

The Benefits and Blessings of Home School Support Groups

Linda Joyce Heaner

Who needs a support group? We all do! In different ways, each of us needs the encouragement, ideas, resources, and camaraderie a support group provides. And every person who attends a support group has something to offer.

Parents new to homeschooling need a support group. They're brimming with questions needing answers—questions about curriculum, their school day, state requirements. They need assurance as they seek to find the rhythm and balance for their homeschool. They need to hear that others struggle, others get discouraged, and others revise their study plans. They need to be reminded that they are not alone in planning and leading their children's education. The Holy Spirit, our Helper, Teacher, and Comforter, is the ultimate teacher in each homeschool.

Who better to share these truths than more experienced home educators? We who have lived the joys and challenges of homeschooling have the wonderful privilege of actively encouraging others who are beginning. Some of us have homeschooled for so long that we don't remember those early days or the fears and uncertainties that surrounded them. We would do well to pause and remember who helped us get started. Who stood by our sides and cheered us on? Who offered ongoing encouragement? And then resolve in our hearts to actively help other families in those ways.

Parents considering homeschooling need a support group to visit. What better way to find out what's involved in homeschooling and talk with parents whose children are similar ages? New and experienced homeschooling parents can offer varied perspectives and a realistic picture of homeschooling. Our support group welcomes any parents wanting to learn about homeschooling, even before their children are old enough to start.

Support groups are not just for novice homeschool parents. Experienced home educators need them too. They need the fresh enthusiasm of new homeschoolers. Listen to the answers three moms give to the question, "Why do you attend a homeschool support group?"

Deb, mom of six, ages 10 to 25 says, "I need the likeminded fellowship and encouragement. Our support group gives me a dose of realism. Sometimes I need to do more. Other times I'm reminded that God is good, and even if we had a bad week, my children are not ruined for life! I also feel a responsibility to help newer families."

Mary, mom of a teenage son, says, "I like to hear others' ideas and how they approach teaching. It's also good to get out of the house and meet with kindred spirits. We're in this together!"

Kristin, mom of four, ages 4 to 18, says, "I'm encouraged when I hear that others struggle too. There's support and excitement in the group. I want to encourage others to continue."

Did you notice the recurring theme of relationship expressed by these women? Of giving as well as receiving? A homeschool support group is a place to build friendships that extend beyond the meetings. It's a place to share victories and defeats, joys and struggles. It's a place to pray for one another and encourage each other to depend on God.

Throughout God's Word we are told to encourage, love, and care for one another. Hebrews 10:24 tells us to "*consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.*" A homeschool support group is one setting where all these actions can readily occur. Whatever your age or stage in life, or however long you've been homeschooling, you can benefit from a homeschool support group, and be a blessing to others who attend.

Biographical Information

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Linda Joyce Heaner home-educated her children for ten years as a single parent. "I could not have done it without the support and encouragement of homeschooling families in my community and church. They were my cheerleaders." In Linda's book, God, I Need Help, she describes her family's start in homeschooling and some of their adventures. Her family's story is also told in the chapter "Homeschooling Single" in Real-Life Homeschooling. She gladly talks with families interested in homeschooling and encourages them to join a support group. You can contact Linda at linda@abidinghope.com.

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