

## Am I Really Supposed to be Homeschooling?

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God knows that homeschooling can be tough sometimes. Some days are wonderful, and you can see the fruits of your labor. Your child's handwriting is neat, the answers are correct, and his attitude is cooperative. On those days, you know why you homeschool. We all love those days--reading together as a family, working together on a new skill, and enjoying each other. You can feel God's hand of blessing upon you so easily, and you are confident that God has called you to homeschool.

But what about the other days? Do you feel as certain when the house is a mess, you're off schedule, and you can hardly even find the books? Are you still confident when the kids continue to be argumentative, after you feel like you've tried all that you know? Or do you start to wonder if you really can teach your own child when he just isn't reading like you had hoped? What about when you are just physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted? Can you keep homeschooling when you have nothing else to give?

Yes! God will continually affirm His plan for you and your family. Satan will try to attack you with negative thoughts--self criticism, doubt, fears, and discouragement. Learn to recognize when that is happening, cast out those thoughts, and look for God's affirmations and grace for you. Again and again in the Bible, God uses unlikely people to accomplish His will. If we were capable of doing it all without His help, He wouldn't get any glory. People would say, "Of course, they can homeschool; they are super-parents!" However, when people see you willing to tough it out and continue on in faith and obedience, they'll see the God who can work in all circumstances. 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, ". . . *My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*"

Think of how God used Moses. When Moses heard God's voice in a burning bush, and God told him that He was going to use him to bring the Israelites out of bondage, Moses' first response was, "Why would you choose me?" God tried to put Moses' mind at ease and reminded him that He would be with him. Later Moses asked, "What if they don't believe me or listen to me?" God then explained how He would reveal His power to the people. Still Moses was so doubtful that he reminded God that he wasn't a good speaker. Even that didn't change God's mind. God reminded him that He is the Creator and can do anything. In Exodus 4:12, God said, "*Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.*"

I believe God says that to all of us. *Go, I will help you speak and will teach you what to say.* I've often heard it said that God doesn't call the equipped; He equips the called. We all have different strengths and weaknesses, just as our children do. God knew all of that when he gave us children and led us to homeschooling. He isn't surprised when we struggle. He holds out His gentle hands and wants us to bring all of our concerns and worries to him and allow Him to do the work. Philippians 1:6 is one of my favorite verses. It reminds me that God isn't just sitting back watching to see what *we* can do. He is the One that is truly doing the work through us. "*Being*

*confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" He affirms homeschooling. He'll complete the work; we just need to stay the course.

I believe that God is doing a wonderful work in homeschool families. Society has failed families in many ways. The world has led women to believe their value is in the workplace, rather than in the home. It has led parents to believe that children will be behind if they don't go to preschool to prepare for public school. Society has led people to think only professional teachers with education degrees are capable of teaching children. Those misconceptions have sent families in all different directions with very little time together. Our time with our children is a precious gift. God's word emphasizes the importance of quantity time, as well as quality time with our children. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 says, "*And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*" Notice that God says *you* shall teach them diligently to *your* children. It's not the job of either the government or the Christian school to teach our children His word. God gives that responsibility to parents, and homeschooling is the best opportunity for discipling our children. God affirms homeschooling.

I am so encouraged by talking with other homeschool parents about how their families are growing closer together and towards the Lord. Long before I ever considered homeschooling, a woman talked about how God is continually growing us as we are growing our children. While homeschooling can be very rewarding and enjoyable, it can also be very humbling and demanding at times. Homeschooling pushes us towards God as we pray for guidance about character issues, curriculum choices, and His will. I believe that God can use other homeschool families to encourage us and affirm homeschooling. Many times an encouraging word has been just what I needed to hear to fight off discouragement. It takes time to cultivate friendships, but the encouragement and affirmation that my family and I receive from other homeschool families makes it worth the effort.

Time and time again God affirms His will for us to homeschool through the rich relationships He's developing among my family. I am so blessed to witness how my boys love and care for each other, their father, and me. When you spend as much time together as we do, you learn to get along. It isn't always easy, and I know that we all have bad days, but I can't imagine how different our family would be if we were all apart from each other for 8 hours a day! I was raised pretty much as an only child, and I can remember dreaming of someday having a house full of children. I thought my friends with siblings were so lucky to always have someone to play with and talk to, but they usually thought I was the lucky one! Most of them didn't really enjoy their time with their siblings and always wanted to get a break from them. While I know everyone needs time alone occasionally, I love watching siblings choose to play and work together.

One of the things that stood out to me, as a young mom attending my first homeschool support group meeting, was how well all the children got along! After teaching in public school for a few years and hearing students complain about younger siblings, it was great when I saw the older

kids happily helping with the younger kids while the parents were in the meeting. The parents trusted their children to be responsible and the kids rose to the task. I knew then that I desired for my children to get along well and to have willing hearts that serve happily. God used those other families to affirm homeschooling for me.

Beyond that, you can just look at the statistics. Homeschooling is growing by leaps and bounds. Research is showing how homeschoolers are succeeding on standardized tests, in college, in the workforce, home life, and more. I believe more families are seeing the fruit of homeschooling and are considering it as an option. Even many public and private school educators see the value of homeschooling. They know how hard it is to teach a whole classroom full of students. They know how important it is to have parents involved. Schools are constantly trying to find ways to get more parents involved. They may not want to acknowledge that parents can teach their own children just as well as (or better than!) the public schools, but we don't really need their affirmation or permission. We have God's!

When you are going through the tough, crazy times and feel you're in survival mode, look for God's affirmation and grace for your homeschool. It's always there if you just look for it. God loves all of us so much and has a wonderful plan for our families. Trust Him to lead you through the tough times, even when things aren't the way you hoped. Don't focus too much on what you aren't getting done or give in to discouragement. Keep things in perspective. While academics are certainly important, eternity is the most important. God sees the big picture and is in control. His grace can cover all of our mistakes or shortcomings. Ultimately He is actually the one doing the work and has promised to complete it. As your children watch you walk in faith, they will learn to walk in faith as well. Isn't that yet another wonderful affirmation of homeschooling?

*"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:5-6*

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### **Biographical Information**

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*Nancy, Tony, and their three boys enjoy learning on their Kentucky farm. God called Nancy away from teaching public school to homeschool their children seven years ago. Now she seeks to encourage other parents to homeschool, to enjoy a lifestyle of learning as a family, and to find God's wonderful plan for their family. You can email her at [tn3jcarter@peoplepc.com](mailto:tn3jcarter@peoplepc.com).*