw a white cat in a coal bin, the coal doesn't turn white.” Just as Solomon's wives drew his heart away from God (1 Kings 11), our children's friends can draw their hearts away.

There are many opportunities even for homeschoolers to be affected by this. Activities such as homeschool co-ops, church activities or even playing in the front yard can lead to our children being negatively influenced by peers. If we accept this as one of our reasons for homeschooling then we can better protect our children.

We know of one homeschool family that didn't have this as a reason and put their children in the public school band and track team. Within two or three years those children were all in public school.

We can have more meaningful interaction with our children

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” Deuteronomy 6:6-7

In order to fulfill the command in this verse we need time with our children. If we send them out of the home for six to eight hours per day it is going to be difficult, if not impossible, to find that time. And there is no more meaningful or valuable time that we can spend with our children than time teaching them God's Word. We'll look at this more in the next section.

Let's also consider the example of the Lord Jesus. After He called His disciples He didn't send them off to Bible school. He kept them

with Him day and night. They went where He went, saw what He did and heard what He said. This is a great model for us and our children. This is one of those reasons that is strengthened as we see the fruit in our children's lives. Seeing that fruit and not wanting to lose it, we are encouraged to continue during the hard times.

We want our children to learn God's Word

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works'. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The importance of God's Word can not be overstated. Of all the books that our children might study during their time with us, the Bible is by far the most important. Homeschooling our children allows us to saturate them with God's Word in a way that would never happen in school.

Spending time teaching God's Word to our children is also a great way to learn it better ourselves. I would especially encourage dads to get involved with this, most important, aspect of homeschooling. Dads, if you only have time to teach one subject to your children, make it the Bible. The rewards will be worth far more than the small sacrifice of time.

When we look more closely at Deuteronomy 6:6-7 we see that it not only tells that we **are** to teach our children, but also **what** to teach our children: God's Word. Other subjects may be helpful in our children's lives but there is only one that God tells us will make them "thoroughly furnished".

In Matthew 24:35 the Lord Jesus tells us: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away". So why would we want to spend the bulk of our time or our children's time studying heaven and earth?

Having this as a reason for homeschooling, the decisions about *what* curriculum or *which* books and resources to purchase become much clearer and easier. We often will find that we don't need nearly as much as we might have thought when first getting started. And what we do choose will be chosen in light of our goal of making God's Word a prominent part of our children's education.

We are convinced from Scripture

"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

If you are teaching your children at home because you are convinced from the Scriptures that that is what God would have you do, then it is very unlikely that you will give up no matter how difficult the going gets. When we feel overwhelmed or discouraged we can rely on God's promises and we can know that what He has called us to do He will enable us to do.

I firmly believe that the Bible teaches that parents are responsible for teaching the children that God has given them. If we are willing to see it, I believe that we will realize that homeschooling is not just another choice but that it is God's choice for us and our children.

There are many passages in the Bible that show us our responsibility to train our children and that show the benefits of bringing up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I know of one dad who was convinced by this single passage:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Psalm 1:1-3

Others may require more convincing so let's look at some of the many verses that can help us see the Lord's will in this matter:

"Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children." Deuteronomy 4:10

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" Proverbs 1:8

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments:" Psalm 111:10

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6:33

"My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments" Proverbs 3:1

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:6

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15

"As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children" 1 Thessalonians 2:11

"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee" Proverbs 2:1

“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” Deuteronomy 6:6-7

*“My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.”
Proverbs 4:20*

“A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke.” Proverbs 13:1

So... what if you're convinced that these reasons are the best ones but they are, honestly, not the reasons why you started homeschooling? Well, first of all, God can change our reasons over time. The reasons my wife and I started homeschooling are quite different from the reasons we continue today. In fact, when we started our first child was 4 years old. This was my idea, because my main reason was to give our son a “better education” than I thought he could get in school, but I wanted to start a year early just in case I was wrong.

Then also, we can decide to change our reasons. Sometimes we think that our reasons or motives for doing something are fixed. They're just “the way we feel”. How can we change that? I don't believe that God would tell us to do something that cannot be done, but He tells us, in Psalm 37:4, to delight ourselves in Him. He doesn't say “if you delight ...”

Another related principle is found in Matthew 6:19 – 21 *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, ... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* We can see here that our hearts follow the action of laying up our treasure. Actually, this passage is another great one for homeschooling. Our children are our treasures. Do we want to establish them firmly in this earth with its corruption or do we want to train them to be living as pilgrims and strangers looking for that heavenly city? (Hebrews 11:13-16)

So let us determine, firmly, in our minds, trusting that the Lord will cause our hearts to follow, that the reason we homeschool is to please Him and to train our children to be His good and faithful servants.
May God bless you and your children as you follow Him.

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encouraging families to
“Seek first the Kingdom of God...”
Matthew 6:33

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