

## TOS with David & Laurie Callihan: High Schooling

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Imagine a school setting where guidance counselors who love and care about your children are available to help you. Imagine that these people aren't in it for the money—they truly love the children. Imagine having access to their care and concern 24 hours a day, with consistency, from grades K -12. Well there is no reason to just imagine. YOU are the loving guidance counselor for your child. The challenge comes when the homeschooler is called upon to engage more fully in the world—in contemplation of college and careers. You need resources to guide you so you can more competently guide them.

David and Laurie Callihan are the parents of five children (all born within six years!) who have homeschooled from the beginning. They have successfully graduated three high schoolers (so far!) and have been actively involved in homeschooling support and advocacy for twenty years. You got questions? They've got answers! Join us as The Old Schoolhouse chats with the Callihans about preparing our children for life after homeschooling.

**TOS:** We are so excited to have you with us and to have the privilege of picking your brains. What's going on with your children as we speak?

**Callihans:** The most significant thing at the moment is wedding bells. Our oldest three are getting married this year—two were married in June (Jeremiah and Rebekah), and Katie in August.

**TOS:** Why do you think homeschooling parents are so intimidated by the high school years?

**Callihans:** To us, it is a matter of perspective that leads to the lack of confidence. Look at it this way. If you have homeschooled a child for twelve or thirteen years, since we consider the first five or so years to be homeschooling too, then your child is very self-disciplined by the time secondary school begins. Frankly, you have already completed the hardest years. At least we think they are the hardest. We're referring to the elementary school years when your children are incapable, by nature, of taking charge of their lives in any way. But if your children are taught responsibility, accountability, self-control, and discipline early, when they enter secondary school (and subsequently, high school) they are really in a position to take ownership, if we give them the right tools and motivation. Since most parents don't think in these terms, they feel a lack of confidence that really shouldn't be the case.

One of the secrets we learned as we raised our children, by asking God for wisdom, is that we can transfer the ownership of high school to our children. We stumbled on to some very useful tools to help us to do this that we find help motivate and direct homeschooled students. We are really training "pre-adults" in the high school years. The key is to help parents realize, "You can do this!" Once we give them that level of confidence, the intimidation factor is minimized.

**TOS:** How early should we start thinking about college?

**Callihans:** How early do you start thinking about preparing your child for life? We think that

there should be some conscious observations of your child's bents, leanings, desires, gifts, callings, and so on as early as they are observable. If your child is going to be going to college, which all children are not, then you can begin actually having them taking college courses at home as early as age 12 or 13, considering some of the tools that are available today (like CLEPs and DANTEs, among others). So frankly, college is part and parcel of a homeschooling structure. This may seem a bit bizarre to think about for the first time. But because of the way that homeschooling works, our children are way ahead of the curve. By putting together a "Grand Plan" for your child as soon as the elementary materials are mastered, you can begin considering college work very early on and give your child a real "jump start" on college while he or she is still in the home. We have a number of practical tools to help parents think through and manage this option. Frankly, it is one of the most exciting parts of what is available to homeschoolers today.

**TOS:** There is no doubt that homeschoolers are thriving in the college environment. They are warmly received just about everywhere. But what about the child who is not interested in college? How can a parent advise and encourage that child?

**Callihans:** Not every student should be college-bound. In fact, we think college is clearly overrated these days. We always joke that our parents did everything they could to get us into college; we did everything we could to keep our children out (but they still pursued it anyway). The secret is to observe your children and figure out "what makes them tick" as early as possible. If you have a child who is always tinkering with things, you may find that some kind of mechanical aptitude is developing. Perhaps that child will pursue a mechanical career in automobile or electrical work. Another child might be fascinated by the stars, or by bugs, or always want to help people. The key is to find ways to provide alternative learning situations for that child. Perhaps apprenticing with a local professional could be pursued. Dads who are self-employed can take their children under their wings too. The key is to be creative and find alternative options for developing career paths.

**TOS:** Some, in the homeschooling community, do not plan for higher education for their daughters, reasoning that they will eventually marry and become homemakers. What do you think about this practice for young homeschooled ladies?

**Callihans:** This is obviously a very sensitive topic. We want to weigh our words carefully here. First of all, we believe that the calling of wife, mother, and homemaker is the highest calling that a young lady can pursue. We also recognize that the temptations and worldly attractions that can snare a young lady, or a young man for that matter, are real and strong. However, up until a young lady leaves the home, we believe it is not only prudent, but imperative that she pursues the development of her mind and skills to the maximum level possible. There are several reasons for this. First, she will more than likely be attracted to a young man some day. We believe she should develop her capabilities to their maximum capacity in order to be as strong a helper to her future husband as she can. Why not? David was drawn to Laurie as much because she was intellectually bright as that she was attractive. Every guy will be attracted to the appearance of a future bride. Let's not fool ourselves. But the deeper attraction is the spiritual and intellectual one. And we should do everything we can do to develop both of these areas in our daughters. But there is a second issue, too. It has to do with wisdom and discernment. What about the unknown

factor? What if some tragedy occurs five, ten, even fifteen years into the marriage where the husband is hurt badly, or dies unexpectedly? What then? If we haven't allowed our daughters to pursue a career path, even if it is just as a backup plan, haven't we done them a great disservice? We think so. It's a matter of prudence. As long as our daughters are under our care and leadership, we are going to encourage their development into becoming everything they are capable of being. This is our gift to our future sons-in-law. We know by personal experience how much they appreciate that we did that for them!

**TOS:** I believe homeschoolers will be the ones to change our conception of the traditional college education being overly expensive and often out of reach. What kinds of alternative routes do you see kids taking towards getting their college degrees?

**Callihans:** This is definitely one of the most exciting trends in education. Home college education. We can offer our children alternatives earlier and less expensively than traditional education can offer. Because our children gain mastery of the basic elementary materials sooner, they are prepared to consider other alternatives earlier as well. A lot of this has to do with how public schools have "dumbed down" over ninety percent of school-age children. Dr. Bill Bennett, former U.S. Secretary of Education said just over a year ago that the average high school graduate tested out in 2001 at the second half of the seventh grade math level! That is appalling. Our homeschooled children on average have mastered that level of math by the end of their sixth grade Saxon or ABeka math book. The fact is that they are ready for higher level math at that time. The same is true in English, history, and science. Homeschool students are ahead of their counterparts in public and private institutional schools, on average. We have the opportunity to then take them beyond standard levels of learning.

There are exciting options available today that may surprise many parents. We have some very simple and straightforward means to help our children move ahead into college work while still in homeschool high school. One of the most significant is the CLEP (College Level Examination Program) tests. They are inexpensive--\$50 per test. They are accepted at over 2,900 colleges and universities nationwide. They are time-tested, having been around at least since the 1960's. They are standardized, since they are administered by the College Board organization, the same people who provide the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Homeschooling students can use these tests to "double credit" high school and college work. In many cases, they can complete one or two years of college at a fraction of the cost! Of course, whether a local college or university will accept the CLEPs is something parents will have to investigate. However, there are other options as well, like AP exams, portfolio reviews, and alternative colleges that are radically changing the landscape of higher education for homeschooled students. It is time for homeschoolers to realize that getting a degree at home is not only reasonable, but practical. You can learn more at our new website, [www.clepclasses.com](http://www.clepclasses.com).

**TOS:** How important is good record keeping during the high school years?

**Callihans:** It is critical. But it doesn't have to be complicated. We have devised a tool that we call the "Grand Plan" to assist parents in putting together their high school students' course of study. Included as a part of this system is a very important second tool we call simply, "The File." This is just what it sounds like, a manila file folder that you throw everything into during

secondary school that you will need to compile as part of your child's transcript and portfolio when high school is over. Did your child earn an award? Do a project? Finish a class? Put it in the file. What about the trophy like Katie won for coming in second place at the regional science fair? Take a picture and put it in the file with appropriate notes on the back. It's really that simple and straightforward. Record keeping doesn't have to be that complicated, if you are prepared.

The most important document needed as a part of record keeping in high school is the transcript. With the "Grand Plan" you can easily transfer information to the transcript once the course is completed. Again, it shouldn't be more difficult than you have to make it. You are the administrator and teacher in most cases for your student. As the parent, you are the one who decides what constitutes an acceptable grade for a class. You are the one who grades the papers and determines how an "A" grade is achieved. It is no different than what a high school English or science teacher does. Just keep enough records to verify what was done. Our "Christian Homeschool Daily Planner" is one of the tools that we created for our own children, and recently have made available to others to simplify this process and create a permanent record of yearly work. By keeping it simple and straightforward, you devote only as much time to this process as is necessary to do the job. No more and no less.

**TOS:** I loved your book, *The Guidance Manual for the Christian Home School*. It is a jam-packed resource for families. How can our readers get a copy of the book?

**Callihans:** You can order all of our materials, the Guidance Manual, the Daily Planner, and a whole bunch of other stuff that we personally recommend and endorse off our web site, [www.davidandlaurie.com](http://www.davidandlaurie.com). There are others who also carry our materials, like Christian Book Distributors and some local Christian bookstores. But we appreciate people buying from us directly when they can because this is our livelihood and when you buy it directly from us, we benefit the most.

**TOS:** What a blessing to have available such a wealth of experience and common sense. Thank you for taking the time to help our readers prepare their children for life!

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### Biographical Information

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