

Joy! May 2001 – Home schooling

A vehicle for healthy family life

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Craig and I are the very privileged parents of four wonderful children, and we are expecting another blessing in July. We are the current leaders of the Eastern Cape Homeschooling Association, and my husband is also involved with the Pestalozzi Trust (the legal defence fund for homeschoolers in South-Africa).

We have been homeschooling for nearly 11 years, since the birth of our first child, although it was a long time before we realised this was what we were doing. God is faithful in leading His children in the ways He has chosen for them. From the beginning, thanks to Ann Robinson's Babies Bible Class, we understood that the training of our children was our responsibility. This understanding was confirmed as we read the Scriptures, where God instructed us: "These commandments that I gave you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (Deuteronomy 6:7)." Homeschooling, by definition, is education given to children in their own home by their own parents. As a result, therefore, there are very few parents who have not homeschooled at one time or another!

Remember potty training? The process of teaching a child to read is not that much different.

Homeschooling has been a very wonderful thing for us. As we have gone along, step by step, more and more vistas have opened up before us. We have learned many things. One of the most significant of these lessons has been the freedom to truly enjoy being a family.

God so often seems to choose the foolish things to confound the wise. My husband and I both came from families that had been damaged by divorce. Both of us had spent much time at boarding schools. We would never have considered ourselves competent to demonstrate God's family values.

And yet homeschooling has ended up being a vehicle for us, not only to experience God's restoration in our own perception of family, but also to encourage and influence others in adopting God's vision of what a family is. Not that the work is by any means complete. As we live together day by day, we are learning more and more what a family is meant to be.

Why is homeschooling such a vehicle for healthy family life? Simply, I think, because you get time to be together. In today's busy world, parents and children have so little time to know each other, to touch base, to develop that intimate understanding and friendship that leads to a united family; to embrace the trials and challenges of growing together in spite of the enormous differences in personality and interests.

We speak to many parents who feel that they do not know their children. But

homeschoolers have time for togetherness; time to learn to implement God's clear instructions about relationships. This is the most wonderful thing that has happened in our family. Out of a very damaged sense of what a family is, God is building a new and whole vision. Family means:

- A safe place to grow
- Accepting one another
- Learning God's ways together
- Being friends
- Teamwork
- Sacrificing in love for common goals or for another member of the family
- Learning to handle conflict in healthy and loving ways
- Learning that it's okay to make mistakes and to say sorry
- Training in responsibility and accountability
- Really belonging somewhere
- Turning the hearts of the fathers towards the children
- Turning the hearts of the children towards the fathers

Many people are crying out for these things.

So, although the academic value is being made evident in our children, this is less and less the thing that keeps us homeschooling. What keeps us homeschooling is the understanding that healthy families build healthy societies. And homeschooling is giving us time and space to have a healthy family. In closing, I would like to encourage you with these Scriptures:

"Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him. Like arrows

in the hands of a warrior are sons born in ones youth (Psalm 127:3,4)."

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs1:7)."

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your heads, and a chain to adorn your neck (Proverbs 1:8)."

"She (the mother) speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on he tongue (Proverbs 31:26)."