

# Priceless Treasures: My Reasons for Home Schooling

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C.S. LEWIS ONCE OBSERVED that God is not so much offended that we want too much as by the fact that we are satisfied with so little. Though He offers us the highest of adventures in our Christian life, we settle for the stale mediocrity of our lukewarm religious routines.

The parental counterpart to this idea is that most mothers and fathers actually want too little for their children - they settle for success in this world's terms. But God would have us aim higher, not like an ambitious stage mother pushing her mildly talented children into the spotlight, but like a fine jeweler making the best possible use of each bit of gold, silver, and precious stone he has. My children are priceless treasures, and I want God's highest and best for them.

What does it mean to aim high in this way? What am I really trying to accomplish in the education of my children?

Is it enough that they read well? No, not for me. I want them to commune with great authors from throughout the ages and be able to comprehend the profound ideas and truths that God has used to change the course of history. Let them be voracious readers of truly great literature.

Do I want my sons and daughters only to write and spell correctly? No, I want them to correspond with fellow enthusiasts in their chosen areas of endeavor. If they have the gifting, let them eventually author intelligent, superbly written works concerning the important issues of their day. Let them be prolific writers, whether privately or publicly

Do I want them merely to know enough history to pass a written test? No, I want them to understand the times in which they live and to be able to pass the real tests of life they will face in voting booths and on battlefields. Let them be like the sons of Issachar ("who had understanding of the times," 1 Chron. 12:32) in the unfolding dramas of future events.

But education is so much more than mere academics. It is primarily matter of character development. Self-discipline may be out of style, but it is never out of work. Do I want my children simply to be nice, well-behaved, and safe from peer pressure? Not at all! Aslan, in Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia, is not a tame lion, but he is good. I prefer my children to be like that - good but not tame, men and women of integrity, not conformity. Let them be so influential and contagious in their faith that they turn the hearts of their companions toward God. Let the world grieve that its best and brightest have become Christians.

What about marriage and children? Are these things only a matter of personal comfort and enjoyment? Is a lifelong marriage aiming too high? Is the average number of 1.5 children per family enough? No, I want each of my sons and daughters to have a marriage and a family like that of Jonathan Edwards - enduring, large in number, and deeply devoted to God. Let each future household be devoted as a team for ministry as an effective embassy of the kingdom of God.

On an economic note, will it be enough if my children manage someday to find good jobs, regardless of how restrictive and disruptive their work schedules may be? No, I would like to see my adult sons provide for their wives and children through family business ownership and entrepreneurial stewardship. Contrary to the best efforts of the ACLU, there are still millions of public school students praying secretly to find decent jobs someday. Why not prepare our homeschool students to hire them?

Ultimately, neither academics, nor character, nor a strong marriage, nor a large family, nor financial freedom will matter if my children are still dead in sin and alienated from the promises of God. God help me never to raise up "civil men, lost in sin," as the Puritans would call them. Salvation in Christ is more than merely foundational. It is everything.

Deep within the secret counsels of God's sovereign decreative will lies the very real responsibility I bear as a father to train up my children in the way that they should go (Prov. 22:6). Only God can save my children. Will He do so? The very fact I care at all for the salvation of my children is good evidence that God is already at work on their behalf. Our God is a covenant-keeping God and His sovereign election is the norm, not the exception, when parents respond in faithful obedience to His Word.

As I read the biographies of great men and women, I notice that godly parents often do make a difference. "As the twig is bent, so grows the tree." Our sovereign God, working by concurrence through His created order of parents training their children and children obeying their parents, has ordained that special instruments of His grace will be forged on the anvil of a mother or father's heart. If I am both wise and diligent in my child training, it may be evidence that something extraordinary is brewing in the heavenlies - perhaps my children will be special gifts to Christ's church in their generation.

But if, like Eli of old, I am passive and negligent in this matter, it bodes eternal ill for me and my children. Insight is not action. Knowing is not the same as doing. Faith without works is dead. Think about it. Taking the easier path of conventional schooling is by any measure taking unnecessary chances with the souls of my children. Willfully sending them off to an institution that denies my authority, where the dominant social life is ungodly, where God is not feared and His Word not taught, where I cannot protect my children from falling into dangerous activities that could ruin a young life

in one casual act of foolishness, where I cannot even vouch for the moral character of the teachers and administrators, seems to me an odd way of being diligent. The spirit of Eli is upon our nation and our churches as we rationalize with all our rational lies. That is why I ask God for grace to understand and obey Him in all of my obligations. Then, strong in the grace of God, I exert myself to do what He has commanded, even when it is not easy.

But salvation must lead to sanctification, and as a father I have a part to play in that as well. It is not enough that my children confess faith in Christ and go to church. Luke-warmness will not do. I want to see the fire of passion for the presence of God safely burning in the doctrinal fire place of each child's Reformed faith. A perpetual state of spiritual childhood, or even of spiritual adolescence, is not acceptable to God. Why should it be acceptable to me? I want my children to grow up to full maturity in Christ. I want them to bear the fruit of the Spirit and one day be qualified to serve as elders and deacons in a strong local church, with the courage and faith to roll up their sleeves and plant that church themselves if they have to.

To those who ask, "But what about socialization?" I can only weep. Socialization has always been a double-edged sword; it cuts both ways. "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm" (Prov. 13:20, NASB). What my wife and I are doing in our home school is positive, biblical socialization that makes our children become wise. My children walk with me, and though I definitely have a long way yet to go, I try to be an acceptable companion to my children.

Most of our modern school-based socialization is of the foolish, harmful sort. Pooled ignorance leads to poor taste in clothing, music, films, and TV - the kind of people who read the grocery store tabloids and believe them. But the harm is far more than cultural. Disinterest in school, disrespect for teachers, rapacious dating, promiscuity, substance abuse, and gang violence also come in waves-- pounding waves of youth culture that erode moral standards. Even a small population of these poor creatures requires that high schools be run like youth prisons.

Good socialization is primarily age-integrated. It occurs when the young are included in the lives of older and wiser people, especially parents and other family members at home and the spiritual family of one's local church. Walking with the wise is a lifestyle, not a program. It is a club of fellow enthusiasts, not a class of uninterested age-mates. It includes working together, eating together, playing together, worshipping together, and studying together. This is where God placed the responsibility for child training and education, and it works very well in aiming children at God's highest and best targets in every area of life.

That is what I want for my children - God's highest and best - and that is my purpose in homeschooling them. Forgive what may seem my audacity, but I don't want my children to be merely counted among the Reformed. I want them to stand with the Reformers.

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