

Grace and the Homeschool

Kim Wolf

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Corinthians 12:9

I've noticed a series of stages in the life of homeschool moms. The first, of course, is one of anxiety and fear as the dear newbies begin their great adventure. The second is usually a fluctuation between "same ol', same ol' " and delight in the privilege of being with our children all day. The third, ahhh... this is the pinnacle we all work toward . . . graduation!

But somewhere in the second stage lies a hidden sub-level that homeschool moms don't talk about. It begins when many get lost in the illusion of fantastic stories and statistics (all meant to be encouraging) of super-homeschoolers. These super-homeschoolers and their families live on small, self-sufficient farms where they raise their own livestock, fruits, and vegetables; make their own clothes; their children have all read *War and Peace* by their third-grade year; they have formed their own family orchestra and every evening they play the chamber music that the oldest two siblings have co-written; and the parents have written an entire curriculum that keeps them in demand at homeschool conventions across the country. Oh, by the way, all the children aced their SATs and entered an ivy-league college at age 16.

Then we come to the point where burn-out could be on the horizon if we try to live up to the exception (note family above) rather than the rule. Yes, homeschoolers score an average of 30-35 points above their public/private school counterparts on the SATs. Yes, ivy-league colleges are welcoming homeschoolers with open arms. Yes, because of the love and time that homeschool families have with each other, our families can (and DO) do superior, wonderful things together! But burn-out can come when a mom tries to live up to that ideal everyday.

Many moms on this level can feel like the hamster in the wheel . . . running, running, running but going nowhere. While Dad is at work, mom is home acting as teacher, nurse, short-order cook, police officer, librarian, taxi cab driver--and on and on. With so much demand on her, it isn't difficult to understand why she might feel unloved, inadequate, or insignificant.

Something I have been heard to say more than once to moms in our support group is: "Even though we homeschoolers are very independent, it's still no place to be an island." What I mean is that we need to be fed both spiritually and emotionally.

We must feed ourselves on the spiritual food of God's Word. This is where the Source of all has given us instruction and spiritual nourishment. This is where our real strength comes from. Whether you prefer to read and pray in the morning or evening makes no difference. Just do it! "But I don't have the time! I can't read and pray in the morning because I barely get up before my kids. I can't read and pray at night because I'm so tired I fall asleep after the first sentence." I used to feel the same way. Personally, I read and pray at night and fall asleep ruminating on what

I have studied. The Lord doesn't care what time of day we talk to Him--He just wants us to talk to Him! You will be amazed at how this changes your day.

You need to be emotionally fed as well. Of course, the Lord is first in this area, but the first mortal you need to go to is your husband. He has no idea what you've been through or what you need unless you tell him. As much as we wish husbands were mind-readers, sadly they are not. If he will help you for a half-hour a day, you can take time for a sip of tea and a little reading, or maybe you prefer going to the grocery by yourself. This, too, can have a reviving effect on your mind.

Another emotional outlet can be your support group. *"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."* (Prov. 27:17) Everyone there has been through, or will go through, what you are going through. Use them--that's why they are there. In our area we have a weekly gym day at the YMCA. The students have dubbed us moms "The Lounging Mamas" because many of us meet in the lounge. While we are there, we do everything from write lesson plans to gab to share new ideas and *pray*.

Dear friendships are made in these groups. Don't isolate yourself by thinking that you are the only one who has a "low" day in a world of perfect homeschoolers. You won't be embarrassed; you will find a sisterhood that the Lord has purposely put in your path. (2 Cor. 1:3-4)

Biographical Information

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