

## Getting the Homeschool Journey Started

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It is not uncommon for families to feel "buyer's remorse" after the first few weeks or months as new homeschoolers, and maybe with good reason. With every change or new beginning there will be struggles, some big, some small, and some monstrous. Maybe the in-laws are furious with your decision. Maybe you just can't seem to find time to finish all that you had planned in your day. Maybe cooperation has only seen a few moments or your house has seen better days. Sometimes, life just takes an unexpected turn.

We homeschooled all through the preschool years and continued with homeschooling for kindergarten shortly before our firstborn child turned five. We also had a preschooler and a toddler, and I was two months pregnant with our fourth. I truly loved homeschooling. For me it was just a short step from what I had already been doing all through the preschool years (which is why I so strongly encourage preschooling at home). Everything was going so smoothly. Then, seven months later, just after the birth of our fourth child, our routine was brought to an immediate halt. Amy had an extremely dangerous infection in the brain. She was only 19 days old. After spending weeks in the ICU, we realized that she had severe tissue damage. Medical advances could not increase the likelihood of normal development. I must confess, the thought lingered in my mind that there was no way I could continue homeschooling our kindergartner, preschooling the next child, and keeping the toddler busy while taking care of the huge needs this child was going to have.

I prayed and prayed, and finally brought my fears to my husband. He gently encouraged me, telling me that God would provide what we couldn't and that He would continue to bless us, our children, and our home if we committed our children to Him. My husband was right. God's Word is filled with promises of the blessings He will bestow upon us when we serve Him with all our hearts, minds, and souls, and allow our children the same opportunity. Yes, our life took an unexpected turn, but we relied on His promises and continued homeschooling in spite of the challenges, knowing that God would always provide.

Do you recall what brought you to the idea of homeschooling? There are many reasons that compel parents to seek this excellent form of education, but are your goals today to use homeschooling to give God glory? Are you using homeschooling first and foremost to strengthen your child's relationship with Jesus in every way possible? Homeschooling with the right foundation is the best opportunity ever granted to us by God to fulfill our responsibility in directing our children to a lifelong relationship with Christ.

*"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. 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, throughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:15-17*

Practically, though, how can you set the course in those first few months of your new homeschool endeavor in order to win spiritually, academically, emotionally, and physically (and perhaps keep the house clean too)?

Today there are hundreds of thousands of homeschoolers in America. Included in this number are numerous single parents, widows, and grandparents who have chosen against all odds to homeschool their children or grandchildren. Collectively, these families have endured every challenge possible and overcome them with God's help. And so can you. Here are some ideas to help you stay the course and run with endurance, right from the beginning:

1. Moms, start your day with a quiet time of prayer and reflection. In the time you used to spend making a mad dash to get the kids to school, you can now get refreshed in the Lord with morning devotions. Let the kids sleep an extra hour if necessary, or let them do their devotions in their room until you're ready for them to come out.
2. Do not start any day without a heart and mind willing to change your schedule at a moment's notice. If you start your homeschool off with too much structure and do not allow time and patience for those unexpected events that come every day, you will be frustrated and will inevitably feel like a failure.
3. The average government-schooled child only spends 5 to 15 minutes per day one-on-one with their teacher. That's all. Can you match that? Although increased amounts of one-on-one time is one of the top benefits of homeschooling, your children do not need eight hours of personal daily tutoring. If you allow them the opportunity to learn to teach themselves, they will develop skills they would not get in any institution, such as self-sufficiency, self-direction, and logical thinking.
4. Focus the beginning months on discovering your child's learning style and your teaching style, keeping in mind that both will need a little tweaking here and there as the years go by.
5. If restlessness or aggravation set in, turn on some Christian music, sing, or do something else to lighten the mood (I suggest putting a CD player and music collection right next to you for easy convenience). After a few songs, a joyful attitude will return and you will be ready to restart schooling.
6. What part does the Bible have in your school day? It must be the primary part of your child's education. There are many wonderful one-year devotionals that divide the entire Bible into morning and evening readings. Also, consider having your children write out the New Testament in one year. They can do this by writing out just 30 or so verses a day. Be sure to create a special binder for these writings. It will be an accomplishment to treasure for a lifetime.
7. Use Christian curriculum! I cannot stress enough how diametrically opposed the government schools' textbooks are to God's Word. They are designed to teach

- your child that God does not exist. There is really no reason to have your homeschool designed around the use of secular textbooks or secular homeschool programs. Review the ads in this magazine, find a Christian homeschool convention, or visit a Homeschool Headquarters section in your local Christian bookstore. There are just too many Christian programs and curricula to settle for secular.
8. Being "super-woman" is an emotional struggle for every mom. Having a clean house often allows us to feel as if we've had a successful day because we have something visually concrete to show we accomplished something. However, a sparkling clean house is not what God is looking for from us. Yes, He likes order, and it is healthy and important, but it should not become the focus of our day. Letting your house look like you have kids is all right. Straightening up a little before your husband comes home will keep you from burning out and feeling overworked.
  9. The biggest aspect in making the homeschool years peaceful and joyful is to make sure you and your husband are on the same page. Take some time to ask your husband what he would like to see you accomplish in your day. I think you will find that what he expects is a lot less than what you expect of yourself. Let him know what your struggles are. Set realistic goals with your husband so at the end of the day no one feels frustrated or tired. Remember, your children are only with you for a short time. Enjoy spending time with them and your husband rather than building up long lists of to-dos for everyone. Nurture your children, but don't forget to nurture your marriage, too.

Remember to relax and enjoy the journey. You only have to please God, and that is so easy to do. If you focus on bringing Christ into every part of your child's education, everything else will fall into place. God has promised to guide us all the way to seeing Him face to face. Is He not then able to guide us in our homeschool? Yes, He is, and He does not fail. Stand sure on His promises, and stay on your knees for His guidance.

*"For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 48:14*

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### Biographical Information

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