

In Honor of the MEN



Hey Heart of the Matter readers! We (the guys) have hijacked our wives' website. We have sent them on an extended vacation. A vacation from the web at least. From now until the 18th, you will be in for a treat - guest articles by some terrific homeschooling dads...some of them are very well-known, some of them are published authors or company owners, and some are, like us, Heart of the Matter husbands. Some of these articles were written specifically for the men, so while we hope all the guys will stop on by to read, we are men after all and we understand that it's hard to get us males to read anything.

We feel very privileged to bring you these articles, as well as some fantastic giveaways just for the men. Yep, every single day, for the next 10 days, we will give you an opportunity to win something.

Just a warning for you readers, some of what you might read in the coming days might shock you, but most of it will give you a peek into the true heart of the average homeschooling dad. Please tell all your friends and help us spread the word about this fun event!

Here's to the end of pink font and pictures of flowers and ballet shoes. (At least while we reign.)

John and Ryan
the devoted husbands of the Amies

A Father's Manner of Love

By Chuck Black

owner of Perfect Praise Publishing,
author of the Kingdom Series

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be



called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." 1 John 3: 1

Dad, your wife may be the

tender loving one with your children, but do not underestimate the power of healthy affection that you have the privilege and responsibility of bestowing upon your children. Done right, a simple hug can change your child's life forever.

I was the last of seven children and the last six of those children were boys. The only hugging that happened in our home was between Mother and us boys or perhaps between two boys in a knock-down, drag-out wrestling match...not exactly a hug fest! However, my Father was a compassionate man that let us know through an occasional back rub, a face rub, or a head rub that he loved us. It was just as good as a hug and maybe even better. I did not realize how unusual it was for a father to show physical affection for his sons until I became much older and watched the interaction between other boys and their dads. Not only did they not demonstrate any physical affection but there was rarely, if ever, any words of affirmation given by their fathers.

A few years ago I attended a men's breakfast Bible study for a few weeks and learned that I was the only man in the entire group of approximately fifteen men that had ever received encouragement and

love from his father. These were born again, Bible believing men, and many came from Christian homes. I can't even imagine what the secular world must be like! I immediately felt out of place and blessed beyond measure for the father I had.

As fathers, we have such amazing power to grow our children with encouraging words and healthy physical affection. I understand that this may not be easy for many men, especially for those that never had the opportunity to have it demonstrated for them, but please consider breaking out of your comfort zone and give your son or daughter what they desperately need and long for...the tender, compassionate love of a father. I spoke to a fifty-eight year old man some time ago that told me that his father never gave him one single word of affirmation; not even a 'good job.' The pain in his voice was indelibly evident and I hurt for him. Even as an adult man on the back half of his life, he still craved the approval of his father.



I learned this lesson early with my own children and have tried to pass on what my father gave to me. With six active boys in my home growing up, my parents had ample opportunity to referee and engage in many youth conflicts. My father told me that the tension of a situation would diffuse if he could just get his hands on the youth in turmoil. A gentle hand on the shoulder or knee would often be all that was needed to express love and settle the emotions of one of my older brothers, for I am certain it was never me!

My oldest son struggled with anger for a couple of years when he was about eight years old. When I disciplined him for an inappropriate attitude, he would become very angry, run to his room, slam the door,

and lay face down on his bed. I knew that it was not wise to leave him in this condition, for bitterness can take root in an angry heart if left alone. I would always follow him to his room and gently talk to him about his anger and attitude. There were times I even had to bring extra discipline upon him until I sensed that his heart had softened and become repentant. That was always the goal, a repentant heart. Eventually, he would submit and we would pray together. I always finished by giving him a hug before I left his room. He was not a boy that really liked hugs, and it was not always easy to do, but I wanted him to know that I was serious about my love for him.

Those were real times of growth for both of us. On one particular occasion, he went to his room in anger, and I followed to help him through his emotions. After quite a long time of counsel and prayer, he just wouldn't submit and truly repent. I was very sad, for it seemed as though I had reached an impasse with him. I shared with him that I was going to leave, but I would be praying for him. I turned and left his room. A few minutes later, he showed up in my bedroom with a broken heart and a sad look on his face. He said, "Dad, you didn't hug me." I could hardly believe what I had heard for I didn't even know he cared for my hugs. I told him that I didn't think he wanted a hug because he was still angry but that I would gladly hug him now. As I wrapped my arms around him and told him I loved him, his tense muscles relaxed and his heart melted to repentance. It was a powerful work of the Lord, for from that day forward this same young man has not dealt with a single episode of anger.

For my daughters, during our church greeting time I have made it a habit to kiss the back of their hand and give them a hug to show them how precious they are to me. I was never so encouraged as to see the same son that had earlier struggled with anger do the same thing for his younger sisters after one of his varsity basketball games in front of his athlete friends.

Our Heavenly Father has bestowed his love on us and called us his children. What manner of love ought we to show to our children? The kind of love that says I will encourage you with my words and lift you up with my arms. Dads, let the Heavenly Father wrapped his loving arms around you as you learn how to show affection to your children. It will change their lives forever, and probably yours too!

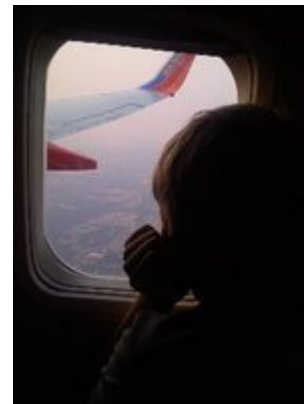
Prayer:

"Heavenly Father, your love for us is overwhelming. Thank you for the privilege of being called your sons and daughters. Help us to express true love to our families in a way that honors you and grows them up in your Spirit. In Jesus name, Amen."

Tuesday, June 10, 2008

Have Children, Will Travel: One Dad's Ongoing Road Adventure

By Ken Carpenter
owner, Franklin Springs Family Media



"Welcome to the world, you precious Psalm 127/128 baby" is the general sentiment with which we have greeted each of the eight blessings God has brought into our home. We assure them that our greatest goal is to raise them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord, praying that they'll be brought to a saving knowledge of Him early in life. To be fair with them, though, we should also issue them a warning: early on, they need to pack a suitcase. Being born into this family means they'll be hitting the road sooner than later.

As a homeschooling, entrepreneurial family involved in a creative vocation (film and video production), our life is anything but

routine. We never know completely what God has in store for us as we navigate each year. Our schedule rises and falls and gets reinvented at the whim of production demands, which are altogether fluid and dynamic.

Early on in this adventure of raising a sizable family while pursuing an atypical career path, I made the determination that if my work was going to take me away from home, I would commit myself to doing everything possible to bring home along with me when I travel. And having been at this strategy now for several years, I can happily report that I have been deeply rewarded as a result.

Our work/family travel takes two basic forms. Usually, if I need to go on a shoot at a destination that is within a reasonable drive, we load up the 15 passenger van with the entire family and commence with a rich-in-life-experience roadtrip. On other occasions, when it's more reasonable to fly, I will take one (or sometimes more) of the older children with me for what is unfailingly a profitable time together. Whether it's a few of us or the whole contingent, we usually purpose to tack a travel adventure onto one side or the other (or both) of a work engagement.

Obviously, this approach comes at a cost. Financially, it's an investment that can be a burden. Sometimes it simply doesn't make sense. And there's been more than a few occasions when I've questioned my sanity as I've juggled attending to the needs of little ones while a big meeting or shoot is looming.

But those inconveniences pale when I consider the storehouse of memories we're building as a family as we traverse the country. Whether it's the 10 of us, or me and my 16 year old (or one of the others), we've shared endless unique, enriching experiences on the road – memories we'll share our entire lives.

On the homeschool front, we are of the opinion that the knowledge acquisition that takes place while traveling is of exceptional value. While some of our subjects get set aside for trips that typically span a few days to a few weeks, the life experience garnered while traveling provides a unique learning opportunity.

Yes, we do get a healthy dose of geography, history, photography, social studies and the like on



the road. My oldest son has been with me to 47 states thus far (and three countries). He's got a pretty good feel for the lay of the land across the United States. But I'm also glad that his experiences have included everything from rolling up his sleeves on a cattle farm to improvising after cancelled flights to hailing cabs in New York City. He's sat in on many, many meetings with me, providing him an excellent look into numerous facets of running a business. He's been a part of meetings that are marketing oriented, and he's been part of those that seek to assuage a client after a challenging set of circumstances. He's been privy to a wide spectrum of customer relations.

All of the children have learned the art of operating as a team as we've spent so many nights moving into hotels, then usually moving out the following day. It becomes a pretty tight operation, one where we're always challenged to maintain a decorum and disposition that combats some of the frustrations that can creep into travel. They're learning that a fundamental civility between us all goes a long way toward keeping the peace. It's a wonderful Deuteronomy 4 "walk in the way" means of shepherding the children's hearts in the

midst of circumstances that can sometimes try anyone's good nature.

Another positive aspect of traveling, of course, is that the children are getting to meet a wide variety of Christian people from vastly different socioeconomic and demographic stations in life. Whether we're staying in a family home, or visiting a church, or meeting people at, say, a Joni and Friends Family Retreat for families with disabled children (where we've filmed portions of a television show for Joni Eareckson Tada), the children are seeing God's Kingdom at work. We love the 100 or so saints at our small family-integrated church outside of Nashville, Tennessee; and we love that the children are meeting God's people in all four corners of the country.

When I reflect on our family travel, of course a lot of the predictable images quickly surface: The Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, Mt. Rushmore, the Northern California shoreline, the streets of Old Montreal, Central Park and navigating the subway with eight children, etc. But I know that the more lasting memory will be less about the magnificent architecture or sweeping landscapes; I'm sure that we will savor much more that we've experienced these things as a family. We've faced down a lot of road challenges together; by God's mercy, we've gotten through them together. And we've grown much closer in the process.



Does this same sort of family unity grow when we take walks along our quiet country road? When we push the children in the

tire swings on a gorgeous Tennessee late afternoon? As we go through the fumbling process of trying to learn how to raise animals together? Absolutely. But is there something special about boarding an airplane with a 10 year old? With the family

cheering as we cross the state line of, say, Montana? With meeting a dear Christian family in a far away state? Without a doubt.

My admonition to other fathers: though it can be a stretching process, don't miss the opportunity to include the family in your travels when possible. Long after the challenges subside, the blessings will abound.

[Ken Carpenter runs Franklin Springs Family Media from the historic village of Franklin, TN, where he and his wife Devon live with their eight travel companions.](#)

Wednesday, June 11, 2008

Turning 40

By [Tim Hawkins](#)
Comedian and homeschool dad



It came and went. Faster than a speeding bullet. My 40th birthday. And there was nothing I could do about it.

My face is changing. I have eyebrows growing in like fiber optic cable. I'm serious.

"Honey, do we have any pruning shears? I've gotta trim these babies up." There's like leaves and apples growing in my eyebrow foliage. And then my ears. It looks like I have ZZTop living in there. "'Cause every girl's crazy / 'Bout Earhair man". Rock on.

My products are changing. I've noticed you can tell you're getting older by the products you start to use. My wife just bought me some deodorant that's labeled 'Clinical Strength'. That's when you know you have issues: When your armpit funk is a clinical case study.

My body is changing. For Christmas, my wife got me a special bathroom scale. It not only measures body weight. It measures water weight, bone density, and body fat. Great. Now I have not 1 but 4 reasons to

feel like a failure.
I'm just glad the
scale doesn't talk.
"Hey! Mix in a
salad, you hairy-
eared fat freak!
GET OFF ME!!"



My beverages are changing. I can't drink Coke anymore. No, no, no. My wife has me drinking diet soda. I can't stand diet soda. Does anyone remember the first diet soda? Tab. That's right, Tab. It was like carbonated Epicac. Sure, it's easy to lose weight when you're dry heaving all the time. The tab ON the can tasted better than the Tab IN the can.

My foods are changing. I can't eat real eggs anymore. My wife is buying egg substitute. Which freaks me out. Where do those come from? What kind of chickens are shooting those things out?

And no more bacon. I love bacon. I brush my teeth with bacon sometimes. My wife went to the organic store and brought me home 'turkey bacon'. Turkey... Bacon!? How is that possible? What, are the turkeys and the pigs hooking up now? What's going on down on the farm these days? Gobble Gobble Oink Oink, I don't think so. I mean, I'm open minded, but that just doesn't sound Christian to me. And turkey bacon just doesn't perform like bacon should. Real bacon crinkles up and sizzles when you cook it. Turkey bacon just lays flat. It's like eating a meat flavored fruit roll-up.

Still, after I weigh the pros and cons, I'm looking forward to my 40's. Because I've found there's something great about getting older. I've learned to enjoy the little things that make life special. Like learning a new lick on my guitar. Or when I find extra fries at the bottom of my McDonald's bag. Or a nap. Little things like that.

I'm just trying to keep my eyes open and see the wonder of this life. That is... when my vision isn't obstructed by eyebrow hair.

Thursday, June 12, 2008

Look Up

By Curt Whalen

Husband of HOTM writer Marybeth Whalen and homeschool dad to 6 children



Bathing my soon-to-be three year old is always a challenge. Don't get me wrong. He loves the water. He loves his toys, loves pouring water from cups, and loves "painting" the walls with a washcloth. And I love watching him laugh.

But sooner than he likes, bedtime draws near and we have to get the soap out and wash the day's dirt away. Our problem begins when we have to wash his hair. He absolutely hates shampoo, and cries out loud when I have to pour water over his head. I'm always careful and have never gotten soap in his eyes, but to him that doesn't matter. As soon as I grab a cup to wash the shampoo away I hear, "No daddy!," and he ducks his head to try and avoid the water, only making matters worse.

The scene played out this morning while we were getting ready for church. Bath-time was over and I began the rinsing process. As I began pouring and he ducked his head to avoid the water, I heard myself saying, "Son, just look up. Look up and everything will be OK. Look up. I won't let it hurt you." The second those words came out of my mouth, I felt an ache in my heart and my eyes clouded over with tears.

You see, for the past few years, life has been a struggle financially for my family. The changes in our economy have been

tough at my place of employment. I'm a commissioned salesman and have watched my monthly income slowly decline. Some specific things happened over the last few weeks that have caused me to experience some extreme emotions of fear and anger. I've been walking through a valley and am embarrassed to admit that in my period of self-loathing, I've let myself turn away from God and even directed anger His way.

As I've found to be typical, God uses the little things of this world to draw us back to Himself. I sat in our bathroom this morning heartbroken as the implications of the words I spoke to my son were sinking in. I heard a voice inside my heart. "Son, just look up. Look up and everything will be OK. Look up. I won't let it hurt you."

Look up.

It is so easy when we are in the valleys of our journey that we forget to look up. It is so easy to wander aimlessly through the desert times of our lives and turn away from God instead of seeing Him for who He is. Doesn't Jesus say that we only have to look up to God and ask for fish (Luke 11:11)? Doesn't God's word promise us His love and protection (2 Thessalonians 3:3, 1 Peter 1:5)? Why is it that we let our faith and our hope drain out of our lives as quickly as the water drains out of a tub? Why am I so quick to forget the countless blessing I've already been given? How is it that I can forget that God has always provided for the things my family and I need? How is it that in a moment of trial I can still turn away from Abba Father instead of looking up and letting His love carry me through a difficult time?

I learn so much from the behavior of my children. A beautiful transformation occurred during my son's bath this morning. For the very first time, my son fought through his fears and listened to his father's voice. I gently coaxed him to look up to me, and with blind faith, he listened and obeyed. I carefully poured the water over his head

and washed all the soap and dirt away. And I saw the realization form in his eyes that his father was going to protect him from harm. His cries of fear turned to shouts of laughter and joy.

Another transformation took place this morning. Quietly in my heart I prayed that God would forgive my unfaithfulness. Through teary eyes, I looked up to Him and promised to trust in His ways and have faith that He

would help me through this difficult time. And for the first time in awhile, I rediscovered the hope I have in this life because of God's love and His grace.



One of the hardest parts of our Christian faith is coming down off a "mountaintop" and finding yourself in a valley of suffering. We all experience it in one way or another. I praise God that we are able to put all of our hope in Him knowing that He promises to protect us. I pray that you're not experiencing a valley in your life. But if you are, I would encourage you to look up and call out to our Father in Heaven. Fall on your knees, look up, and let his love pour over you. Let God wash all the fears of this world away.

"Look up. Look up and everything will be OK. Look up. I won't let it hurt you."

Real Answers from Real Men



A few weeks ago we asked our readers to send us their husband's input to a variety of questions designed to get to know the heart of the average homeschooling husband and father. Some of their answers will tickle your funny bone, others might tug at your heartstrings. We could not possibly include all the answers we received, but here is a collection of some of the most insightful or most common answers.

1. What do you wish your wife would understand more about you?

- Sometimes I just want to be listened to and heard.
- That I'm not angry or disappointed in her as often as she thinks.
- How much I really love her.
- There are sometimes that I really am thinking about nothing.
- That I think she is beautiful no matter what she does to herself.
- That I am not an animal for wanting sex every day.

2. What would be your perfect day?

- A family picnic and a mountain bike ride.
- Morning intimacy, golf, little bit of shopping, meet the family at the boat for an evening cruise, more intimacy after kids are in bed.
- Church, then Popeyes Chicken and Saints football (Saints win), then

whole family snuggles under covers and takes a nap.

- A cup of coffee outside by myself with a newspaper, then a great breakfast with my family. Then a little reading and thinking time. Then, a nice lunch outside somewhere. Then, an afternoon nap. Then a good dinner on the barbecue. Then, kids go to bed and parents play. :)
- Having sex all day

3. What is the most ingenious or oddest use you've found for duct tape?



- Taping someone to a tree/ being taped to a tree
- My son uses it for everything and I never get to use it.
- My son can make a duct tape belt and that's pretty cool. My daughter made a duct tape wallet and that was cool, too.
- Naptime enforcer. Just kidding. Reinforcement of the artificial Christmas tree box. Ten years and it still holds together, like a sausage. I wish I was kidding.
- Patching a hole in your pants (one piece on inside and one on outside of hole)-obviously not a permanent fix

4. If you didn't have to consider your wife's preferences, what would be your perfect date night?

- Dinner by the water outside on a warm evening
- Motorcycle ride going out for ice cream.
- A great steak dinner, a play or concert, then coffee and a stroll around downtown.
- A nice meal and an evening without thinking about what is going on. It could end in a little romance and I wouldn't mind so much.
- One where we walk, holding hands, and some excellent Chinese food.
- Eat buffalo wings and go watch a ball game

5. What gift would you rather receive?



- A. Power Tool of choice 25%
- B. Intimacy 58%
- C. An evening alone at home-- no wife, no kids, just quiet. 17%

6. What does your wife do that REALLY makes you want to run and hide?

- Not listen and jump to conclusions
- Yell at the kids when she has really had a hard day
- Any major cleaning project (closets, the garage, etc.)
- Gets mad about shoes in the house
- Wake you up too early in the morning
- Accuse me of staring at another woman
- Get angry when I am just trying to be playful

7. What could your wife do to make your daily homecoming pleasant?

- Come over and give me a kiss.
- Greet me and be happy I'm home, not complain that I work too much.
- Be pleasant and not criticize me for anything.
- "Hi Honey! I'm proud of you and I respect you for the work you've done today."
- Greet me wearing nothing but an apron.
- Give me time to adjust without talking my ear off when I walk in the door.
- Get the kids involved in something so they don't climb on me.
- Have dinner ready and the house tidy.

8. What is your greatest reservation about homeschooling?

- That the kids wouldn't be able to attend the college of their choice.
- The kids don't get daily interaction with other kids their age.
- Putting too much stress on my wife related to planning and preparation.
- How much we stick to a structured approach versus real-life experience and unstructured learning.
- Kids being too secluded from realities of today's society and not knowing how to handle them as an adult.
- That their academic achievement will not be recognized as equal to public or private schooling - that their education might be viewed by colleges/employers as lesser.
- Boredom

9. What makes you feel loved?



- Being listened to followed by intimacy
- When my family seeks my attention, wants to be near me
- My children wanting me to read stories to them.
- When she makes me a drink without being asked, rubs my shoulders without being asked, offers to put the kids to bed alone so I can relax after a long day.
- Her willingness to take care of me when I'm feeling un-well.
- When my wife initiates sex
- When the house and errands are taken care of so I can spend all my free time with family
- Not being argued with
- When she tells me I am her dream man or hero

10. Is there a way that you show love to your wife that she doesn't always notice or appreciate?

- Playful affection
- Even though I am often overwhelmed by my days, I do not let work take over my life.
- I rave about her beauty.
- When I fill her car up with gas
- Going to work everyday so she can homeschool
- Bringing in the groceries for her
- Spending time with her family even when I don't want to
- Making sure her car is in great shape
- I get her all the best gadgets and technologies to make her life as easy as possible

11. What are some creative ways husbands and wives can spend time together at home without actually having a night out?



- Besides just putting the kids to bed at 6pm (yeah, right!) we try to run errands and do everything as a family. If the kids go to bed on time, then it's easy to have several hours alone together so long as you don't get distracted with other things.
- We meet 1 night per week after the kids are in bed for prayer and Bible study, also renting a movie for after bed time, or exercise together.
- Watch cooking shows together and then make what you saw on TV.
- Purchase your favorite series on DVD and watch an episode after the kids are in bed.
- Funny comedy movies, so you can laugh together. Laughter brings people together.

12. What would their typical school day look like if they took over for the day? Phone calls, school, errands, breakfast, lunch, dinner, and chores?

- Wake up.
Eat cereal or waffles.
Sit down and they would do their schoolwork. They would ask questions that I have no idea what the answers are. Then I'd say let's move on to the next subject.
Lunch would be macaroni and cheese or Cici's Pizza.

We'd come home and be too full to finish school. So we'd take a nap. That's about it.

- Field trip!!
- We would take a sick day and play video games all day.
- Cereal for breakfast, lunch and dinner. I would not answer the phone. We would read books, and watch educational videos all day.

13. How can I get my husband involved/lead family devotions without him feeling that it is just another thing on his plate?



We've struggled with this one in the past too. My first response is to ask why do you feel it's necessary for him to lead family devotionals in the first place? Without devotionals, is he living up to his role as the spiritual head of the household? Does he model Christian behavior, put the family first, share the gospel with his children in other ways (read Bible stories, make Church attendance a priority, etc.)? Devotionals are a good thing, but they do not equate to "being a good father or spiritual leader" and a lot of times it comes across as criticism. My wife used to do several devotionals and Bible studies at a time and all it did was make her too busy to enjoy life.

If he's truly not living up to his role as spiritual leader, you've got bigger fish to fry and may need to seek the help of a Christian Counselor or your pastor. If he's doing a great job and you just want to add this new item to the mix, 1.) to him it probably does seem to be just another thing on his plate, 2.) there will always be things to add to the mix so keep in mind that this

one thing isn't the end all, be all, 3.) see if there is anything you can subtract from the equation and substitute the devotional so it's not taking up more time, just a different use of the time he's already blocked aside, and 4.) try getting him to commit to a small goal like one hour a month. It should be pretty hard for him to say no to such a small request and it would at least get the process started.

For men, especially those with hectic work schedules, the thought of committing a regular amount of time to any activity that we don't feel is a necessity makes us cringe. It might not be that he doesn't want to do the devotional but just that he doesn't know what the future holds with his schedule and doesn't want to make promises he can't keep. Start slow...Rome wasn't built in a day.

The Homeschooling Father

By Michael Farris

Founder and Chairman, Home School
Legal Defense Association

Parents do not need professional training to become excellent homeschool instructors.

But they do need divine empowerment if they are going to have the stick-to-it-iveness necessary to keep to the task as their children progress from toddler to adult. Every homeschooling father needs to begin to examine his duty to his wife and children by considering their need for spiritual



empowerment. They are going to be mocked by friends, neighbors and relatives. They may be prosecuted by authorities. They are going to face spiritual warfare. They are going to have to do a lot of plain old hard work.

Fathers do not have the job of directly supplying the spiritual power their families need. That is God's job. But a father has the responsibility to see to it that God's power is flowing freely to each and every member of his family. A father is to serve as the family "pastor," providing spiritual leadership for his home. In other words, Dad, if you want your children to be homeschooled, you must commit yourself to becoming a vital spiritual leader for your family.

A father is usually expected to provide spiritual leadership by (1) taking his wife and children to church with him; (2) praying regularly for his wife and children; and (3) conducting regular family devotions. There is no doubt we should routinely discharge all three of these duties though these tasks are

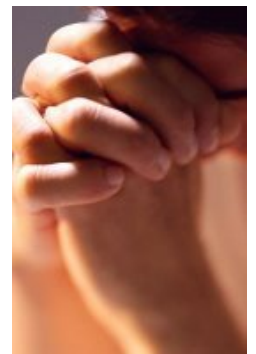
simply methods not goals. In fact, when we focus on these three duties rather than on attaining spiritual goals, these duties tend to become distasteful tasks to be endured - the spiritual equivalent of home maintenance projects.

Some examples of goals for children include: My child will love and understand God's Word, my child will be an effective witness, my child will spend daily time with God and my child will understand the power of prayer. You may be currently frustrated with your attempts to plan meaningful spiritual activities for your family. Once you have set spiritual goals for your children, it is easier to plan activities since you will need to make specific plans to reach specific goals.

If you want your children to spend daily time in God's Word, then you need to plan activities which are designed to reach this goal. If you want your children to be effective witnesses, then you need to plan activities which will give them an opportunity to witness. Having spiritual goals and plans is not an absolute guarantee of success. But if you have no goal, you will hit it every time. The steps and actions required of a spiritual leader are not that different from the kind of leadership men are required to demonstrate on the job.

We fathers need to exercise at least as much diligence in our spiritual goal-setting, planning and review as we do on our jobs.

After all, the stakes are a lot higher. God is the ultimate foundation of all our endeavors. However, from the perspective of human responsibility, your spiritual leadership is the foundation upon which your homeschooling program will be built. You want your children to succeed, so give them a foundation for spiritual success. Be a real spiritual leader.



What's My Role?

By Scott MacMath

Husband of HOTM writer Lori MacMath



"Hon...."
"Daaaaaaaaaaaaa-
aaaaaaaaaaaaad!"
These two words help
define me. I would
like to tell you I have
a fancy title around
our house. Something
like "Principal", "CEO"
or even

"Superintendent", but

I'd only be kidding myself. I am defined by
the call of those who love me, "Hon" and
"Daaaaaaaaaaaaaaad!"

So, with that I introduce myself to you as a
humble, yet much needed Homeschool Dad.

As I was installing an update on the
computer last night (did I mention "IT
Analyst?"), and with the knowledge that I
was already LATE with my HOTM article, I
began thinking what exactly ARE my
defined roles around here? Or, better yet,
what SHOULD my roles be? Not just as a
husband and father, but as a
HOMESCHOOLING husband and father.

My intended audience for this article is all
the fellow "Dad's & Hon's" out there that
can relate to these questions. For those like
me that go off to work each day, leaving
Wife/Teacher/Mom at home (or in our case,
downstairs) to educate, edify and overall
make our house a home. **Side note – 'She
Who Will Be Obeyed' just looked over my
shoulder and added, "If you need help with
that list, I have plenty to add!" So, let it be
known that the aforementioned list of tasks
does not come near doing justice to all that
"She Who Will Be Obeyed" is responsible for
on a daily basis. For those Dad's that are
brave and patient enough to actually
assume THAT role in your house, a

collective tip of the hat from the rest of us!
For those of you still trying to answer
questions about your role, read on.

Nearly 5 years ago, after many months of
contemplation, confusion and prayer, we
came to the decision that homeschooling
our 3 children would be the best option for
them. The operative word being "them"
because neither my wife nor I were
remotely prepared for the challenges that
lay ahead. All we knew at the time was if
the Lord was calling us to it (and He showed
us enough stops signs for other routes to let
us know that), then we'd better do it!

Thus the journey began.

That started my struggles with exactly what
my role was supposed to be in this whole
homeschooling thing. Public school
educated and holding a stereotyped view of
what a homeschool family looked like, I
hardly seemed like a good choice to LEAD
my family through this. As a pastor of ours
once said "God doesn't call the qualified, He
qualifies the called." And I needed a bunch
of qualifying! I've learned so much these
past five years. Life lessons that I would
never have had the chance to experience.
I've learned about what "commitment"
really means, I've learned about strengths
and weakness of my family that I may
never have seen, I've learned how to pick
curriculum, about how much homeschooling
REALLY costs, but really I've learned the
most about who we are and what we can
truly be as a family. That's right,
homeschooling to us has been about
committing TOGETHER to something much
bigger than ourselves. To use a Texas Hold
Em' term, to be successful in
homeschooling, everyone needs to be "ALL
IN!"

I stumbled across this quote not long ago
and it summed up quite a bit for me:

~Do more than exist: live.

~Do more than touch: feel.

- ~Do more than look: observe.
- ~Do more than read: absorb.
- ~Do more than hear: listen.
- ~Do more than listen: understand.
- ~Do more than think: reflect.
- ~Do more than just talk: say something.
- ~author unknown

This talks to daily values that we TRY to use in our lives and have learned through the process of homeschooling. We have begun to live, feel, absorb, listen, understand and reflect as never before. It's funny to reflect on it now, I do play roles as the Superintendent, the Principal and the Accountant, but the bigger parts I play are supporting roles. It's like being the Lead Actor and the Supporting Actor in a film all at the same time. (Or, for those of us more inclined to sports analogies, like being the quarterback AND the right guard!) I have had occasion to "call" someone into MY OFFICE to discuss circumstances that only the role of a Superintendent would handle, or make decisions on educational direction that a Principal would make, but I do most of my work in the supporting roles.

Below are a few of the roles I've identified as key to my success as Homeschool Dad:

- ~Spiritual Leadership – and I've lead and grown in ways that I never knew I could
- ~Moral support and guidance for my wife – as she serves this family in ways I can't measure.
- ~Financial support – keeping this "boat afloat" along with the many trips to Staples and Costco!
- ~And occasionally... I provide the janitorial support that no good organization can do without! (Let it be said that NO ONE can operate a plunger quite like DAD!)

I have come to realize that the various roles I play are vital in our home. Not as a passenger or passive participant, but as a driver, engaged with hands on the wheel and eyes focused on the road ahead and the kids in the backseat. As a Dad those roles have always been needed, but they become that much more critical in a homeschooling family. I am the one my wife looks to for encouragement on her journey in her roles, to provide professional feedback that she doesn't get during the day, but as a world-class teacher she deserves. Our family is in this together. A journey I was not fully prepared for up front, but one that I learn something new from each day. Together we know we can give OUR children OUR best, and in the end that is all God asks of us.

So there it is. Commit to the journey, go ALL IN, define yourself by YOUR actions as a homeschool Dad in your family. Whether writing a check, plunging a toilet, helping with homework or giving a well-timed hug, ALL of these and more are part of the support required of a homeschool Dad. And, above all else, pray, teach your children how to pray, and find that grace and guidance for your life that can only come from Him.

Just call me,

"Daaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaad"

Helping fathers stay involved

Ten ways for fathers to maintain their presence through physical separation

August 11, 2007 we got the phone call we were dreading. "This is BNSF crew management. You have been force assigned to Denver, Colorado..." My husband would be moving five hundred miles away for an unknown period of time while I stayed home alone with four children and all the responsibilities of running a household. "We are fortunate," we told ourselves. Military families must make these sacrifices every day. We always knew that becoming a railroad family would bring with it a hectic schedule. In fact, flexibility was one of the original attractions homeschooling held for us because it allowed time to be with dad even when his home time did not coincide with traditional school hours.

The importance of fathers in the education of their children is well-documented. In a [study published by the US Department of Education](#), for example, children living



with both biological parents were far more likely to earn mostly A's and far less likely to ever be suspended than their blended family or single parent family counterparts. Resting on an increasing body of research, the [US](#)

[Department of Health and Human Services](#) published a [handbook](#) in 2006 for caseworkers to educate them in the importance of fathers to the family unit. For the most part, it tells Child Protective Service workers what most

Christians have known for a long time: "Fathers have a powerful and positive impact upon the development and health of children." After all, it was God who instructed fathers to bring their children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6: 4)

While we understand the importance of fathers in the lives of our children, practical applications can be elusive, particularly if the father is called away from the home for extended periods due to work, ministry or the military. Lack of physical presence, however, does not have to mean a lack of a fatherly presence. With a combination of old-fashioned letter writing and the advantages offered by modern technology, it is possible for fathers to remain connected to their families despite periodic separation.

Send letters and postcards.

Communication is perhaps one of the most important foundations for a relationship. While modern technology



gives us a great advantage in the ability to stay connected even at a distance, there is something about writing and receiving letters that helps families feel closer. When my husband is on the road, he sends the children post cards which they carry about until they are too worn to decipher. My four year old ask me to read them until he has them memorized. Not only do the children have the words of their father, but they have something physical to hold and to remind them of their father's presence. Email can be a good means of communication as well, but even my eight year old does not get nearly as excited over these digital messages as she does over letters in the mail.

Leave a message in a bottle.



Fill a bottle or other container with brief notes of encouragement and instruction for each child. Allow the children to read one each day while their father is gone. Children can then write their own note back to dad to be

collected in a special container. This can be read later when he returns, or even be taken with him on his next trip.

Take pictures. Lots of pictures.

Children love to see where their father works. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to make a field trip to daddy's office to allow them to see for themselves, but pictures make it possible for them to get an idea of where their father is and how important they are to him. Digital cameras and cell phones make this especially easy. Do not forget the seemingly mundane: the desk where you write your letters, your stash of letters and drawings from the children as well as any interesting spot you know your children would want to explore if they were there. If you have an extra camera, allow the children to take pictures from their day. These can be sent in an email or saved until the father returns.

Cell phones and Skype.



Telephones allow anyone to "reach out and touch someone." Cell phones can

add to the convenience and make possible multiple, brief calls throughout the day. If both parents have access to the Internet, Skype is a free service allowing PC to PC communication with voice and even video. The first time my husband called the children via Skype, they were so excited to see him on the monitor that there was really no conversation. They just kept

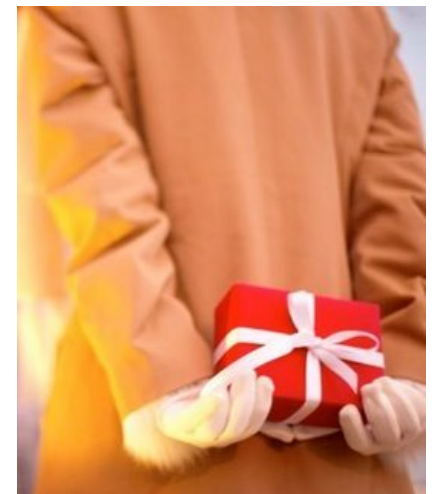
waving and shouting, "I see Daddy! Hi, Daddy!"

Play games.

Play is a powerful means of connecting with children, and there are a number of games that can be played together even from far away. Battleship is perfect and, since it is played on a grid as well, even chess can be played over the phone. With Internet access, the possibilities are almost endless, allowing families to play digital versions of some of their favorite games as well as try out some new ones. Invent games together as well. Children can be encouraged to go on a scavenger hunt for memories to share with their father when he returns.

Give presents.

While my husband was in Kansas City and later in Denver, he bought each of the children a souvenir which now ranks among their favorite possessions.



These small tokens of affection **do not need to be purchased**, however. Interesting rocks, a fallen leaf or a rubbing from a plaque all demonstrate that you were thinking of your children and will likely become treasured additions to a collection. It is not about the monetary value of the gift and regularly splurging would likely spoil a child. Small tokens let a young child know they were thought of without letting the gift become the focus of the reunion.

Maintain discipline.

When the father is frequently away, home time is precious. It is easy to excuse misbehavior by thinking, "They are just excited," or, "We have so little time. I don't

want to take it up with discipline issues.” This change in expectations between the time the father is home and the time he is away is stressful for children, however. In the long run, it will make home time less pleasant and more chaotic as children increasingly take advantage of lowered expectations. It is better to invest time early in discipline, even if it seems like the home time is “wasted” dealing with minor behavior problems. This will help the children transition more smoothly and make home time much more pleasant for everyone later.

Take advantage of home time.



Make sure to set aside time just for family without other distractions. Try to have some amount of time devoted to each child. This does not have to be extravagant. Once a month, my husband takes one child out for a special day. Normally, this just involves running errands together and maybe picking up lunch or a snack. Sometimes an entire day is not necessary or may even be too much for younger children. My four year old son is ecstatic when chosen to accompany his father on a quick trip to the hardware store. When asked to go along to pick up a gallon of milk from the local grocery store, my two year old asked, “Me? Just me?”

Do not forget about mom.

Parents make a number of sacrifices for their children. Unfortunately, it is common to even sacrifice each other. Time with the children can become such a priority that

couples can forget how important their own time together is. The foundation of the Christian family is a right relationship with God and this is seen most practically by children in the relationship of their parents to one another.

Remain positive.

It is natural for children (and parents) to wish that the situation were different and that the father were able to spend more time at home. Help children to understand why the situation is the way it is. Fathers make tremendous sacrifices for Christ, for country and for their families by choosing professions which take them away from home. Let children know the good that is coming from these choices.



Sometimes, the hardest part is remembering that you are not alone. Our churches rightly put a strong emphasis on the importance of the father’s role in the home, but this can also leave families feeling like they are not doing enough when the father is called away frequently. While this situation might not necessarily be ideal, it can be overcome. I always think back to the example of John Adams, Founding Father and second President of the United States. When he and young Abigail married, they did not realize they would spend more time apart than together during their early years while John Adams was busy fathering

a nation. Concerned that he was away during the formative years of young John Quincy Adams, he wrote many letters, emphasizing the importance of the time in which they lived and giving general direction as to the books his son should turn his attention to. Reading his letters reveals the devotion of a father committed to family, despite the greatness of events he is engaged in and the distance which separates them. They also reveal the developing character of his young son. At the age of ten, [young Adams writes to his father](#),

Dear Sir

I Love to receive Letters very well much better than I love to write them, I make but a poor figure at Composition my head is much too fickle, my Thoughts are running after birds eggs play and trifles, till I get vexd with my Self, Mamma has a troublesome task to keep me Steady, and I own I am ashamed of myself....I wish sir you would give me Some instructions with regard to my time and advise me how to proportion my Studies and my Play, in writing and I will keep them by me and endeavour to follow them I am dear Sir with a present determination fo growing better yours,

John Quincy Adams

The exchange of letters which ensued certainly contributed no small influence in young John Quincy Adams to eventually follow in his father's foot steps as the sixth President of the United States. His father's presence was tangible, even from a great distance, because of the commitment his father made to remain involved despite inevitable periods of separation.

This article was originally published by Dana in [Home School Enrichment](#).

Spiritual Disorientation

By [Chuck Black](#)

owner of [Perfect Praise Publishing](#),
author of the [Kingdom Series](#)

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Ephesians 6: 16

Over the past few years, I have been given the privilege of mentoring an outstanding young man who has shown a consistent commitment to honor the Lord



and grow in his relationship with Christ. Recently he began to encounter an onslaught of spiritual attacks because he was facing a major life-changing and kingdom-building event. The attacks came in the form of doubt...doubt primarily about truth and salvation. In the middle of the night, alone, and away from home, he could feel the presence of darkness pressing in upon him and the foundation he was standing on seemed to shake.

For anyone that is a believer, is serious about pursuing a relationship with Jesus, and is doing His kingdom work, spiritual attacks will come. The form of such attacks is varied, and Satan knows which one is most effective with each of us. For our children it is paramount that we prepare them for the challenges that they will face regarding spiritual attacks from the evil one. As Ephesians 6: 16 says, it is the shield of faith that will quench all of the fiery darts of the wicked. Therefore, we need to continually find ways to build the faith of our children.

God gives us the evidence we need to build

faith both in ourselves and in our children. My three favorite ways to build faith based on God's evidence are to observe creation, to witness changed lives, and to remember answered prayers. Scripture supports this in Romans 1:20, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Matthew 21:22. One of Satan's common attacks against a young Christian is doubt, for once they leave the protection of a Christian home, the fiery darts of worldly intellectualism, political correctness, and spiritual diversity, will bombard their minds which will cause them to question what you have taught them. Bible knowledge alone is not enough to withstand these attacks, for only the shield of faith can protect them at this critical juncture in life. If we have only invested our time into training our children on Bible facts and doctrine, we have sent them forth ill-prepared to handle what will invariably come their way. We must daily find ways to build their faith. Take God-walks into the country, invite a radically converted Christian over for supper and talk about the transforming power of Jesus Christ, and show them how God has touched your life by His answering specific prayers.

For my young friend, working through this episode of doubt took many days of prayer and counsel. The Lord gave me a simple



story to share that helped him through. On one of my earlier flights in the F-16, I was a wingman flying

close formation with my flight lead who was a much more experienced pilot than I. Close formation means that our wingtips were three feet apart, and we were flying at 480 miles per hour. We were ascending up into a cloud cover that was much thicker than I had anticipated. As we entered the clouds, I was close enough to my flight lead to keep in formation as he began to lead us up to clear skies. In our ground training, our instructors warned us about something called "spatial disorientation." This is a

strange effect that nearly every pilot that has flown in weather experiences. We have semicircular canals in our inner ear that tell us what our orientation to the earth is and give us a sense of balance. In an aircraft, the visual cues of the horizon helps keep our inner ear oriented. Once we lose sight of the horizon, the motion of the aircraft can cause our inner ears to falter and we then become "spatially disoriented" thinking that up is down or left is right.

In such cases, a trained pilot recognizes the situation by monitoring and relying upon the instruments of the aircraft. However, the feeling is often so powerful and overwhelming that pilots cannot overcome what their inner ears are telling them and end up losing control of the aircraft and crashing...which is bad. Hearing about spatial disorientation and then experiencing it are worlds apart. On this mission, I began to experience severe spatial disorientation while flying just off the wing of my flight lead. After a few minutes in the clouds, I felt as though my jet was ninety degrees to the horizon and we were plummeting to the earth. The feeling was so powerful that I could hardly make myself stay where I knew I needed to be, right on my flight lead's wing. I quickly checked my instruments and they confirmed that my jet was straight and level. I had to trust my flight lead in spite of the overwhelming doubt that I was experiencing. After a few more minutes of battling spatial disorientation, we broke through the clouds and our jets were perfectly level with the earth. My inner ear immediately recalibrated and I felt great relief. It was a sobering realization to know that if I had trusted myself and not my flight lead and the instruments, I would probably have crashed and died that day.

After sharing this story with my young Christian friend, I explained that there are times when we can become "spiritually disoriented", especially as a young believer facing stormy times. During these times, Satan will attack and it is important that we

trust our flight lead, Jesus Christ, and our instruments, God's Holy Word, to see us through. Our faith must stand solidly upon the foundation of Jesus, the chief corner stone as described in Ephesians 2:20 and upon the pillar of truth, the Bible. Faith like love is not based on our feelings, it is a choice. Even in times of doubt we can choose to believe and know that just beyond the clouds of doubt is a clear blue horizon waiting for us to journey towards.

Dad...Mom...I encourage you to take every opportunity to build the faith of your children, for they will one day face the fiery darts of the evil one just as you have. Give them a shield to protect them!

Prayer:

"Heavenly Father, please give us the wisdom we need to help build faith in ourselves and in our children. As they go forth from our homes, protect and guide them against the fiery darts of the wicked. In Jesus name, Amen."

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

Do they see Him in me?

By Gregg Harris

Husband of HOTM writer Rachel Harris



As an only child, I acknowledge that I sometimes struggle with selfishness. As a man living with three women, I

admit that sometimes I just need an escape to something, anything that isn't pink or princess or fluffy and cuddly. And as a father, I confess that I am sometimes terrified when confronted with the reality that as fathers, we are our children's first model of God. It's a sobering thought.

While there is only one true God, and no one gets to choose who He really is, we dads do get to choose how our children will

begin to approach having an intimate relationship with their creator. Maybe you disagree with me, but I ask you to think about your relationship with your father growing up and compare that with how you first approached your relationship with our Father.

Was your dad distant and emotionally unavailable, and if so did you see God as watching over you from a distance and not ever present? Was your father a strong authority figure, and if so do you see God as just and quick to dole out swift punishment? Was your dad abusive, and if so do you question your faith thinking maybe God doesn't even care about me after all? In my case, I had a father who did the best he could, but believe me, he made his share of mistakes.

Let me paint a picture. My dad put himself through college (the first in our family to go to college), built three small businesses from nothing and worked seven days a week to make sure I went to the best private schools available. I can honestly say that I never was left wanting for anything. My dad never once hit me, like his own father had done. Correction, he did spank my bottom once when I was five, but boy did I deserve that one! Because of my father, I set my goals high and I dream big. My dad taught me the value of self reliance, hard work, independence, and every day stressed the importance of getting a quality education. It's no wonder that last month I became the first in my family to obtain a Master's degree. It's the work ethic and drive he instilled in me that has put me where I am today, able to allow my wife to stay home and educate our two beautiful daughters. My



dad loves me more than anything in this world, he would do anything for me if asked, and I can honestly say that our

relationship today is by far the best it has ever been in my life.

But no one is perfect. Like so many of the children in my generation, my dad was not around much. He was at work before I woke up for school each morning and thus was usually asleep soon after dinner. Family time in my house was marked by the three of us sitting in silence watching TV or more often by me hiding out in my room playing video games. By high school I usually worked nights at our family's store; Dad was asleep when I got home. The only time I really saw him growing up was at work and in those moments he was more of my boss than my parent. I always got the honor roll (which was expected), was the only person in my high school graduating class to have a perfect conduct record all four years of high school (five years if you count 8th grade), and still held down a part-time job earning my own money year round. Yet all of this was expected. My childhood was a pretty lonely one, and in retrospect most of my early life decisions were made to win my Dad's attention, affection, and approval.



So how did that affect my relationship with God? Well until a few years ago when I actually started reading the Bible and

developing my own personal relationship with Him, God to me was a distant father, watching me from afar. God wanted, no, He expected perfection and was very disappointed in me when I failed to deliver over and over again. In fact, there have been times in my life when I messed up so bad that I wanted to hide from God, didn't feel like I could go to him at all for fear of how disgusted in me he must be. I was expected to be perfect, nothing was ever good enough, and guilt ruled my life. Good deeds deserved no reward and bad deeds deserved swift justice. I knew God loved

me, but I also knew that He had more important things to worry about, and I should be strong enough to handle the world without having to always go to him for help. I think you get my point.

It wasn't really until I was on a retreat a year ago that being born again really took hold. That night, I hit bottom and while I was there I felt Jesus' hand on my shoulder telling me that we all make mistakes, we all fall short, and I am loved no matter what. That night, my Father in Heaven wrote me a short poem (one of the most profound moments in my life, but far too long a story to go into here). God's words not mine, I received the following:

Creation. Wonderfully complex. What marvelous workmanship!
Seek, and find unfailing love pursues you all the days of your life.
"Seek, and find unfailing love pursues you..."

Since that night, I've been asking myself some serious reflective questions. What kind of God will my daughters know when they get older? Do they see Jesus in me? Do they know the God within scripture well enough so they won't use me in His place to fill the gaps?

I realize as dads, we have a choice, we have influence, and we have an amazing responsibility. Will our kids know a God of love or a God of anger? Will they know a God of patience and grace or a God of quick discipline? To them, will God be mysterious and absent or transparent and ever present? Will God's love be unconditional or something that has to be earned? When they make mistakes, will God's love ever be withheld, even if just for a moment? Will they ever think twice before coming to see Him because he might be "too busy right now"? And will they ever think they are not good enough for Him?

We are our children's model for God. And, God is our model for fatherhood. Knowing

this will help us make better choices as parents. This realization, if nothing else, has forced me to seriously reevaluate my goals and priorities.

I guess it's a choice we all have to make on our own. But for me, I just want my girls to know that any time, any where, and under any circumstances, they have a Father ready to listen with open arms. I want them to know that if they seek, they will find my unfailing love pursues them all the days of their life.

Tuesday, June 17, 2008

["Don't be afraid, just believe."](#)

By Curt Whalen

Husband of HOTM writer Marybeth Whalen and homeschool dad to 6 children

There's a short verse in the fifth chapter of Mark that I carry with me everyday. Jesus is approached by a father whose daughter is deathly ill. He wants Jesus to come to his home to heal his little girl. The father is filled with grief, falling at Jesus' feet and pleading "fervently" with him to come.

We've all faced desperate situations. We've all been paralyzed by fear. We've all pleaded with Jesus. Eight years ago, I was standing in the door frame of a hospital room watching doctors and nurses trying to help my ten year old son, then two. He couldn't breathe and they couldn't get him stabilized. I stood there and begged God to reach down and touch my son's throat. This New Testament father was no different. Faced with a hopeless situation, a Father came to Christ for help. But as they were walking back to his home, the Father is told the worst. A servant approaches to tell him that his daughter has died.

In our darkest moments, hope can break through. Jesus grabs this heartbroken

father's shoulders, looks him in the eyes, and speaks into the deepest part of his soul.

"Don't be afraid. Just believe."

I go to that verse a lot. When my teenage son acts like he hates me and wants nothing to do with his family, "Don't be afraid, just believe." When my wife and I aren't getting along and are fighting over stupid little things, "Don't be afraid, just believe." When my office's sales have dipped and my general manager calls me in for a meeting, "Don't be afraid, just believe." When the bills have stacked up, things are breaking down, and I'm struggling with staying current, "Don't be afraid, just believe." When everything seems to be going wrong and I feel alone.

"Don't be afraid, just believe."

It's not easy for me to follow that instruction. My mind goes in 1,000 different directions and I worry about many things. I want to wrap my arms around my wife and children and protect them from harm. I want my teenage son to find success as he begins to make his way in a tough world. I want to bring the big purchase orders and best accounts back to my company and propel us to excellence. But somewhere along the way, I've lost the innocence and eternal optimism of youth. I have watched good people, good men, good families get devastated by life. I learned how little control I really have.

And at times I get scared.

But Christ's words burn in my mind. I grab them and hold them close to my heart. Over and over again, I hear Him saying these words of comfort, hope, and protection. "Don't be afraid, just believe."

Is Homeschooling for Everyone?

By Jim Bob Howard

Editor-in-Chief of Homeschooling Today magazine

I recently received an email from the National Congress of State Legislators, touting their excitement over states having increased spending over the last year by over \$1,000,000,000 (I prefer to put all the zeroes on there to show how big a billion actually is) on early education, meaning day care and preschool programs. That's a lot of money to increase spending for children who aren't even in school yet!

But I have a question: What did the states spend last year? What percentage increase was this, really? The report didn't say. On the one hand, if the states were already spending \$50,000,000,000, then this is really only a 2% increase. Hardly enough for those who are excited to actually be excited about. If they were already spending \$1,000,000,000, then it doubled! Whoa! Can they show some figures of the effectiveness of throwing twice as much money into the program in one year's time? So, knowing the dollar amount doesn't give any perspective on the scope of the change. But \$1,000,000,000 is a heck of a lot of money now matter how you slice it.

Salt and Light?

Why is this much being spent on children under the compulsory attendance age? If you're a Christian parent, let me ask you: Until you put your child in a "head start" program, or kindergarten, what had you been doing with them? Many parents of young children will say they are "thinking about" homeschooling, but their child is "only three" so they "haven't started, yet."

What have they been doing all that time? Haven't they trained them to walk, to eat, to say "Thank You," to brush their teeth, to

tie their shoes, to chew with their mouths closed, to go potty by themselves, to sleep through the night, to say "Yes, Ma'am" and "Yes, Sir;" to count to ten, to say their ABCs, to pray, to sing, to play pat-a-cake, to finger-paint, to eat Goldfish, to clean up after themselves, etc.? Where do we get the idea that when a child turns five (or four these days... what's next?), now they need formal schooling? And what do they do in pre-school and kindergarten? They spend a couple of hours away from home, finger-painting and eating Goldfish. They could have done that at home... and learned to empty the dishwasher, sweep the floor, share with their siblings, take care of a puppy, and a pray "Now I lay me down to sleep" before their nap.

When we send our children off to a classroom, what they really learn is: "Education" is administered by "professionals" and takes place in a room separate from the "real world" with a bunch of people who are the same age and socio-economic status as me. And so for the next twelve to fifteen years (depending on how much of a "head start" you give them), they spend the majority of their time with people who are the exact age and class as they are. This is called "socialization." When those years are over, they might extend it for another four years by going to State U. And then they are NEVER in that situation again... Never again will they only be around people that are exactly their age, except... in Sunday School! Is the Church impacting culture? Or is culture impacting the Church?

So That's Where All of This is Leading!

Let's face it: the institutional school as we know it today acts as a massive eugenics program. That's what Margaret Sanger and Adolf Hitler were seeking to implement with Planned Parenthood and the Nazi Party's "Final Solution" for the Jews.

I hear what you're saying: "Wait just a minute! How does the current school

system perpetuate those atrocities?"

Simple. Just as Sanger and Hitler placed a value on a certain class of people and called the rest "useless eaters" or "subhuman," we act the same way when we age-segregate everyone out by their birthday and tell them which "grade" they're in by their age. Once in their grade, if they don't perform to the mean (the fiftieth percentile), they go into "Special Ed" classes, or are "held back" a grade. If they excel, they're given special treatment, a special designation, and the ability to address their class at graduation.

But what about the "average" student? There are none. God has given gifts to all men (1 Corinthians 12:11) and expects them to use their talents wisely (Matthew 25:14-30).

The truth is that some children excel in math, others in science, while others excel in mercy, and still others in grace. And yet, as a society, we don't reward those who excel in godliness; only those who do well in the eyes of men, academically or athletically.

And then there are all of the social cliques (maybe this is what people mean when they ask homeschoolers about "socialization": they are concerned that our children don't have the "benefit" of trying to be popular among their peers). Institutional schooling—from age-segregation, to advanced placement and special education classes, to socialization, to standardized tests and SAT scores—is all about survival of the "fittest" and putting aside those who don't "measure up." No wonder divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and the warehousing of the elderly are so prominent! (Not to mention: the sending away of our four-year-olds to pre-school.) If you're not in this minute's most popular class, you can't have any real worth. (We're told that the "Seniors of '08 rule," but last year it was the Seniors of '07 that ruled.) So, those "other" people can be done away with. They are "useless eaters" in our minds even if we don't say it out

loud.

This even applies to Christian schools that segregate by age and academic or athletic performance. And it applies to Sunday Schools that do the same thing. Had Paul been writing today to the church in Galatia, IL, or Galatia, KS, or Galatia, NC, his famous line about there being neither Jew nor Greek might have read something like this: "There is neither Empty Nester nor Crawler, Junior nor Senior, College Ministry nor Singles Ministry, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (paraphrased from Galatians 3:28-29).

What Shall We Then Teach?

A wise father once told me that he and his wife had sat down and written down all the things they wanted their children to know before they left home. Among those things were: how to read the Bible; how to balance a checkbook; how to change the oil on the car; how to write a persuasive essay; how the political process works (and how it is supposed to work); how to wash, fold, and put away laundry; how to plan a menu and buy groceries; childcare; home maintenance; how to find and study primary source documents to understand the true events of history; and how to put out a kitchen fire. Along with these, they wanted their children to have a love for their neighbor (saved and unsaved); a respect for authority; a biblical view of marriage; pure hearts, minds, and bodies on their wedding days; honor and respect for their parents; and most importantly that they would love the Lord with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Since only a couple of those would they learn in an institutional school setting, they decided they should keep their children at home, so they didn't get only a partial "education."

*I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide them from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the
LORD,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He
has done.*

*For He established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which He commanded our fathers,
That they should make them known to their
children;
That the generation to come might know them,
The children who would be born,
That they may arise and declare them to their
children,
That they may set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep His commandments;
And may not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation that did not set its heart aright,
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.*

—Psalm 78:2-8

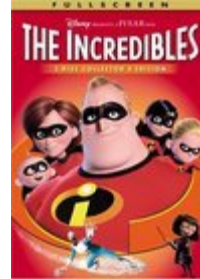
Jim Bob Howard is the Editor-in-Chief of [Homeschooling Today magazine](#). He believes God has chosen this generation for such a time as this, to rise up and start a new Great Awakening in our land. That will only happen when God works in the hearts of fathers, to turn their hearts toward their children. If they don't, His promises are sure: He will smite the land with a curse. We are already reaping what we have sown.

Homeschooling Today magazine has recently launched an eNewsletter for fathers, named [The Father-Led Home](#). An encouragement to fathers from some of today's best Christian writers, The Father-Led Home joins the popular Homeschooling Helper eNewsletter for moms (and dads alike). To sign up for either of these encouraging newsletters, go to <http://www.homeschooltoday.com/newsletters/sub>.

Raising Your Own Superheroes

By Matt Binz

Husband of HOTM writer Lee Binz and otherwise known as Mr. HomeScholar



Step One: Observing Passion

The 2004 Pixar film "The Incredibles" poses the intriguing question: "What would happen if superheroes lived among us as normal citizens?" In this film, a couple of former superheroes, Mr. Incredible and Elastigirl, marry and then, as a result of a class-action lawsuit against all superheroes, are forced deep undercover using the alter-egos, Bob and Helen Parr. The movie explores how this true "power couple" deals with suppressing their superpowers in order to live a "normal" life.

As a homeschooling father, one of the most intriguing aspects of this film is how Bob and Helen deal with their children, two of whom have nascent superpowers. The aptly named son, Dash has super-speed. His older sister, Violet, has the ability to disappear and cast force fields. The baby of the family, Jack-Jack, has not displayed any super-powers and the family is slowly accepting that he is, perhaps, not "super" at all.

Like many of the Pixar films, there are some profound lessons just under the surface waiting to be discovered. The Incredibles has much to teach us concerning raising our children, specifically, how to nurture and develop the "super-abilities" that lie dormant within each of them.

That's right -- each of them. I firmly believe that each of our children is a budding "superhero" waiting to be discovered and developed. Their abilities are likely not as dramatic as our fictional friends, but that

does not diminish the potential of each of our kids to change the world in their own way. The goal of this series of articles is to provide some insights on how to grow our children from undiscovered Jack-Jacks, to full-blown Mr. Incredibles and Elasti-girls.

Jack Jack's Story

Baby Jack-Jack is a mystery. His parents must realize that he has to be "special" - he has the right DNA - but yet he displays no superpowers. There is absolutely nothing mom and dad can do to force superpowers into him. All they can do is wait and watch. That is one of our primary roles as homeschooling parents. Gifts are discovered, not created. We need to be students of our students in order to discover the secrets that lie deep within. Eventually, Jack-Jack's superpower is hilariously revealed to an unsuspecting babysitter. Similarly, you also may be surprised at the gifts displayed by your children. Even the most normal kids will often reveal themselves as "super" in one or more areas of their life. In our family, our kid's gifts revealed themselves in areas that neither Lee nor I would ever have imagined.

Kevin's Story



Our oldest son exhibited a sudden and profound talent in Chess when he was fourteen years old. Chess was something I

taught my kids when they were five and seven. "Taught" in the loosest sense of the word - just how the pieces move. This lesson lay dormant in my eldest for years. For his fourteenth birthday, Kevin requested a chess book. I looked at him as if he had requested Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations." I was clueless where this desire came from. None of our ancestors played chess and we had not spoken of it for years. On his birthday he received lots of presents, but only one made it back to his room that day: "Play Winning Chess" by Yasser Seirawan. Kevin emerged from his room about two weeks later and proclaimed: "I'm ready to play in a tournament." Before I acceded to this, I told him he would have to beat me first. I detected the slightest trace of a smile on his face as he quickly ripped my position apart and stomped enthusiastically on my King. After that, I was quite willing to let him pick on someone more his intellectual size, so off to a chess tournament we went.



The tournament director looked at me with disdain. He was convinced that I was one of those parents that pushed my children to hide my own shortcomings. A few minutes of interrogation, however, convinced him that chess was probably the least likely place I would choose to bolster my self-esteem. I was utterly lost. Kevin, however, felt right at home. He ripped through a series of adult opponents with enthusiasm normally reserved for a box of Krispy Kremes. He left his first tournament with a provisional rating that placed him among the elite of Washington State high school chess players, almost all of whom had professional coaches and had been playing

competitively for years. Lee and I spent the next four years feeding him chess books and driving him to tournaments. He finished his high school chess career in 2006 by finishing second in state. Not bad for a late starting, self-taught chess player with no documented chess DNA.

Alex's Story

A couple of years after the surprise birthday request of my eldest, my youngest son did, in fact, ask me for Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations." Again, Lee and I never saw it coming. I hated economics. Lee actually failed economics in college. Both of us were nonplussed at this request. "Wealth of Nations" was followed by "Democracy in America" and various other ancient tomes on political economics and philosophy. We learned not to ask too many "why" questions and just fork over the books. We figured it was a good investment.



That is exactly the way it turned out. For reasons known only to God, my youngest son had "caught fire" with economics. This led to amazing opportunities for him with scholarships, fellowships and meaningful employment. None of which would have been possible if we had attempted to force his passion into areas where we, his parents, felt more comfortable.

Such is the nature of children and superheroes. Who they are and what they become may not be what you think. It may not even be in the realm of imagination. In fact, with Kevin and Alex, the only way it made any sense at all was in retrospect. Kevin had always been quiet and analytical as a child so, now, chess seems a somewhat logical source of his enchantment. Alex was always our little academic, so philosophy made some sense in hindsight. We still, however, scratch our heads about economics.

Conclusions

The message: be students of your students. Observe their passions. Don't be too skeptical or try to force them to love what you love. They are individuals and will spend their lives striving to become who God intended them to be. You play a critical role in shaping and guiding, but not in defining or forcing. Some of your children may exhibit "superpowers" in chess, math, economics and philosophy. Others will flex their muscles in sports, writing, dance or music. In Lee's work, she has encountered children who demonstrate leadership in areas as diverse as acting, mycology and fiddling. The first step in raising your own superheroes is to discover where their super-powers reside. It will require your most focused attention, and will frequently demand that most elusive of all superpowers: patience.

You can do it.

The world needs them.

Your superheroes are counting on you!

[Matt and Lee](#) are veteran homeschooling parents of two and the owner of [The HomeScholar](#), whose mission is "Helping parents homeschool through high school". You can sign up for their free email newsletter [The HomeScholar Record](#) and get your daily dose of wisdom via e-mail from [The HomeScholar Blog](#).