

Lesson One

Father's Heart

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A recent study conducted by the Institute of the Incredibly Obvious reports that 100 percent of children living at home are being homeschooled. Institute spokesman, Dr. Name Changed to Protect the Guilty, stated that these shocking results stunned the institute's scientists as they discovered that long after the cessation of teachers, books, and dirty looks, children continue to learn in their homes, every day of the year, including official state holidays.

This report has done wonders for the social acceptance of homeschooling, but it has also concerned those who considered themselves homeschoolers before the release of this study. "Does this mean I don't have to keep portfolios?" one mom asked. On condition of anonymity, another mom, like her government school teacher counterparts, complained that if she is always teaching the children, she deserves a raise.

I pray the above spoof will help us understand that we all became homeschoolers the moment our children were born. Homeschooling isn't something you start, though it certainly is something you can start to do better. Whether we've been at it for decades or are just beginning, nothing will help us do better than to demystify the whole process. Homeschooling is nothing other than disciplining our children teaching them our convictions, and transferring our understanding of the world to them. Such is true for all of us, even those who send their children to the local state school.

No matter how "conservative" the local state school might be, it teaches children that the Lordship of Jesus over all things is, at best, something that shouldn't be talked about and, at worst, something that doesn't exist. Those who send their children to the best "Christian" schools that focus on impressive SAT scores, ivy-league colleges, graduate schools, and prestigious jobs, teach their children that success as the world measures it – by hefty paychecks – is the end goal. Those who homeschool because they feel guilty if they don't and thus grumble their way throughout the day, teach their children that they are a burden and a chore. In all these circumstances lessons are being prepared, delivered, learned, and assimilated. Education is happening. And the real superintendent is well aware of all that is going on.

To come to the end of the homeschool years and see that it has gone well for our children means we must labor to see that all we teach is true to God's Word. Whether they are getting through a workbook at the kitchen table or through the more common "more is caught than taught" method, we need to be sure we teach them the very wisdom of God. That means not being as concerned with changing curriculum as with changing lives.

It is also important to avoid teaching our children that education is women's work. Too often we fathers sheepishly claim that our role is that of headmaster and that we are involved in the macrocurriculum issues. Our wives tell us, "I heard this really great seminar at the homeschool convention about the Standing On Your Head Method. Studies show that more blood to the brain increases test scores, and you know what that means – Harvard M.B.A.s, and the 401ks to match." Then we mumble our approval, as long as she can buy used curriculum somewhere.

Getting started for the husband probably means repenting. A passive rubber stamp is not the role God called us to fulfill. He told us to raise our children in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord and not to provoke our children to wrath. Lesson one for us is to believe that our heavenly Father meant what He said. Lesson two is for us to manifest to our wives the love Jesus has for us, to lay down our petty agendas, and not just get involved, but to take charge. Lesson three is to

teach the children that Daddy also has a Father he must obey. Lesson four lasts the rest of our lives and the rest of our children's lives. It is to learn to be more like Jesus.

These are the basics of home, of school, of life. We repent that we don't obey, and we believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, who did obey. This is Sunday school, Monday school, and Tuesday, all the way to starting all over again. Let us seek to get this right and pray that our children do the same.