

Encouraging Single-Parent Home Educators

Linda Joyce Heaner

The face of homeschooling is changing. As long-term benefits of homeschooling are visible and documented, more people are pursuing this educational choice. No longer is there one common picture of a "typical" homeschooling family. Grandparents home educate today And the number of single parents who homeschool is increasing. Does that surprise you? Do you wonder how single parents can possibly do it?

Homeschooling is a challenge for all parents. It is especially challenging for single parents. Why? The mom or dad is one person, not two. He or she makes all the decisions about curriculum and course of study. There is no other adult in the home to provide support and balance. All encouragement for homeschooling efforts must be found outside the home. Plus, the single parent must balance homeschooling with some form of employment, in or outside the home. Wow! It makes you wonder why any single parent would want to homeschool!

Single parents homeschool for the same reasons you do. They want to invest in their children. They want to teach them about living for Jesus. They want to instill a biblical worldview in their children. They want their home to be the hub of their family. Single parents love their children as much as you love yours. They have great hopes and dreams for their children, just like you do. Some are convinced that homeschooling their children will give them the best education possible. They have counted the cost and are willing (just like you) to make needed sacrifices. And like all other home educators, single parents need ongoing support and encouragement.

Do you know any single parents who are home educating? Is there one in your homeschool group or in your neighborhood? Here are some simple ways you can be a cheerleader for them:

Inquire.

Ask them questions like, "How did you decide to homeschool?" or "What got you interested in homeschooling?" It's so much better to ask than assume. You'll hear fascinating stories. One single mom told me her sons had special learning needs that weren't adequately addressed at school. "My love and personal attention plus whatever assistance I can find are far better than what the school offered." A widow continues to homeschool after her husband dies. Why? "Even though it's hard, I still believe it's the best educational choice." Why would a single mom start homeschooling after a divorce? She may respond by stating, "It provides stability and security for our family. It's the best way I can instill Godly values in my children."

You may ask them, "How is homeschooling going for you these days?" Every home educator has up and down times. Let single parents know you're interested in how they're doing. Your question invites them to honestly share their joys and frustrations.

Encourage.

Tell a single-parent home educator that you admire his courage. Listen attentively when she's discouraged. Freely offer ideas or tips that have helped you. Share books and resources you're

not currently using. Reassure them of God's personal love and His wonderful promises. Remind them that they are never alone.

Learn.

Homeschooling in single-parent families may look far different than in your home. Yet there's plenty you can learn from them. Single-parent home educators are extremely resourceful, tenacious, and creative. Find out their favorite resources. Ask them for ideas in areas where you need help. Discover what passions God has put in their hearts and how they pass them on to their children.

Include.

Ask a single-parent homeschooling family to go on a field trip with you. Invite them to join your family for an activity or a meal. Offer to pick up their child for a homeschool event and give the single parent a little break. Your family can serve as one role model of a two-parent family. The pressures of single parenting can sometimes rob a family of fun. Spending time with your family can help them enjoy the lighter side of life.

Pray.

Offer to pray with a single-parent home educator. And do it right then. Strength and comfort come in praying together. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in praying for them and their children. Their task is not an easy one. As you remind them of God's faithfulness in the past, you will help them look to Him with hope for the days ahead.

It's really just putting the Golden Rule into practice: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Never underestimate how your simple word of kindness or small deed can encourage a single-parent home educator.

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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